

Ireland's current affairs quarterly

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Womens View



Limerick's Chilean Refugees Divorce — a Human Right

Thumbs down for Belfast Women's Aid

Copenhagen Women's Conference Women of Courage

Saidie Patterson — Review Galway's Big Mistake

What makes a woman a prostitute?

**Exclusive: Mairin de Burca's feminist analysis on
The Midnight Court**

WOMEN IN THE NEWS..



Congratulations to INEZ McCORMACK the first woman to be elected to the Executive of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions... but roll on the day when the election of women to such positions will cease to be a two-day wonder!

A 25-YEAR OLD WOMAN, a mother of two who died in June last year was described as a "victim of these terrible times" by her former doctor at a Belfast inquest recently.

The coroner's court heard that Mrs Maria Fogarty, of Rock Grove, Belfast, died on June 8, 1979, four years after she had seen her husband shot dead in the living room of their home when she was seven months pregnant with their second child.

Her doctor told the court she had suffered depression since her husband's death and was in bad health, suffering from anorexia nerves, ulcers in the stomach and epilepsy.

Maria knew the identity of her husband's Provo killers and saw them continuously around the neighbourhood. One of the gang, female, was shortly after arrested on another attempted murder charge.



ANGELA DAVIS will be a vice-presidential candidate in the November US elections standing with Gus Hall, the Communist Party candidate. Angela has been active for the past 15 years against racism and political oppression.

Womens View

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IWWU admits men

MEN can now join the previously all-female Irish Women Workers' Union. Under the Employment Equality Act, it is illegal for trade unions or other professional bodies to practice sexual discrimination. The union was founded in 1911.

EQUAL PAY VICTORY — AT LAST

PERSEVERENCE and determination have won an equal pay victory for the Arklow branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. An Equality Officer investigated a claim on behalf of a cleaner in Nitirigin Eireann Teoranta back in 1979.

The cleaner was performing 'like work' with a utility worker in the company but NET argued that the utility worker rate was not the rate for a cleaner but for a person capable of performing a whole range of duties over and above cleaning duties. The particular man in question did not actually perform those extra duties but could be required to do so.

The Equality Officer rejected the claim, deciding that 'grounds other than sex' were involved. The Union appealed to the Labour Court, arguing that there was no difference in the work actually being performed by the two people concerned.

The principle of 'actual performance' is a fairly well-established one and the Labour Court recently concluded that since the range of duties actually being carried out by the utility worker was also being performed by the claimant, she was entitled to equal pay with him.

Well done!

Maternity leave

PAID maternity leave will become a right for women workers in a new law promised for the next session of the Dáil by Brendan Daly, Minister from the Department of Labour, at the World Health Organisation in Copenhagen.

The Government waited to announce this at the international gathering to bolster the Republic of Ireland's tarnished reputation in the field of women's rights.

It is not quite the shining example it seems. Paid maternity leave is coming in as part of the Government's commitment to the EEC not women's equality.

Equal pay, equal opportunity and now paid maternity leave are the minimum equality programme demanded of EEC membership. There is still no broad anti-discrimination law for women in the Republic of Ireland.

Until the new law comes into force Ireland is the only EEC member where there is no legal right to maternity leave, paid or unpaid.

Where women workers do get maternity leave they have won it by collective bargaining of trade unions.



Ireland is the only EEC country where there is no legal right to maternity leave — paid or unpaid.



A drug with harmful long-term effects is still being prescribed to pregnant women in Ireland.

Dangerous drug still on sale

DUOGYNAN, the controversial hormone drug suspected of causing serious foetal defects and rare forms of cancer in the daughters of women who take it during early pregnancy is still available for sale in some pharmacies over two years after it was officially withdrawn from the Irish market by its German manufacturers.

That's what the *Irish People*, weekly newspaper discovered when it checked on reports that unsuspecting patients had been supplied with the drug on prescription recently. The drug was designed to regularise women's periods but it was soon used as a quick and easy method of pregnancy testing in the 1950s.

Since 1974 there has been growing medical evidence that the drug has harmful long-term effects on daughters of women who took the drug during the early stages of their pregnancy. It has now been established that on reaching adolescence these girls are much more prone to cancer of the vagina and cervix.

There is no system of checking on prescriptions to see if banned or harmful drugs are inadvertently prescribed and dispensed to patients. The Drugs Advisory Board simply publishes catalogues of suspect drugs to the relevant medical professions and institutions.

Groups poll members on divorce

ORGANISATIONS representing Irish women are canvassing their members' views on divorce. The ICA is writing to their 26,000 members for their opinions and the Council for the Status of Women questioned its 32 affiliated organisations on their attitude to divorce.

The Council for the Status of Women believe their questionnaire will give a clear indication of the thinking of Irish women on the subject. They intend to publish it and present it to the Government.

No action on Nightwork

SINCE last November when the Minister for Labour, Gene Fitzgerald, approved the Employment Equality Agency's recommendation that the 40 year old bar against women doing nightwork should go he has done absolutely nothing.

In the first such review of existing laws the Agency examined the Conditions of Employment Act of 1936 at the request of Michael O'Leary, then Minister for Labour. Their report concluded that the ban was no longer justifiable, and that keeping it only undermined women's equality at work, not protected it.

The 1936 Act bars women from working between 10pm and 8am in industrial jobs only.

PROTECTION

THE EOC for NI is campaigning for legal protection from domestic violence for common law wives. A new law, The Domestic Proceedings (NI) Order 1980 which was passed in April, gives, among other things, protection for battered wives and children. However the law does not protect common law wives, that is a woman living with a man in a stable relationship but not legally married to him. The Commission feels strongly that a woman should be protected from physical violence in the home, whether or not she is married.

The Minister, Hugh Rossi MP, has said that he will consider extending the law in this way if there is sufficient support for it. Therefore the EOC has written to all NI MPs asking them to support the extension of the law to common law wives and cohabitants. The Commission is also calling on all womens organisations to join them in their campaign.

In an explanatory note sent to NI MPs the EOC says:

The EOC NI welcomes the approval of the Domestic Proceedings Order by the House of Commons as a valuable step towards equality between the sexes in Northern Ireland.

We regard it as unfortunate that the history of this legislation precluded the Minister from extending to cohabitants the provisions of the draft order which afford protection to a spouse who is subjected to domestic violence.

We are aware that other issues relating to co-habitants involve very broad considerations upon which the Commission makes no comment at this time. Domestic violence is, however, a narrow issue which need not involve the creation of policy precedents affecting other aspects of matrimonial law or property law.

A woman living with a man may suffer domestic violence whether or not the relationship is that of marriage. It is not logical to exclude her from the protection of the law which would be her right if married.

School meals cuts

CUTS in the school meals service are beginning to bite hard in school meals kitchens among women workers. A recent pre-term tally among the Area Boards indicated that as many as 200 women would have no jobs to return to in September and that figure will swell significantly when the cost of school meals goes up in January 1981.

North East — 110 canteen workers paid off as a direct result of fall in meals demand. More will lose if there is a further drop in meal sales.

Southern area — 90 out.

Western area — 40 out. 20% drop in meals.

Belfast is the only area where demand for old style school dinner is rising. Job layoffs are inevitable when school starts again.



Newry women organise

NEWRY has an energetic women's group campaigning on a broad range of local issues.

Lack of nursery and pre-school provision, absence of playground and recreational facilities, low pay and bad working conditions in local factories and domestic violence were the issues around which the group was formed.

They are campaigning for a hostel for women who are the victims of domestic violence. And they held a successful series of classes covering women and the welfare state, women and the law, and women and health. They plan to hold a new series at the end of the year.

No equal rights for N.I.



More Northern Ireland women than ever before went to Britain for abortions last year. Abortion clinics, legal in Britain but illegal in Northern Ireland, were used by 1,430 Northern Ireland women in 1979 compared with 1,316 in 1978.

The Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement wrote to all local MPs at Westminster pointing out the disastrous implications of James Corrie's Abortion Amendment Bill for women in Northern Ireland.

"The issue at stake isn't whether we have abortions or not. It is under what circumstances they will be performed, in the backstreet or under professional clinical guidance with full supportive back up services."



CRAIGAVON ADVICE CENTRE

THE NI Womens Rights Movement has a thriving branch in Craigavon. The group was formed in 1977 and has gone from strength to strength. As this is a new community it is very much a community based feminist grouping. The branch has strong links with Craigavon Trades Council. The group has a mixture of women working inside and outside the home and having a wide range of interests has divided into sub-groups who concentrate on different topics. They obtained their own premises in 1978 and operate a regular Advice Centre.

Equal pay at Glen Electric

THE ITGWU has won a major equal pay victory in Northern Ireland. Last week the Industrial Court ruled that 150 female workers at Greenpoint Appliances in Newry should receive the same basic rate as male workers employed there and in the parent Company, Glen Electric. It was the first case of its kind to be heard under the North's Equal Pay Legislation.

Glen Electric manufactures domestic appliances and employs both men and women. There are two grades in these factories, 'light assembly worker' and, at a higher rate of pay, 'general factory worker'.

Both grades do similar work. In fact the only difference seems to be that all the light assembly workers are women and all the general workers are men!

Since 1978 the Union has argued that although the job titles are not expressed in terms of sex, the Company was clearly operating a discriminatory job structure, since only female workers were in one grade, and only men in the other.

The Union also pointed out that male juveniles who worked alongside the women doing a similar job, were recruited as 'general factory workers' and received a proportion of the wage rate for that grade.

The dispute was taken up with the Equal Opportunities Commission, and then in October last year the Union referred the issue to the Industrial Court. The Court has now ruled in favour of the Union and directed that the minimum basic rate for both grades should be the same.



Speakers at the Dublin meeting to organise a Women's Right to Choose Campaign were Patricia Mac Mahon (U.S./Catholics for a Free Choice), Ann Connolly, Dublin, and Jan Parker, Britain.

Women campaign for the right to choose

A GROUP of Dublin women formed a Women's Right to Choose Campaign because they see 'there is an urgent need to change the law on abortion in this country'. An estimated 9,000 women go from Ireland every year to have abortions in Britain.

A survey of 300 women who went to England this year shows the sensation-seeking press image of young, single and irresponsible users of contraceptives is far from being the whole story.

Nearly a third of the women already had children, so had first hand knowledge of what it means to go ahead with a pregnancy in Ireland. Almost

half of women — "a staggering 42% — had never used any contraception at all, a fact the Campaign sees as a severe indictment of the difficulty and expense of obtaining contraception here. Well over half, 63%, were working women which lends support to the claim that a "child-bar" is rapidly replacing the old "marriage-bar" against women holding down jobs. "Saddest of all," say the women campaigners, "30% of all these women gave their main reason for seeking an abortion as their parents, a hypocrisy that calls to mind the Victorian era rather than 1980."

The Campaign for a Woman's Right to Choose held

a well supported meeting over the summer. In spite of being called in the middle of the holiday period a hundred people — mostly women — came along. And women's groups in the north have combined to reform the abortion law more along the lines of the British 1967 Act. At present the old British Act of 1929 allows Northern Ireland doctors to terminate pregnancies in very limited circumstances, so like their southern sisters most northern women travel to Britain for abortions. In the Republic of Ireland the 1861 Offences against the Persons Act allows life sentences for having or performing an abortion.

Rape Centre gets £5,000

DUBLIN'S' Rape Crisis Centre has won a grant of £5,000 from the Department of Health to continue its work of confidential counselling and information service to women who have been attacked.

The money is to go to publicise the service and the Centre welcome the £5,000 as a boost to their fund raising efforts to employ a full time worker at the centre.

At the moment the service is run by volunteers at the end of a telephone line which is open from 8pm to 8am each evening — and 24 hours at the weekend.

Rape Crisis Centre: Tel. 601470, PO Box 1027, Dublin 6.

Sex hazard at work

AWARENESS is growing that among the hazards of work for women is the persistent problem of sexual harassment. Most women who go out to work have had some experience of this unpleasant feature of working in mixed company.

And while some sexual banter may be harmless and goodnatured, when it develops into sexual harassment it is offensive, humiliating and difficult to combat.

Victims of sexual harassment are often isolated at work. Sexual humiliation often inhibits the woman from reporting such incidents.

Nor is it easy to prove cases of sexual harassment and they may not be taken seriously when they do report them.



If the office or factory 'romeo' is also the boss, the only solution may be to look for another job.

EHB IN THE DARK

WEEKS away from the Health (Family Planning) Act becoming law the Eastern Health Board have complained that they still haven't been told by the Department of Health how to work the Act. Under the new Act the Health Boards will be mainly responsible for implementing it.

CONTRACEPTION SURVEY IN GALWAY CITY

THE Galway Branch of the Contraception Action Programme recently surveyed 110 households around the city on attitudes to contraception, the Family Planning Act etc. A total of 53% of those interviewed favoured easier access to contraceptives for all, and a further 46% believed it should be easier for married couples. 91% said there should be more information on contraceptive methods.

Although 93% of respondents had heard of the Family Planning Bill, only 38% knew that it would make contraceptives more difficult to obtain; 31% had attended a Family Planning Clinic and, of these, 80% were satisfied with the service provided.

Seventy-four of the households surveyed were Corporation flats. The remaining 36 were divided evenly between private and Corporation houses. Of the people interviewed 90% were women.

Commenting on the survey results a spokesperson for Galway CAP said the case for better contraceptive information was proven. "In spite of this the Family Planning Bill developed by Mr. Haughey as Minister for Health and Social Welfare is going to restrict access to contraceptives to married couples as well as raise their costs and thus hinder their availability to all."

On 11th September 1973 the democratically elected government of Chile, led by Salvador Allende, was overthrown by a military coup. At that time Paula Riesco and her future husband, Patricio, were students at a Physical Education College in a city about the size of Limerick. Now they both live in Shannon, Co. Clare, where Paula works in a local factory while Patricio, recently made redundant, is unemployed.

Paula was more fortunate than some of the other Chileans in that she spoke a little English. But those first months in Ireland were difficult ones. Despite the kindness of the Irish family with whom they stayed, it was difficult to adjust to living with strangers. There were the problems of a new society and its customs, a different language, different food and climate to be coped with, while the future in terms of jobs and a home were still

One of the problems facing the Chileans is how to ensure that their children learn the language and customs of Chile while growing up in an Irish community. As the children get older it has to be explained to them why they live in a strange country and why they don't have relatives here as the Irish children do. Due to the language difficulty it has taken some of them longer to finish school than under normal circumstances.

A bleak future for Ireland's Chilean refugees

Maura Mc Inerney

Paula remembers hearing about the coup in a radio broadcast at lunchtime. On the morning of the coup Patricio left his home in a nearby town never to return again. As a political activist he was forced to go underground in the capital, unable to look for a job and never knowing when he might be turned over to the police, possibly to become another name on the long list of missing persons who disappeared while in detention centres.

Of course the universities and colleges were now closed to people like them although Paula could have returned to her studies under a later law, but only if she registered as a first year student despite the fact that she was entering her third year at the time of the coup.

Obviously their only option was to leave Chile. They met an Irish Colombian priest who agreed to make arrangements for them to come to Ireland, initially to stay in Shannon with his family. The priest was imprisoned for a period around this time but on his release and about three months after their marriage they came to Ireland — the first Chileans to arrive, in fact.

uncertain. Paula's application to complete her studies at the local P.E. College was rejected.

When the other refugees arrived in Shannon, AnCo provided English classes and eventually they were all housed. Jobs to suit the skills and qualifications of the Chileans were more difficult to obtain and the theory still exists that, because they were political refugees, some employers viewed them as likely trade union activists and 'trouble-makers'.

Despite the fact that classes were provided the language barrier is still a problem. There is one woman who still speaks only a few words of English which means that she is totally isolated apart from her family and the other Chileans. The men and children improved their fluency through work and school. But for the women who stayed at home the language presented a special problem because within the family group the Chileans still speak Spanish. This is important, they feel, if the children are to be bilingual. Many of the children were very young when they left Chile — Paula's own children in fact, were born here.

However, with the advantage of youth on their side, the young people are coping better with life here than some of the older people. In fact there is the danger that they will settle down too well. Some of the women fear that, if they decide to return to Chile, the young people who barely remember their native country will not want to go.

There are certain aspects of Irish life of which the Chileans are critical. In general, Irish workers do not have a great awareness of their rights. The importance of education is not emphasised enough. In Chile, under Allende, young people were encouraged to stay on at school as long as possible although, under the Pinochet regime, this has of course changed. Before the coup creches and night classes were provided to facilitate further education for women.

The Church in Ireland is very different too, Paula thinks. In Chile it has always been more progressive, more in touch with the ordinary people and their problems. Paula and Patricio's families still live in Chile. There is no difficulty about communicating with them although



The news from Chile is not good. Torture, repression and murder are on the increase. Above a Chilean mother demands news of her husband and children who have 'disappeared' while in the hands of the police.

once in a while letters arrive looking as if they might have been interfered with. Naturally they would like to return to Chile, but, having been forced to leave, they are uncertain about what going back might mean.

Certainly the news from Chile is not good. The arrests still happen and people still go missing as the repressive Pinochet regime consolidates its position. The Chilean people continue to be faced with unemployment, malnutrition, low wages, shortage of housing, lack of freedom to organise or hold opinions.

For Paula Riesco and the other women and their families the future remains uncertain. A return to Chile would certainly mean living under a repressive regime with all that that entails. But remaining in Ireland offers little chance of bettering themselves in terms of jobs or an education to Paula Riesco and her family, who, along with thousands of other Chileans, had a bright future under Allende.

A sample of Family Planning Services throughout the world shows Ireland and Bolivia to be the only two countries where these facilities are illegal.

ALGERIA

Since 1974 the Government has provided Family Planning facilities as part of the Maternal and Child Health services. These facilities are available at 164 clinics throughout Algeria.

AUSTRALIA

Government supports F.P. activities and services are available through maternal/child health centres, community health services and free of charge through Medibank. The F.P. Association (AFFPA) provides services through clinics.

BRAZIL

Official government position encourages population growth but permits family planning. In 1977 announced a programme to provide services to all poor women for whom pregnancy was a health risk.

BRITAIN

Government programme through national health service since 1974. Advice and services available free of charge since 1975. By 1976 services were available at 1,860 health authority clinics. The F.P. Association (founded 1930) handed over more than 1,000 clinics and domiciliary services to the government in 1974/75. The Association continues to provide information, education, training etc.

BOLIVIA

Bolivia has a ban on integrating F.P. services with mother/child health care and the Government closed down the F.P. Clinics. Profam — the F.P. Association — was founded in 1974 and closed down by the Government in 1977.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

A government programme has existed since 1957 and intensified since 1975. Their policy is to reduce annual growth rate to less than 1%. Family planning is integrated into health services and available through local units, rural health, and bare-foot doctors. There is a massive family planning education campaign.

CUBA

In Cuba the government programme is fully integrated with health services; emphasis is on maternal health care, of which family planning is an integral part. All contraceptive methods are available free of charge and are available at all clinics and rural hospitals. A family planning association was founded in 1976 to complement the national programme.

FRANCE

Since 1974 F.P. advice and services have been provided by the Government. The cost of contraceptives is reimbursed by social security. France has 381 F.P. clinics and 294 F.P. and marriage guidance centres.

INDIA

A Government contraception programme has existed since 1951. All methods are available.

ITALY

Government gives support to municipal family centres set up under a 1975 law. All methods readily available in urban areas and the Pill is free of charge on prescription from clinics.

KENYA

Kenya was the first Black African country to announce official government policy in support of family planning and has had a Government programme since 1966.

SPAIN

Under Franco the advertising, distribution and practice of contraception was illegal, but this law was rescinded in 1978. The government, through the Department of Health, is now establishing centres offering F.P. advice.

U.S.S.R.

Advice and services available within the health services, at local health centres and obstetrics and gynaecology departments of hospitals. All medical care is free.

U.S.A.

Government services are provided through both government and private facilities. F.P. services are federally funded for low-income groups. The U.S. was one of the pioneers of F.P. and survey data shows that almost all married couples, regardless of income, practise some form of contraception.

A planned family can mean a better and fuller life for all — and a better world.





In a debate at the Merriman Summer School at Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare, MAIRIN de BURCA's feminist analysis of THE MIDNIGHT COURT provoked sharp reaction from the audience.



I am not a Gaelic Scholar, in fact I am not a scholar at all. My schooldays were comparatively few and, because of that, devoted to the bare essentials. The bare essentials did not include an appreciation of poetry and so when I read the *Midnight Court* years ago, for the first time in translation, it was because I had been told that it represented the acme of liberated, anti-clerical, bawdy Irish life before the dark night of the famine came down and the nasty Brits made narrow-minded bigots of us all. I don't remember that it made any impression on me at all. Last week I read it again — David Marcus' translation — from the standpoint of a committed feminist.

First of all let me admit to a prejudice. I don't believe that men can write intelligently of women's oppression. The best that can be said is that some of them mean well but — as with novels written by foreigners about Irish oppression — when well meaning men try to interpret the struggle of women for human rights I appreciate the thought but I cringe and wish they wouldn't. There is no evidence of course that most of them mean well at all.

What I found in the *Midnight Court* was a series of sentiments which would not be out of place in twentieth century Ireland and which, if expressed with a little more decorum, could be accepted by any ninety year old parish priest in the country. In the first section a young girl deplores the reluctance of men to get married and suggests that,

reluctant to marry, they are also reluctant to go to bed with any woman. She resents the fact that women, older and uglier than she, find husbands, she boasts of her looks and her fashionable dress and her single-minded dedication to catching a man. She dreads dying a 'miserable old maid' and finally decides to accomplish her one purpose in life by means of magic spells.

*While a virgin like me goes untouched by the plough!
How is it my beauty no passion awakes?
Don't tell me I haven't whatever it takes!
My mouth is sweet and my teeth are flashing,
My face is never in need of washing,
My eyes are green and my hair's undyed.*

In the second part, what Merriman/Marcus describes as a "wizzened old josser" takes up the woman's challenge and launches an attack, not on the sentiments she expresses but on her looks. He decries her parentage, her lack of a dowry, her inability to do housework of a high enough standard and, that old standby of the male, he attacks her virtue. He then bemoans his own fate since he married, again claiming to have been taken in by a woman without virtue (the virtue invariably meaning as in 20th Century Ireland sexual purity), the baby arrived the day after the wedding and ends by making a stirring plea for free love in order that the male offspring of such unions will grow up powerful and strong.

The woman (sorry, the girl) men find an inordinate difficulty in describing the opposite sex as women and think that women should find it insulting to be accurately described and that every woman secretly and not so secretly desires to be referred to as a girl all her life. In any case the woman rejoins the battle and does an exposé on the man's marriage. He tricked his wife into marriage she claims, with promises of wealth and luxury. She attacks what is usually described as his 'manhood', takes a side swipe at the celibate clergy while managing to insinuate that they aren't all that celibate.

The judgement, when it is handed down by the woman judge, is sympathetic to the woman's case and the sentence is flagellation to encourage men to procreate, whatever their financial circumstances.

I submit that there is nothing particularly revolutionary there. Oh, the language is earthy and it is not the first time that explicit descriptions of anatomical appendages and sexual gymnastics was mistaken for the polemics of liberation. Myself I find it distasteful and if that is a sample of Jansenist Catholicism overlaid with modern agnosticism, that's what it is. I am familiar with the human anatomy and with what are curiously described as the 'facts of life'. They are neither especially amusing or especially interesting —

just necessary for the propagation of the species. Many people actually enjoy the whole process of course and good luck to them. However, until comparatively recently women could not enjoy sex without fear.

Gearoid O Tuathaigh in his essay 'The Role of women in Ireland under the new English Order' claims that the Midnight Court is 'a plea for the rights of women to sexual satisfaction' but another interpretation and one equally as valid is that it was rather a plea for men to marry the surplus women when they were both young, and by definition beautiful. Procreation was an occupational hazard for the woman who could spend anything from 20 to 30 years of this idyllic life expecting a child, having a child, miscarrying a child or nursing a child. As there were three women to every man her husband meantime would be encouraged to put other women he came across in the same condition so that they wouldn't degenerate into miserable old maids. No doubt but that this is every male's idea of women's liberation, the one with which he is in most accord but that is a myth not too difficult to demolish.

*From throat to breast to little finger
I've plenty to make a fellow linger;
My waist is slim and my back's unbowed,
With the best of fittings I'm well-endowed;
A look at my legs would provide a thrill,
And what's between them is better still.
I'm not silly or stupid or snobbish or
snooty —
I've bags of breeding and brains and
beauty;*

The most that can be said for Merriman is that he was the first to articulate, and in poetic fashion to boot, the curiously male notion that Liberation for women coincides exactly with the principle of free love. I saw the effects of this brainwashing on some of the women who came into the Liberation Movement. Not naturally promiscuous, they were conned by male reactions to the movement into adopting a lifestyle completely alien to their inclinations and principles. It was the old 'you are a liberated

woman you must prove it and sleep with me' syndrome. This caused a great deal of unhappiness for the women but of course a deal of satisfaction for some men. The more intelligent women woke up of course and realised that true liberation meant taking an informed, mature decision on all sorts of questions which had hitherto been decided by male-determined social attitudes.

Merriman opines, with almost monotonous regularity, the ineligibility of the old and ugly to the pleasures of sex whether male or female. This cruelty is usually ignored by enthusiastic Merriman fans. I suspect that they find the insulting descriptions of people less than young and winsome as hilariously funny. As far as the women were concerned it must have been difficult to remain young and winsome with a baby coming every nine months and Gearoid O Tuathaigh's essay mentioned earlier contained a reference which described women in the early nineteenth century — a bare thirty years after Merriman composed his epic — as 'treated more like beasts of burden than rational beings'. That, I suspect, was nearer the reality for women than the sexist not to mention ageist nonsense of Merriman.

It will be said of course that I am taking things too seriously, that Merriman was composing a humorous commentary on the sexual mores of the day, that his sympathy came down on the side of the woman complainant and as for the rest we can enjoy the explicitness of his language in contrast with the narrow joylessness of the literature which came after the horrific events of the next century. But Merriman is not generally treated lightly. His poem has been investigated and inspected from every angle. Why not from the angle of a feminist?

There is nothing particularly amusing in the glorification of a work which reinforces the most despicable male prejudices against women.

I am aware that there is an argument which goes something like this; poets are by nature extraordinary beings, we cannot therefore judge them as ordinary persons, they are not of our mundane world but a race apart. When poets do stupid and malicious things then supporters of this argument turn somersaults trying to excuse them.

*Come on, you might as well admit
All that you had to exchange for it,
For you weren't elected a Fashion Queen,
And it's not so long since you hadn't a
bean;
Or perhaps you'd prefer us to make a
guess
As to how you came by your flashy dress,
And goodness knows what you had to
lose
To achieve the price of those splendid
shoes.*

Thus we have quite intelligent persons claiming that Ezra Pound or William Butler Yeats were not really fascists — not because their politics belied this conclusion but because they were poets. The very notion is itself fascistic. Someone will no doubt claim that since Brian Merriman was a poet he was therefore incapable of sexism. The answer to that is simple — Brian Merriman was a man, he was by definition and without the exercise of any particular faculty a member of the oppressing class. As a poet he did his oppressing more gracefully, more musically perhaps but there is no evidence that he deliberately opted out of the benefits to which his sex automatically entitled him.

He wasn't alone of course and he has millions of comrades even today. So let us by all means enjoy his poem, let us laugh at it or rail at it or do whatever is fashionable with it but let's not cod ourselves or have ourselves coddled that it is a feminist tract because it isn't. Sexual licence is not what women's liberation is all about however much men would like to persuade us that it is. Freedom and human dignity for women will come only with total economic independence for every woman whatever her sexual status, and with total and safe control over her fertility. Without these rights women are as much men's slaves today as they were in 1750.

A woman's work...

Maire Leydon describes the 'joys' of working in West Germany during the summer. Readers who have had similar experiences at home or abroad may be interested in writing to us about it for the next issue.

Given the degree of 'liberation' achieved by women in the West, in the European Economic Community in particular, one would expect conditions to have changed in areas of traditional female employment such as the small, light goods factory, if not in all spheres of daily life such as status and expectations.

My period working in the richest country in Europe — West Germany — did nothing to confirm expectations of equality. The factory I worked in was a small, food-packaging one which employed mainly 'Gästarbeiterinn' women from Greece and Turkey. Very few men were employed — most were German and all these had highly skilled jobs such as engineering or maintenance. The remaining men were foreign workers who did manual labour.

Work began at 6 am and continued until 2 pm with a 20 minute break in the eight hours! Frequently there was compulsory overtime and this ended at 5 pm; Because of the exploitative nature of the owners, there was no extra pay for such work. The security of immigrant workers' employment is always precarious and the owners often intimidated the workers through this means.

Despite the insecurity of their jobs, the immigrant male workers didn't hesitate to display their chauvinism — particularly when it came to the hour set aside for washing the machines; because they didn't consider cleaning as proper 'work'. They sat while we females sweated over vats of soapy water!

The management — who were in general uncooperative and dogmatic — passed a blind eye to this and paid these men 11 DM an hour, while females only received 7 DM an hour for their troubles.

Coupled with bad wages were bad working conditions; there were no showers or canteen facilities, and the place set aside for eating one's own food was a converted wash-room, which was dark and dank.

My sympathy certainly went to the other immigrant women. Usually

they were unable to get time off to attend the dentist or ante-natal clinic. And they were often under pressure holding down two full-time jobs — that of housewife, charwoman and mother, and of being a factory employee. This pressure became obvious in the constant bickering with other nationalities and an obsequious attitude towards the owners.

With an immigrant labour reserve like this, perhaps it's no wonder that Germany is the most affluent country in Europe.

Thousands of young Irish students travel to Europe each summer to earn their college fees for the coming year. Most of them share bad wages and working conditions with their fellow immigrant workers.



The issue of women's participation in the trade union movement moved centre-stage at the ICTU Annual Delegate Conference in July. While the sceptics or the disillusioned might well argue that the extremely progressive ICTU Working Women's Charter got passed almost by default a couple of years ago, there can be no question about the fact that this time the delegation knew precisely what they were doing when they voted in favour of positive discrimination as a means of dealing with "the lack of proportional representation of women in the trade union movement" and when they instructed the ICTU Executive to report to the 1981 Conference on its examination of "the position and role of women in the trade union movement at all levels" and on "ways in which positive discrimination can be implemented".

With the sound base of a comprehensive package of progressive demands on all aspects of the 'women's question' already laid down, the issue of 'women in the trade union movement' has now moved firmly into the area of facilitating and ensuring that women become *involved* — firstly as a very necessary end in itself, and secondly — and equally importantly — as a means of ensuring *action* on women's issues.

The trade union movement is demanding 'positive discrimination' of itself. Taking a closer look this means two things. Firstly the trade union movement must be reorganised to realistically facilitate women's participation. This means very simply, that the obvious fact must be taken into account that women are not only workers but also carry family responsibilities, and trade union activity must be organised accordingly — e.g. workplace union meetings, creche facilities at conferences etc. I think we will find that as the traditional work division between the sexes changes as men and women refuse to follow the rigid traditional sex roles, our fellow male trade unionists will increasingly see this aspect of positive discrimination not

Women in Trade Unions and POSITIVE ACTION

A further view on the debate from Patricia Redlich who is Education Officer and Executive member of her union



Dan Murphy casts a disparaging eye at colleague Inez McCormack as she criticises him over his "contradictory attitude to positive discrimination" at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions annual conference.

just as a 'women's' demand but as a more general trade union issue.

Secondly, the trade union movement is taking on the task of compensating for the more general and all-pervasive discrimination against women in our society — the intimately inter-connected issues of differences in education; broken patterns of employment due to child-bearing and rearing; low pay, low status, low job satisfaction and resulting lack of interest in work-related issues; continuing responsibility for the kitchen and the dirty nappies; low self-confidence in the skills necessary for trade union involvement — in short, lack of identification with the world of work and with it the trade union movement.

Here the trade union movement will have to be considering women's committees, reserved seats for women at various levels, special education courses for women etc. etc. The support we get on *this*, more fundamental, aspect of positive discrimination is what will separate the men from the boys among our trade union colleagues.

It is also the area where we will probably see differences between the white-collar workers and their unions and the general workers and their unions.

This difference would appear to have already emerged on the question of reserved seats. I don't think it is either fair or accurate to put all objections voiced about reserved seats down to mere lack of understanding on the part of 'successful women about their less fortunate sisters'. There are many women workers who are, happily, already in the position of being able to meet their male colleagues in their unions on an equal footing and who don't want reserved seats — and more power to them.

Positive discrimination — there are going to be many variations on the theme; varying needs are going to require many different solutions. In some areas the changes are going to have to be quite fundamental; in others a mere extension of existing structures. At a period of high jobs demand — six out of ten new workers are female workers — the explosion in the female workforce will continue.

This makes the task as urgent as it is formidable. The woman worker has now arrived on the industrial scene demanding her proper place. Trade union structures and procedures — as well as society as a whole — will have to recognise her position and concede her demand.



Lylie Doyle of the Divorce Action Group addressing the meeting. Other speakers were Rev. Peter Tarleton, Pat McCartan, Councillor Tomas Mac Giolla and Paula Scully.

Divorce — a human right

Respect for minority rights was a recurring theme of a meeting on 'Divorce, The Law and Society' held in Liberty Hall, Dublin, in July under the auspices of Sinn Féin The Workers' Party's Dublin Executive, and chaired by Party Spokesperson on Justice, Pat MacCartan.

Cllr Tomas Mac Giolla said that divorce was a Civil Liberties issue, not a religious issue. Whether we liked it or not, marital breakdown was on the increase, greatly aggravated by the problems and tensions which had accompanied urbanisation in this country.

"High-sounding Constitutional phrases about the 'inalienable and imprescriptible' rights of the family and need to protect it were laughable in a society in which families were being evicted from their homes, torn apart by unemployment and subjected to intolerable strains by the appalling housing conditions in which so many of them were forced to live. What had the ban on divorce done to protect these families?" he asked.

Cllr Mac Giolla was particularly scathing about the suggestion made

by the Taoiseach Charles Haughey, in a Panorama interview, that within a unified Ireland there could be different laws for North and South, with the North retaining its more liberal laws on matters such as divorce and contraception.

It was more than time, he said, for the Southern State to cease confusing the 'sinful' with the 'illegal'. The dangers inherent in a confessional State were all too evident in the current Iranian situation. Reiterating SFWP's demand for a humane divorce law, Cllr Mac Giolla welcomed the formation of the Divorce Action Group and pledged support for their campaign to end the constitutional ban on divorce.

The partial remedies existing in Ireland for marital breakdown — barring orders, nullity actions etc. — were described as "grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the situation" by Paula Scully, a solicitor with wide experience in Family Law. "They created a particularly bad situation for children," she said. "While the law could not prevent the breakdown of a marriage, it could and should regulate it and help to sort out the

resulting complexities with the minimum of distress and trauma to the parties involved."

The Divorce Action Group was represented at the meeting by Lylie Doyle, who recounted her personal experience of marital breakdown and outlined some of the resultant problems. She urged respect for the rights of those who wished to avail of divorce legislation, stressing that this did not impinge in any way on those who for one reason or another were not themselves in favour of divorce.

She added that the D.A.G. were urging the Government to ascertain the real extent of the problem of breakdown, through the simple expedient of including a 'separated' category in the Census form.

Rev. Peter Tarleton, Limerick's Church of Ireland Vicar, welcomed the opportunity to associate himself with the objectives of the Divorce Action Group. He conducted an interesting tour of the New Testament in relation to separation and divorce and in conclusion joined the other speakers in stressing the importance of maintaining and extending the rights of ordinary people.



United Nations International Womens Conference

COPENHAGEN 80

The United Nations Conference in Mexico in 1975 declared a Decade for Women and adopted a Plan of Action for women's equality and development.

The purpose of the International Conference held in Copenhagen in July this summer was to review the progress of this programme and to explore ways to promote the three major goals of the Decade — Equality, Development and Peace.

Over 150 countries sent delegations to the U.N. Conference. The official Irish group, led by Brendan Daly, Minister of State at the Department of Labour, included Ambassador Tinney, Hilda Tweedy, Monica Barnes, Sylvia Meehan and Roisin Conroy.

A second Conference, the Mid-Decade Forum, to accommodate non-governmental organisations was held in Copenhagen simultaneously. The Council for the Status of Women was represented by Audrey Conlon and Ann Kavanagh who were funded by the Irish Government.

The only Irish political party represented at the Forum was Sinn Féin The Workers' Party whose delegate was **Margaret O'Leary** of the party's National Women's Committee, who reported an extraordinary interest by delegates in the pamphlets and information leaflets on Ireland and a desire to know more about the real problems facing women in this country.

Patricia Brown, representing the Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement at the Forum had a similar experience, and welcomed the opportunity to explain the additional problems facing women in the north who must live with terrible social hardships amid the sectarian violence of para-militaries and British Army harassment.

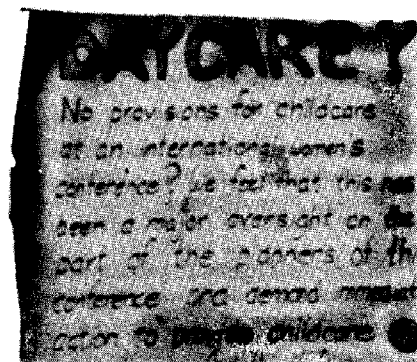
The conclusions of the Conference were not re-assuring and show that little has been achieved in the social and economic advancement of women since 1975. This proved what most women — at the Mid-Decade Forum at least — already know, that change can only come from hard work and commitment by women's groups and organisations at their own national and local level.

International conferences may have the effect of highlighting inequalities but will ultimately achieve little else.

Delegates to both conferences march for Peace.



Sally Mugabe (right) Deputy Sec. of Womens Affairs in the Zimbabwe government.



No childcare facilities at an international conference!



Well attended workshop sessions at the Forum.

While the conflict between world politics and women's issues was played out at the main UN Conference, the Mid-Decade Forum was an informal gathering of thousands of women from literally every corner of the globe. Here at last there was some chance for women to get together... some opportunity for western women to find common ground with their sisters from the developing countries and to share experiences.

Friendships were made and developed at the workshops, drama sessions, marches for peace, display stalls and weekend get-togethers. In the end that's what it was all about — sharing experiences on a personal level and learning what women were doing to help themselves in their own countries.

THE leader of the Irish delegation, Mr. Brendan Daly, Minister of State at the Department of Labour, addressed the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Copenhagen in July.

SUCH an enlightened view of the problems facing women in Ireland should be reassuring but our readers could be forgiven for adopting a cynical attitude to what Mr. Daly had to say on behalf of the Government.

HE certainly gives the impression that all our problems have been identified and are in the process of being dealt with. Time will prove if his speech was merely intended to impress this world gathering or if in fact the Government are actually preparing legislation to deal with areas of discrimination and victimisation against women.

"I would like to emphasise that the Government of Ireland are committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women."

IT gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Government of Ireland to participate in this Conference.

For some considerable time, before the commencement of the Decade for Women, the Government of Ireland was concerned about the role of women in our Society. As far back as March, 1970, the Government established a Commission on the Status of Women with the following terms of reference:

"To examine and report on the status of women in Irish society, to make recommendations on the steps necessary to ensure the participation of women on equal terms and conditions with men in the political, social, cultural and economic life of the country and to indicate the implications generally — including the estimated cost — of such recommendations."

At the commencement of the Decade for Women we were in the fortunate position of having as it were, terms of reference which could be a guide for future action. I am glad to say that action has been taken on many of the reforms advocated in the Commission's Report. Indeed, I might mention that a number of those reforms relate specifically to the basic objectives set out in the World Plan of Action for the Decade.

One of the major sub-themes of this Conference, employment, is of special concern to me. I am firmly convinced that women at work make a significant contribution to the economic well-being of our society.

In Ireland, as in many other countries, the sectoral distribution of women is very uneven compared to that of men. Women workers have tended generally to be concentrated in a fairly narrow range of occupations. Due to traditional attitudes to work, training and education, women are still excluded from taking on a range

of jobs even in sectors where there is a shortage of workers. For example, we have many unfilled vacancies for highly qualified and skilled workers, but in the main, women do not enter these occupations or have the necessary qualifications.

These traditional attitudes have, in the past, tended to influence the pattern of female participation in the labour force. The attitudes of employers, of girls themselves, of their parents, of educationalists, and of society generally have contributed to segregation within the labour market.

There are encouraging signs that attitudes are changing, but a great deal remains to be done, so that equality between the sexes can become a reality for both men and women.

I am glad to say that considerable progress has been achieved as regards legislative measures aimed at eliminating discrimination against women in employment. May I say here that our legislation on equal pay was found to comply with the stringent requirements of the European Commission.

In addition to equality in pay, we also have legislation which is designed to promote equality in recruitment for employment, training, advancement in the job, and other aspects of the world of work. An independent statutory body, the Employment Equality Agency, was set up in 1977 to monitor and review progress towards equal treatment for women and men, in matters of pay and employment opportunity. It also has an important enforcement role in this area.

The Agency also has the wider function of working towards the elimination of discrimination in employment on grounds of sex, or marital status, and to promote equality of opportunity in employment between men and women.

A recent OECD survey has shown that Ireland, in common with other countries has some elements of stereotyping in the school curricula for boys and girls. In second-level education girls are under-represented in the subjects which lay the groundwork for engineering and technological disciplines.

A more equal sharing of work inside and outside the home between men and women, could give a broader economic and social life for the family and a richer life for parents and children.

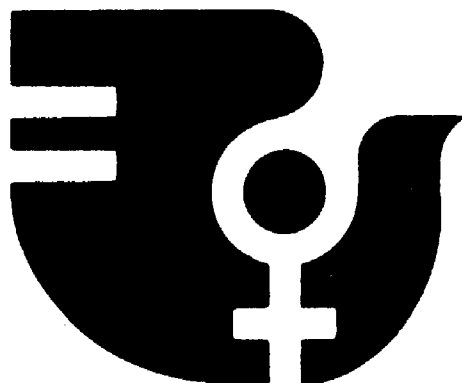
The key issue is how to reconcile the home and family roles with those of working life. The more widespread introduction of flexible working hours should be looked at in the context of the sharing of family responsibilities. This would help to resolve some of the problems caused by conflicting hours of work, and those of schools and child-care facilities.

I would like to emphasise that the Government of Ireland are committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

The views of women must be taken into account in a programme so vital to their well-being. Over thirty women's organisations in Ireland have joined into a confederation of organisations, the Council for the Status of Women.

There has been some progress in the area of family law. It is in this area that progress must be made in the next half of the decade.

In regard to the UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women my Government were in fact one of the Governments which voted for its adoption. It is intended to sign the Convention immediately we are in a position to implement fully the obligations contained therein.



Ireland declines to ratify Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.



Domitila de Chungara — unwittingly in the news. This mother of seven children of the Bolivian Andes, and militant women's activist led a protest march to the UN Conference following the fascist coup in her country. Danish police refused them entry and many had to receive hospital treatment due to the assault.



Elizabeth Palmer, Convenor of the Planning Committee of the Forum... "we wanted to give women an opportunity to exchange ideas on the things they had been doing and to find out how to do them better".

A MAJOR STEP towards the attainment of the goal of equal rights for women was taken on 18 December 1979, when the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The 30-article Convention sets out in legally binding form internationally accepted principles and measures to achieve equal rights for women everywhere. Its adoption climaxed consultations over a five-year period by various working groups, the Commission on the Status of Women and the General Assembly.

The comprehensive Convention reflects the depth of the exclusion and restriction practised against women solely on the basis of their sex, by calling for equal rights for women, regardless of their marital status, in all fields — political, economic, social, cultural and civil. It calls for national legislation to ban discrimination; recommends temporary special measures to speed equality in fact between men and women, and action to modify social and cultural patterns that perpetuate discrimination.

Other measures provide for equal rights for women in political and public life; equal access to education and the same choice of curricula; non-discrimination in employment and pay; and guarantees of job security in the event of marriage and maternity. The Convention underlines the equal responsibilities of men with women in the context of family life. It also stresses the social services needed — especially child-care facilities — for combining family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life.

Additional articles of the Convention call for non-discriminatory health services to women, including services related to family planning; and a legal capacity identical to that of men, with States parties agreeing that all contracts and other private instruments that restrict the legal capacity of women "shall be deemed null and void". Special attention is given to the problem of rural women.

The Convention sets up machinery for the international supervision of the obligations accepted by States. A committee of experts, to be elected by States parties and serving in a personal capacity, will consider the progress made.

Opened for signature on 1 March 1980, the Convention will enter into force after 20 States have consented to be bound by its provisions, either through ratification or accession.

The following countries signed the Convention at a ceremony held during the Copenhagen Conference: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Burundi, Byelorussia, Canada, Chile, China, Finland, France, Gabon, Federal Republic of Germany, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Buissau, Haiti, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Spain, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, USSR, United Republic of Tanzania, United States, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire and Zambia.

Countries which had signed the Convention previously are: Bolivia, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Honduras, Hungary, Panama, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal and Rwanda.

A number of families are having to be turned away from the present refuge run by the Belfast Women's Aid due to lack of accommodation. The figures are as follows:

August 1979	15
September 1979	18
October 1979	10
November 1979	12

Also, during the fortnight of 26 February 1980 to 8 March 1980 seven cases, all with children, were refused admission. These people came from all parts of the city — New Mosley, Silverstream, Ballysillan, Castlereagh and Ballymacarrett. It should be understood that the existing refuge is stretched to the limit both in terms of the numbers making use of it and the work load of the staff.

Belfast Women's Aid runs on two mornings per week a referral centre

which has only been open for a few months in the Whiterock Resource Centre where on average eight persons are seen. Usually battered wives do not necessarily want refuge accommodation but are more in need of a supportive service although they may eventually decide that they can take no more. It is also alleged that it is the practice of some Social Work staff to contact the husband involved prior to referring a battered wife to a refuge due to a lack of accommodation.

In an honest assessment of the extent of the problem it would be established that Social Workers put the greatest pressure on the Belfast Women's Aid refuge because of a lack of adequate temporary accommodation facilities provided by the statutory agency. Interviews are held with people before they are sent to Ashmore Street Hostel or Moyard Hostel (the two statutory

temporary accommodation hostels) which, it should be noted, are not specifically refuges for battered wives.

Within the last twelve months in an attempt to document the extent of the problem Belfast Women's Aid undertook a survey of all professionals who might have had contact with battered wives. However, as the Director of Social Services in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board did not permit Social Workers to take part in this survey, it was restricted to Health Visitors, General Practitioners and the Royal Ulster Constabulary and it was, therefore, neither comprehensive nor a sample survey. Nevertheless, even within its limitations, this survey revealed that those staff questioned between them came across some one hundred and thirty-seven cases of battered wives per month.

Thumbs down for Belfast Women's Aid

Belfast Women's Aid run a hostel for battered wives with premises supplied per Housing Aid association. Over the last two years they have fought a running battle with the Board to have a second premises opened to cater for the ever growing number of women forced out of the home by violence. But in a classical case of double-think the Board have refused their request: saying on the one hand that there is no need and in the same breath that cash limits restrict the finance available.

Out of the whole sordid story one fact emerges: that the Board are unable and unwilling to make provision themselves; that their reliance on voluntary groups will be sorely tested under the cuts... they will be the first to suffer from reduced revenue grants and that, consequently women desperately in need will either walk the streets or be forced back into the matrimonial home to be beaten again... even to death.

The N & W District Committee, a consumer group with the EHSSB

has this year taken up the case for a second refuge but to no avail. A member of the committee Mary McMahon writes:

"In the whole South Eastern Health Board Area — Belfast, Lisburn, Downpatrick — social services provision for battered wives, pregnant homeless women or other emergency cases is restricted to a hostel in Ashmore Street — the only occupied dwelling in streets of derelict houses sitting on the peace-line; a number of flats in the Moyard estate where the

care-takers are nuns; and access to some voluntary organisations, normally Catholic lay centres where the ethic is more 'preach and save souls' never mind the social problems. The battered wives refuge, whatever the short-comings of Womens Aid and I believe they are many, does offer a highly specialized area of emergency aid: it does provide safety, security; it does provide sisterhood and it does have access to specialist professional help for mother and child."

But its ability to carry out that role is dependent on having availability of space at all times and this just isn't so. On numerous occasions it has to decide between stretching its statutory limit on in-take or sending away a battered woman. In this day of people seeking easy victims for sacrifice on Thatcher's altar of cuts that is not an easy choice. Even worse though is the attitude of senior Social Services Management to the problem. They have no specialist provision. Indeed they went as far as to suggest that bed and breakfast accommodation might be the answer: that unfortunately isn't a sick joke, it is a fact. Bed and breakfast was proposed as a serious option for battered wives.

They refuse to fund those who do make specialist provision and they do so because they refuse to listen



to their social workers on the ground. Earlier this year Womens Aid attempted to do a survey into need, collating reports from all the agencies that might be aware of the extent of wife battering. The Director of Social Services refused to allow SS staff to answer the survey questions.

There is a failure to understand the problem that battered wives present. There are too many presumptions about it: that it is necessary; that it is tolerable; that it is just a manifestation of other difficulties; that it should be borne in the best interest of the family and keeping that family together. Much of this thinking stems from a cultural-religious doctrine that marriage is for better or worse, and a few digs in the face are just the worst aspect of it, to be soothed away by memories of happier days. And the SS are willing to use a few very rare cases of mis-use of refuges to condemn all clients.

What is needed is the political will and skilled persons to stand up and be counted.; an open recognition that wife battering isn't something to be kept behind closed doors and not spoken about in public; a recognition that battered women need refuge, need professional help, need sisterhood, need security and most of all need the opportunity to begin to pick up the threads of life again. Alone maybe, but with the knowledge that being battered won't be part of it.

It is not an easy choice: to decide after maybe years of marriage to pull up roots and go elsewhere. But is it made any easier by a community that pretends the cause doesn't exist and prefers that domestic disputes be stilled by sleight-of-hand, even to the point of death. There have been three deaths, all stemming from domestic violence in the last 12 months in Belfast alone. Countless women have been through the refuges. How many others never got the chance to get there because as one social worker said "We had no room for them so we just had to send them home again." To be battered.



Social Service cuts will mean that many women will be forced to return to the matrimonial home to be beaten again.



Three more American States must ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution if it is to be adopted. Their deadline for doing so is June 1982.

ERA's basic premise is that "sex" should not be a factor in determining the legal rights of men or women". It grows from the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women the vote, and has three sections:

1. *Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the US or by any State on account of sex.*
2. *The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.*
3. *This Amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.*

Simple enough, you might think. There can hardly be a problem in passing such basic equality legislation as this. You would be wrong. A strong campaign is being waged against ERA and a prime contender for the Presidency of the United States, Ronald Reagan, has publicly voiced his opposition to the amendment.

The struggle for ERA is 57 years old. In March 1972 Congress approved it overwhelmingly and sent it to the states for ratification. Initially it went through easily but since 1977 well-financed right wing

American elections — whoever wins women lose



Little reassurance for women in the November Presidential election. U.S. presidential candidate Ronald Reagan supported the ERA up to 1972, but his wife Nancy (background) is believed to be responsible for influencing him against women's issues.

forces have subsidized a huge war on ERA. Five states that previously ratified the Amendment have since rescinded their decision.

The most recent focus of attention has been Illinois, the only northern industrial state not to have ratified ERA as yet. A vote on the proposed amendment scheduled for May of this year was called off when sponsors determined that they were two votes short of the three fifths majority needed for ratification. (In most states only a simple majority is required for constitutional amendments).

An ultra right lobbying group, Moral Majority Inc., financed an advertisement in a major Chicago newspaper quoting the leader of the Stop ERA Campaign saying she "envision[s] a unisex society" if the ERA is passed. In the same ad, Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell wrote that he views the bill as "an attack upon the family and the bible". Falwell, incidentally, has set a goal of "eight million new Christian voters" for this year's election. His slogan "Get 'em saved, baptized and registered".

The diehards will not have things all their own way. Earlier this year between 50,000 and 75,000 ERA supporters held a rally in Chicago and over 300 organisations — including trade unions and civil rights organisations — were represented. Sponsors are still hopeful of getting the amendment ratified before the end of the year.

NEWSBRIEF

WOMEN STUDENTS

WHILE the numbers of women in higher education has gradually climbed to 42% of total student numbers, the distribution of female students among the different sectors of higher education remains in a disturbingly traditional pattern.

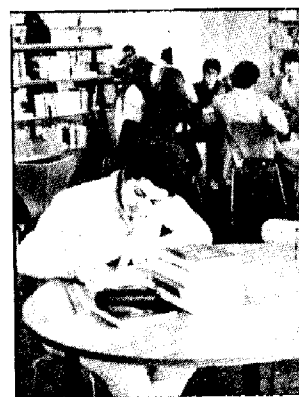
This much is evident from the Student Statistics published during the Summer by the Higher Education Authority. The Universities and the National Teacher Training

Colleges between them account for over 76% of all female students. Within the universities, women are heavily concentrated in the Arts and Social Science faculties, Arts for many of them being a prelude to a secondary teaching qualification. Science and Medicine (a comparatively recent trend) have sizeable numbers of female students but in the Engineering/Technology faculties they scarcely feature at all.

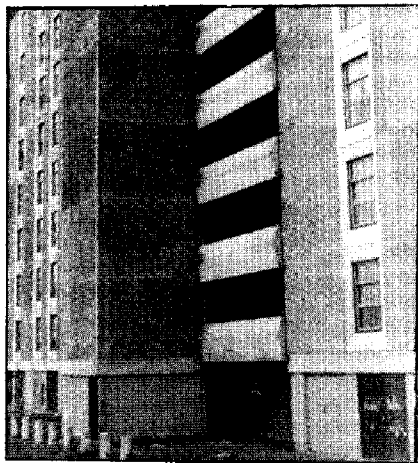
In the non-university technological sector (Regional Techs., Dublin VEC Colleges etc.) women form less than 30% of total student numbers and in some colleges the figure is considerably lower. An

earlier HEA Report (on the educational needs of the Dublin area) found for instance that only 9.2% of Dublin entrants to Bolton Street College of Technology in 1978/79 were female.

Given the current emphasis in Government policy on education to meet 'manpower shortages' in precisely these areas where women are most seriously under-represented, there is a genuine danger that women's share of higher education will actually *decline* in the near future if steps are not taken to overcome resistance — from whatever quarter — to women entering non-traditional spheres of study and work.



Female third-level students are still likely to end up in the traditional spheres of work.



High-rise flats....



...and children just don't mix.

Galway's big mistake

by Hilary Rock

On a fine day, as one approaches Galway from the countryside to the west, there is a glorious view of the hills of Clare, Galway Bay, Salthill beach, and, in the foreground, sticking up like several proverbial sore thumbs, are the flats of Ragoon Park.

In all, there are 276 flats, of which 20 are one-bedroomed, 40 are two-bedroomed and the remaining 216 have three bedrooms. They are four storeys high, without lifts, of course, and built mainly in separate blocks with eight flats per block.

The largest problem facing every family in the flats is that of the rent. Recent increases have led to problems for families all over the country, and Corporation tenants in Galway are no exception. However, in Ragoon the heating and hot water are supplied by the Corporation who impose an astronomical charge of £7.38 weekly (for a three-bedroomed flat) *in addition* to the rent.

Thus, a family with three children and an income of £70 a week pay

£8.87 rent, plus the £7.38 for heating, making £16.25 in all. The same family, if the husband is unemployed and receiving his basic allowance of £50.50 will have to hand over a total of £12.20 weekly.

This is an enormous amount out of the family budget, and I personally know of two families who have recently given up their flats and have gone to live in caravans, on the side of the road, because they were unable to cope with the recent increases.

The second major problem for Ragoon flat-dwellers is that of repairs. In a recent survey conducted by Sinn Féin The Workers' Party in Galway it was discovered that 57% of the flats suffered from dampness, and in most cases it was a severe problem. This has been an issue since the flats were built, and complaints have been many and vociferous, so the Corporation cannot claim to be unaware of it.

Other repairs also seem to take a long time. In the same survey it was found that 56% of the flats were

awaiting major repairs, and waiting periods for the repairs to be done were quoted in years rather than months. Notable among these were faulty windows, and Ragoon has the same type of "killer window" as Ballymun.

The third problem that families have to face is the total lack of amenities in the area. Although there is plenty of play space and four or five small playgrounds, there is also an unfenced main road which divides the estate in two. Therefore, mothers cannot allow small children outside to play at all. When the children are old enough to avoid the road they have to confront the hazard of broken glass which litters the ground like confetti in places, and is rarely, or ever, cleaned up.

One hopeful sign for the tenants of Ragoon is the re-establishment of the Tenants' Association which had become defunct over the past couple of years. Already they can claim one victory in getting the heating switched back on, and they are now looking seriously at the other problems which confront the tenants.

But at the end of the day there can only be one conclusion. These flats are not suitable for families because the attendant problems are too severe and have no easy solution. That the families themselves share this opinion can be demonstrated by the fact that the overwhelming majority put their names on the transfer list as soon as they move into the flats.

In our modern society with enormous pressure on land for building purposes around large centres of population, flat-dwelling has become an accepted way of life. In fact, in many cities, including Dublin, enormous sums of money are asked for the privilege of living in a modern apartment block. Flats do not have to be second-class homes for second-class citizens, although the suitability of them as homes for young children should be seriously questioned.

Our health page features contributions from a Doctor which are of particular concern to women

Women have known for many years that, to put it mildly, they are not at their best just before a period. But, because until this century there was a prohibition on discussing menstruation, along with other things related to sexuality, women felt isolated — not realising that they were not alone in many of their experiences.

Also there were so many myths about the menstrual cycle, equating it with the lunar month — and therefore with personality changes due to the moon's waxing and waning, and how this was supposed to influence behaviour (how many men even today don't secretly think that women are fickle, unstable, subject to fits and moods that can be called lunatic?); and also because until this century women were not really able to appreciate changes that could occur so dramatically before a period, and so dramatically disappear at the onset of menstruation — either because they were pregnant most of the time, or died in childbirth and didn't live long enough to experience them; for a variety of reasons this set of symptoms has only recently been recognised — and even now is subject to much controversy.

It was in 1931 that Franck first described a set of symptoms that could be termed a "syndrome" — of 'tension', headache, edema (fluid retention) and weight gain; occasionally more bizarre symptoms occurred, such as subcutaneous haemorrhages (bruising), epilepsy;

other symptoms include extreme fatigue, breast soreness, abdominal discomfort; changes in sexual appetite also occur such as disinterest in sex and lack of libido, but also the opposite — so that one early study described pre-menstrual 'nymphomania'!

And with the acceptance of 'sociological' medicine other factors emerged. In 1950 Morton did a prison study — showing that 62% of crimes of violence committed by women occurred in the pre-menstrual period, compared with only 2% in the first week after menstruation. Kathleen Dalton, who has pioneered much of the use of hormone treatment in the pre-menstrual syndrome, has shown that the suicide rate in women is seven times higher in the second half of a menstrual cycle; and that convictions for shop lifting (which is often associated with depression) are 30 times greater.

So what is the current view? Unfortunately many of the attitudes that also apply to the menopause are still prevalent: such as 'put up with it'; 'it's your age', 'it's natural'. Anthony Clare, a psychiatrist, in one study showed that whereas in 'psychotic' patients 80% experienced symptoms of the premenstrual syndrome, when patients complaining primarily of premenstrual symptoms were evaluated, there was no correlation with either psychoses or neuroses; an important distinction, for it does seem to imply perhaps an underlying biochemical change.

And indeed this assumption influences the modern approach to treatment; for there is much evidence implicating a hormonal basis: the fact that the syndrome either starts at puberty, or frequently after childbirth — although the syndrome can occur at any age, it tends to occur in the late thirties, and can often be dated quite dramatically from the birth of a particular child; and the fact that the symptoms disappear at menstruation or during pregnancy. As well there is the extreme regularity of the symptoms — each person seems to have their own 'clock', and the fact that so many people obtain relief on the combined contraceptive pill, which acts by mimicking a pregnancy.

Hormones, or internal secretions in the body, affect not only the chemical and biological changes that occur, but also our moods and emotions: they control and keep in fine balance our energy source, glucose. Whereas everyone knows the importance of the secretion of the pancreas, insulin, in controlling sugar metabolism, perhaps we don't all realise that other hormones also play a part here.

The female sex hormones also play a part. In situations of stress these female hormones, which are controlled from an area in the brain, may also cease to function in the normal way. There are many instances for example of menstruation ceasing due to anxiety — change of job — worry; the extreme being the concentration

A typical advertisement — but for many women pills alone won't help.



Is every month going to be as difficult?

camp, where often menstruation ceased for years. It is as if the body says *survival* is the most important function at the moment. And in the premenstrual syndrome, whereas sometimes a hormonal balance may be easily detectable, this may not always be so.

Many women feel much more hungry premenstrually, and over eat. There is in fact evidence that blood sugar may be lowered at this time.

Whereas Katherine Dalton believes that the hormone progesterone, the hormone of the second half of the menstrual cycle, is deficient, this has only been shown to be so chemically in about 30% of cases — but often progesterone may alleviate symptoms in those who do not have a lowered progesterone level. Other workers believe that the hormone controlling salt and water may be of more importance — for while oestrogen, the female hormone of the first half of the menstrual cycle,

also influences salt and water, this is not its main function.

Many workers have found that a hormone secreted from the pituitary gland, in the base of the skull, and which acts on the breasts, producing milk secretion, is raised in the premenstrual syndrome. And an excess of oestrogen (either absolute, or relative to progesterone) may also influence the absorption and metabolism of pyridoxine, or Vitamin B6. This is an essential enzyme in a brain neurotransmitter, and a pyridoxine deficiency may lead to depression.

So the answer is not a simple one. Many women may be helped with pyridoxine alone; many need progesterone; others may need yet other hormones to redress the balance. Many women benefit from 'mimicking a pregnancy' — the combined contraceptive pill. The important thing is that many workers now recognise this as a real syndrome — even though we don't have all the answers, or a single 'cure'.

WORLD BRIEFS

WOMEN MINERS



THERE are over 2,500 women in the underground mining workforce in the United States. But they still constitute only a little over 1% of the workforce. There is evidence of widespread discrimination — against women who are trying to get hired and reports of sexual harassment in the mines continue.

To respond to the changing reality of both sexes working in the mines the Coal Employment Project has developed a non-sexist training programme for new miners.

Change in French Rape Laws

HEAVIER penalties will be imposed for the crime of rape in the wake of a recent amendment to the French Criminal Code.

The French Chamber of Deputies voted unanimously for the amendment, which defines rape as "any act of sexual penetration of any nature committed or attempted on another's person by violence, force or surprise". Rape is to be punishable by ten to twenty years criminal seclusion or life imprisonment in the case of collective rape or where there are aggravating circumstances.

As regards public hearing of rape trials, the Court of Assizes is no longer entitled to order a case to be heard *in camera* if the victim objects. The victim's name cannot be mentioned by the press "unless the victim has given written consent".

AFRICAN CONGRESS



A young South African girl helps her friend who has been shot in the stomach by the police during a peaceful demonstration.

THE first ever African Women Workers Conference organised by the International Metalworkers Federation was held in Nairobi, Kenya in early August. Nearly 50 million of Africa's 200 million women are 'economically active'. In other words they work for a wage.

However, according to Ilda Simona, Head of the IMF Women's Department most of them are employed in unskilled and poorly paid jobs. "In most African countries women find it difficult to obtain regular employment. Frequently they are taken on as casual workers, and, because of their extreme poverty, have to accept underpaid jobs in arduous and unhealthy conditions. They also shoulder the main burden of providing for and looking after the family."

Women trade unionists from a number of countries attended the Conference and apart from discussing problems and experiences, they laid down goals to be included,

A Way of Life

by Alan Wadforth

Mrs Julie Campbell, nee Slane
Sat staring at the wall
Ironically, noticed it needed a coat of
paint,
Her eye wandered to the corner of the
room
A pile of dirty washing
Too late all too soon,
Wondering where it all began
An old memory
A child with a doll and pram.

How that child had grown
Toy dolls and dressing up
To buying make-up of her own,
Long days of dreams and school
O level in domestic science
A boy friend's name scratched on a rule,
A perfect girl in a perfect life
Everyone told her
She would make a perfect wife,

The Beatles and the Rolling Stones
Coffee bars
Late night discos,
Have to stay out in front
In the cattle market stakes,
Collect the ultimate prize
Ever lasting love
In the back of a second hand car,

The job in an agency
Freedom bell at five
And a monthly salary,
Reflections of a glossy magazine
The right clothes and make-up
Body deodorised thoroughly,
Believing the advertising signs
A perfect woman
In a perfect time,

Mrs Campbell smiled
Said "A woman is just a woman
At any time",
The manilla envelopes and bills
Lay where she had dropped them
At her feet,
She was still holding the photo
Of the one who said
He would always love her,

Memories of sunny days
Long walks
And new plans made,
Wool carpets, white walls
Habitat furniture
Two boys and a girl,
Save for a mortgage
Golden rings
And blissful marriage.

The very first flat
Unfurnished
And damp,
Of nights toiled in love
At the time
It seemed enough,
The very first surprise
The wanted and unwanted
The birth of a child,

Mrs Campbell tore the photo in two
Stood up
And left the room,
She lay down on the settee
Stared absently
At the blank T.V.,
It had not lasted long
A year together
Promises broken one by one,

It was a struggle on one wage
He started to drink
The flat became a cage,
A brief return to love
A second child
Proved more than enough,
Alone day and night
A child's conversation
Was little respite,

A council house promised hope
A third child
Another knot in the rope,
Life an endless bore
Of cooking, cleaning, washing and
The Saturday night chore,
No holidays, no pay or rights
Twenty-four hours a day
For life,

The arguments became more severe
No clothes for the children
No shortage of beer,
When he slammed the door and walked
out
She washed nappies and floors
And put the children to bed for the night,
She had no way of knowing
When he finally returned
If he would hit her or say sorry.

The divorce was inevitable
Compared to the marriage
It wasn't painful,
He saw the children once a week
Then monthly

And the last time was Xmas eve,
He never left any money
After a court case
Existence on social security,

Mrs Campbell lit a cigarette
She had bought a packet
With the last of the rent
They'd had steak for tea
And a treat for the children
Strawberries and cream,
She recalled her final attempt
To give some purpose
To a futile existence,

Degraded at the Unislim class
Rightly decided
It was no disgrace being a little fat,
Caught working and drawing the dole
They stopped her money
Threatened to put the children in a home,
Fell behind with the rent and H.P.
The bailiffs came
Left with a three piece suite,

And of the three men she had met
All of them left
When they couldn't get her to bed,
Being divorced and just over thirty
Did not get her invites
To the neighbours party,
No point in having a perm done
Solace becomes
T.V. and Valium

The children were growing older
That did not make them
Any easier to look after,
See them off to school
Clean the house
Go shopping for food,
Give them their tea
Help with the homework
Go to bed and sleep,

The routine a silent roar
Take the tablets
Ask the doctor for more,
A little something to help her sleep
With no one to talk to
You forget how to speak,
Utterly and totally alone
Children are warders
The prison is home,

Mrs Julie Campbell, nee Slane
Closed her eyes
She did not feel any pain,
Life had given her no choice
We trained her to be a woman
No opportunity for anything else,
She did not commit any crime
Just being tired of being a woman
All of the time.

What makes a woman a prostitute?

PROSTITUTES — OUR LIFE. Edited by Calude Jaget. Published by Falling Wall Press. Paperback £4.20p.

Ita and Jack Gannon review a unique book which tells the truth about prostitution as told by the experts — prostitutes themselves.

When a prostitute spoke at a meeting in Galway recently, a man in the audience said that, like a lot of people, he previously had had some weird ideas about prostitutes. He now realised, having heard her, she was "just another human being".

This book should have the same effect on readers. Six French prostitutes speak openly about their lives, their fears and their desires.

They speak about the hypocrisy in our society. They say women don't want to know them, and a lot of "respectable" men pretend not to know them. They feel that because society regards them as the lowest of the low, people can mistreat them without being answerable to the law. They think that even the murder of a prostitute is not regarded as seriously as that of another woman.

The case they make is very strong. They leave little room for doubting that prostitutes are the most exploited women in society.

Many people regard prostitutes as being the 'lowest of the low'. Even the murder of a prostitute is not regarded as seriously as that of another woman.



However, the book is extraordinarily silent on the culpability of the client. Police, law, men in general and society in general are criticized heavily. But like our present Victorian legislation which blames the prostitutes and ignores the client, this book soft-pedals on the men who benefit most immediately from the exploitation of prostitutes.

The reason for this seems to be to escape one logical way of fighting prostitution. Prosecute clients! But the problem the authors of the book would have in calling for legislation against clients goes deeper than the brief references to prostitution as a necessary therapy for men.

The nub of their problem is the trust they place in the liberal ethic. In a nutshell they believe that a complete absence of law from the area will lead to an improvement of the prostitutes' conditions, and thereby to a condition in which women may choose to be or not to be, part of what is (they say) the best paid woman's job.

Few people with an understanding of the social forces that operate in our society could believe in such a naïve view of how the world works. Further, they would be asking the opponents of prostitution to disarm themselves to an unusual degree if they suggested that law be discarded in this case as a way of fighting exploitation.

The book makes the point that as the law works at present it usually harasses prostitutes without doing good to anyone.

But surely the main reason for the law's ineffectiveness is that the possibility of eliminating prostitution altogether is an idea that is only lately beginning to gain some support? Until now prostitution was regarded generally as an eternal institution. Such a view reflected male interest in a male dominated society.

Women's politics is changing all that. At a time of growing strength the task for male and female progressives is to fight, with every tool available, the institution that this book shows most clearly to be savagely degrading to women.

The strength of the book is the very valuable insights into the minds of prostitutes. Clearly prostitutes feel less degraded and strengthen themselves against exploitation by documenting their feelings.

The weakness of the book is its failure to convince that a laissez-faire policy is the best way forward.

Prostitution — the oldest male crime? by Ita & Jack Gannon is now on sale at £1.00 from JIG publications, PO Box 1076, 8 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1, or local bookshops. All proceeds go to the Campaign for a Women's Centre.

Womens View will be reviewing it next issue.

Books

SAIDIE PATTERSON *Irish Peacemaker* by David Bleakley. Publ. by Blackstaff Press. P/b £4.95p.

YOU could be forgiven if you dismissed this book out of hand after a look at title and cover. After all, what's another 'peace-woman'. However in retrospect I would recommend struggling through the mire of sentimentality in which David Bleakley drenches the book, because Saidie Patterson's life from her birth in 1904 on the Woodvale Road, Belfast, tells a lot more about the times in Belfast than about Saidie, though I'm sure this isn't what Bleakley intended.

The account of her early childhood in poverty-stricken Belfast at the beginning of this century is particularly illuminating on the position of women in the heart of Protestant working class Belfast. Saidie's own sentimentality in reminiscing cannot diminish the picture of the special hardship suffered by women in the disastrous social and economic conditions of the time.

In 1920 Saidie Patterson started work in W. Ewart and Co., the biggest and most conservative in the textile industry. The story behind Saidie's success in organizing the women linen workers is really inspiring. At a time of widespread unemployment and economic



Saidie Patterson — woman extraordinary.

gloom any trade union activity is difficult but for Saidie to organise women workers was revolutionary. It was not surprising that the male trade union leadership recognised her abilities, especially after the strike of 1940, and offered a full time trade union position.

In the 1940s Saidie also became very involved in the Standing Conference of Women's Organizations of Northern Ireland. It's interesting to read of the issues this federation of women's groups campaigned on in the 40s and how relevant they still are in Northern Ireland today, showing how little the Government has actually

done on issues such as the disastrously high child and infant mortality rate in Northern Ireland. TB and social welfare benefits were more successful areas of campaign work for the women's organizations.

As a result of this involvement in community affairs Saidie Patterson recognised the need for massive and radical social and political reform, and following a socialist Christian philosophy became an active member of the N.I. Labour Party working in Bob Getwood's campaign of 1945 and Vivian Simpson's in 1958. Both campaigns were fought on the 'bread and butter' campaigns on which Saidie flourished.

Although David Bleakley attempts to convince the reader that Saidie never became disillusioned with party politics, he doesn't succeed. Certainly there is nothing in his story of Saidie's life through the 60s and 70s to suggest that she continued in the militant fashion which her political conviction of the first fifty years of her life reflected. The last half of the book is indeed a let-down. David Bleakley's superlative commentary and exaggerated compliments on Saidie's work as the token

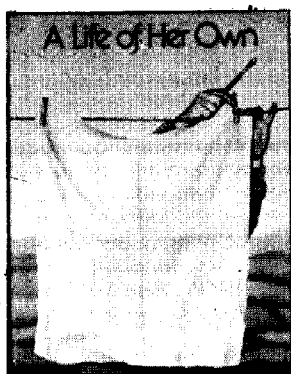
'prod peace person' are unbearable.

The book finishes with extracts from various speeches made by Saidie during the 70s, including an International Women's Year Message, 1975. The only humorous part of the book I found, is the chapter dealing with 'The Sayings of Saidie'. It's hard to believe that someone who achieved so much for women in the 30s and 40s could utter such tripe — I'm tempted to believe these are actually David's but then they are consistent with Saidie's later meandering and philosophising.

There's no doubt that the success of the book — in fact its saving grace — is the meticulous detail with which Saidie Patterson recounts her early life. Illuminating anecdotes of these early years of her life are enriched with historical reproductions of trade union leaflets and there's even a reproduction of the 'Rules and Regulations to be observed by J. Robb & Co's. Assistants, 1874'.

For this alone the book's worth getting and D. Bleakley is worth suffering.

CHRISTINE DONAGHY



From A LIFE OF HER OWN — a selection of short stories by Maeve Kelly. Paperback. (Poolbeg Press) Great value at £1.65p.

WHEN the baby was born he suggested she go for the blessing. What blessing, she asked. He said his mother had done it after all the children. The Blessed Virgin did it. Did she not know about the Feast of the Purification? He remembered then that there was such a feast day but she had not understood its significance. She had simply thought it was another Jewish custom transferred into Christianity. Don't pull that education muck on me, he said. She protested that she did not need to be purified for having a baby. That was going too far. The baby was beautiful, a

beautiful boy, just what he wanted. Did he think the baby was soiled too? He got angry and said she was always arguing and she was to do what she was told, or by God she'd hear about it from him, it was the custom and she wasn't going to make a holy show of him. So she went. Up after Mass to the altar in front of everyone to be purified. Why don't men get purified, she wondered. It's their seed. And why doesn't a woman give me the blessing, she wondered, just for a change. Of course it is only a custom, she consoled herself. It's only a religious performance.

Another Paterson

Thirty years before Saidie Patterson was born a namesake of hers had already earned for herself the title of pioneer of trade unionism.

EMMA PATERSON was the first woman to attend the T.U. Congress as a delegate over one hundred years ago in 1875. Her story is told by Harold Goldman and published by Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.

EMMA PATERSON (She led women into a man's world) Hardback. Price £2.25p.



**MARIA
RUTKIEWICZ**

Maria gave birth to twins in Paviak prison in Warsaw on 16 February 1944. She was in an extraordinary position. She had been tortured and beaten after her arrest as a wireless operator in the resistance and daily she waited for her death sentence to be carried out.

Maria had been an activist in the

Communist party from an early age. Her ideals and those of the Polish Communist party were diametrically opposed to Nazism, and after the siege of Warsaw in 1939, Maria fled to Russian occupied Poland. After the Germans invaded Russia in 1941 she made her way to Moscow to meet other members of the party who formed a partisan group called the

Initiative Team. Eleven of them, including Maria, were parachuted back into Warsaw.

Though she was unexpectedly released from Paviak on the eve of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 her mother and two of her brothers had been killed. Her husband had died at the end of the war after nearly two years in Auschwitz.

MARY LINDELL

Born in 1894 in England, Mary Lindell always wanted to fight. Called the Bébé Anglaise by the French, Mary Lindell was twice reported as killed, the first time in 1914-18 War when her mother read of her death in France on a newspaper stand in London, and again in 1944 when notices appeared on the streets of Paris declaring that she had been shot by the Nazis.

France was divided into two territories after Petain signed an Armistice with Hitler in 1940 and Mary Lindell soon formed a series of escape lines to help soldiers and airmen returning to England.

HILTGUNT ZASSENHAUS



A schoolgirl of 17 when Hitler came to power in 1933, from the moment her teacher came into the classroom and told the class to say Heil Hitler, Hiltgunt maintained her principles. For the next twelve years she resisted

Hitler's Nazism, refused to accept it and was never deceived by it.

She knew she could not rely on her fellow countrymen to overthrow Hitler. In 1943 the RAF's massive bombing raid almost wiped out Hamburg but Hiltgunt realised that is was the only way to end the war. "We really had to pray for our own demise because only that would bring the end of Hitler.

SIGRID LUND

A pacifist all her life, the Nazi Occupation represented a special challenge to Sigrid Lund. She soon became involved in a wide range of resistance activities from underground newspapers to distributing money to the families of victims of the Gestapo and helping refugees across the border to neutral Sweden.



Peter Morley's and Kevin Sim's 'Women of Courage' was screened on HTV/UTV in late July and throughout August. In this documentary series four outstanding women of different nationalities who had risked their lives in the Resistance during World War II, recalled their personal experience. Their commitment to fight the Nazis took different forms and was political rather than religious only in the case of the communist Pole.

It led them and their relatives and friends into situations of extreme hardship, torture, solitary confinement and concentration camps. In the end they found themselves amongst the few who survived Nazi persecution against all odds.

Each woman told her story in the most dignified way, enough time had passed for

them to be able to look back with a certain mature detachment, and yet one could detect a subdued embarrassment in their faces when reminiscing on their own role in the Resistance.

Once again I felt ill at ease watching this type of documentary. I don't want to pick holes in this particular series or go into the very different personalities and lives of these remarkable women. Instead I would rather like to ask the pedantic, but necessary question, why are these documentaries made?

Is it to pay tribute to people, who were in the Resistance, or is it to bring history to life on Television, and can the two motives be successfully combined in this type of programme? I find it too reminiscent of Eamon Andrew's tearjerker 'This is your life', a relentless journey

into sentimentality, the very antithesis of life itself.

People talking about their own acts of courage seem to reduce them to a mere sequence of events. Out of necessity these programmes dwell on too much detail, propped up by 'artistic' shots of relevant locations, which are not really interesting in themselves, and alternating with snippets of documentary film, too short to be anything but frustrating.

Perhaps the personal story of people who fought in the Resistance can be more effectively portrayed by actors, who do not carry the emotional burden of their experience. In a dramatisation the essence of a story can be brought out more forcefully than in the literal process of piecing together a sequence of events.

In the Federal Republic of Germany many carefully researched TV documentaries about World War II and the Resistance have been shown on Television. People who survived concentration camps were interviewed, set against documentary film material.

On the whole these programmes did not lack sensitivity and insight.

But it was not until the Hollywood blockbuster 'Holocaust' was shown that history came to life. It sparked off a huge debate and for the first time since the War the German people were shocked into a confrontation with their own history.

CHARLOTTE SCHULENBURG

UK POVERTY

WITHOUT married women's wages, almost 2,500,000 UK families could be living below the poverty line. This is one of the principle findings of a recently published report "Low Pay and Family Poverty".

Nearly half of all married women in the UK now go out to work, and if they didn't, the number of families with incomes below subsistence level would treble.

"There has been a dramatic change in the face of poverty" says Chris Pond, co-author of the report. "Low pay is becoming a major cause of poverty, and that goes against the received wisdom that if you have got a job you're O.K."

The report argues that more and more families will suffer if the Tories continue to push policies based on the idea that a woman's place is in the home — that families should be solely supported by one male breadwinner.

The report supports the view that women should be able to go out to work and proposes policies which would make it easier for them to do so. These include improvements in maternity leave, in pay and conditions and statutory child care provision for pre-school and school age children.

Registered unemployment among women in the UK however is now growing twice as fast as among men. And many married women out of work do not bother to register, as they cannot claim supplementary benefit.

GMWU equal rights

ONE of Britain's biggest unions — the General and Municipal Workers Union — has decided to establish equal rights advisory committees within each region and at national level to encourage women to participate in the unions' affairs and to fight for their rights at their place of work.

The committees will have the task of identifying discrimination and advising on action. They will also assist in the development of union policy on equal rights.

One parent families



The number of one-parent families in Britain is growing at the rate of 6% per year.

ONE family in eight in Britain is now a one-parent family. In parts of London the proportion is nearly one in three; in Manchester, one in four and in Liverpool and Birmingham nearly one in five.

These figures were released in July by the National Council for One-Parent Families, who launched a blistering attack on the economic policies of the Tory government. These policies were devastating and demoralising one-parent families, according to the group's director. Tory cuts in local authority funding meant "less housing for the homeless, less daycare for those in work, and worse social services for those in trouble".

Six years ago the Finer Report made 230 recommendations on one-parent families. During 16 months in office, Margaret Thatcher's Tory government has implemented only two of these and has accepted the rejection of 115 others.

Yet the number of one-parent families in Britain has grown at about 6% per year since 1971. This means that in 1980 there are 920,000 one-parent families bringing up over 1½ million children.

Enforced sterilisation

THERE are about 100,000 native American women of child-bearing age in the USA. From the statistics available it seems that as many as 42% may have been sterilised over the last seven years or so — largely without their informed consent.

These figures came from investigations carried out by Native people themselves. Dr. Connie Uri, a Choctaw and Cherokee Indian, has been researching the matter since 1972 and was instrumental in having a Congressional investigation into the matter. She estimates that between 1972 and 1975 the number of women sterilised by the Indian Health Service alone was 25,000.

Many of these sterilisations were in violation of the US Health Department guidelines. Women have been told that the operation is reversible; hysterectomies have been performed unnecessarily; relatives have been persuaded to sign consent forms immediately after childbirth (when the woman is still drugged) by being told further childbearing would be a risk to the woman's health; threats of losing welfare payments or even children have been used; girls of 15 or 16 have been sterilised.

It is little wonder that many Native people see this as a method of genocide, particularly since the incidence of sterilisation (in the same type of dubious circumstances) is similarly high among US Blacks, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans.

Women at work

IF work done by women at home contributes 40% of a country's national income, are they paid 40% of the wages? The answer of course, is no.

According to the International Labour Organisation, two thirds of all working hours are performed by women. But only one tenth of the world's income is received by women and only one-hundredth of the world's property is owned by women.

South Africa Women's Day

AUGUST 9 was South African Women's Day. It commemorated the two magnificent demonstrations in 1955 and 1956 when thousands of black women converged on Government Buildings, Pretoria, protesting against the extension of the pass law system to women. For the occasion they created a new song, addressed to the then Prime Minister:

"Strydom, Now you have touched the women you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed."

Dorothy Nyembe, the woman who led the contingent of African women from Natal all the way to Pretoria in 1956, has been a prisoner in apartheid jails for over ten years now.

Having previously served a short sentence of three years, and having been held in solitary confinement for five months during the 1960 state of emergency, she was in 1969 convicted under the notorious Terrorism Act, and sentenced to 15 years. Under South African prison regulations, those jailed for 'political offences' serve every day of their sentences: Dorothy will not be released until 1984, by which time she will be 54 years old.



Int. Labour Organisation figures show that work done by women at home contributes 40% of a country's national income.



DIVORCE IN SPAIN

DIVORCE may soon be legalised in Spain, if a Bill currently under debate in the Spanish Parliament is passed. Spain is the only country in western Europe — apart from Ireland — where divorce is still banned.

The new law would permit divorce in cases of "irremedial conjugal failure" and after previous legal separation of two to four years. Grounds for divorce include alcoholism, drug addiction, madness and jail terms of more than six years. Where there is no culpability, divorce would not be permitted.

Right-wing opponents of the Bill have covered Madrid with anti-divorce graffiti. They claim the Bill is a threat to family life and to the health of Spanish society.

Criticisms of the Bill have also been voiced by the powerful left-wing opposition. The Communist Party and the Socialist Party consider the Bill to be too conservative and wish to include other factors e.g. mutual consent, as a ground for divorce.

The Catholic Church in Spain has been less vocal in the divorce controversy than was the Italian Church in similar circumstances ten years ago. Nonetheless it has been made clear that the Church is opposed to divorce, no matter how restrictive the Bill.

Polls show that the vast majority of Spaniards favour ending the ban on divorce which has operated since 1939 when Franco crushed the Spanish Republic.

GERMAN CALL FOR EQUALITY AGENCY

MANY women's organisations in West Germany are dissatisfied with the existing bill on equality of status for men and women at work. Earlier this year they contributed to a public hearing organised by the parliamentary committee on work and social affairs.

The main fault they see in the bill is that it provides no sanctions against employers who fail to comply with the law. There is an obvious need for a monitoring body to ensure that the law is being enforced and this body must have the power to intervene on behalf of women whose rights have not been respected.

The principle of equality between men and women has, for over 30 years, been proclaimed by the W.German constitution, but without a watchdog body and without sanctions it is virtually impossible to ensure that this is upheld in practice.



Following their military victory Nicaraguan women now face an even tougher battle.

Nicaraguan Literacy Appeal

FOLLOWING talks between representatives of the International Affairs Bureau of Sinn Féin The Workers' Party and representatives of the Government of Nicaragua, an urgent appeal was made to our Party to help in the reconstruction of that country, recently liberated after 43 years of right-wing Dictatorship.

The Party, maintaining its tradition of international solidarity, has launched a fund aimed at fighting illiteracy in free Nicaragua. Nicaraguan Government representatives have stressed that the defeat of illiteracy, a key weapon used by the Somoza dictatorship to stifle the advance of the people, is of central importance to the further success of the revolution.

That revolution, which swept away the oppression of so many years in 52 days of bravery, has become a symbol for socialists and anti-imperialists the world over.

Donations to the Nicaraguan Literacy Appeal Fund should be sent to: Nicaragua, International Affairs Bureau, Sinn Féin The Workers' Party, 30 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1. All donations will be acknowledged.

Nicaragua

THE women of Nicaragua have long been active participants in the Revolution of their country.

During the long struggle against Somoza, Sandinista women took up arms and fought side by side with the men until victory was won. One third of the Sandinista army was made up of women, many of them commanding officers.

The women are conscious that if they want the revolution to move toward more equal social forms this change can only be made by the change in attitude of the women towards organizing, training and educating themselves. The first step for this training is for all Nicaraguan women to learn how to read and write.

One of the most important objectives is to organize women peasants. AMNLAE has been quite successful at achieving this: The National Assembly for Peasant Women met last December and more than 700 peasant women came together, representing many different rural communities never before organized.



FRENCH TAX LAW DISCRIMINATION

TAXATION of married couples was the subject of a recent action at Liège court of appeal. In dispute was Article 73 of the tax code which lumps together the earnings of husband and wife for tax purposes.

The plaintiff's advocates pleaded that this Article was unconstitutional and contrary to law and order. "It penalizes marriage and the work done by a married woman. It respects neither the equality of married people nor the equality of the sexes. Tax law is in conflict with the evolution of civil law and women's rights..."

The plaintiff lost the case but has stated his determination to take it to higher courts.

HELEN, 75 FACES NEW BANNING ORDER

ON 25 June Helen Joseph was served with a new banning order by the racist South African regime. The Order prevents her from attending political gatherings and addressing meetings for two years.

This is the fourth ban imposed on Mrs. Joseph who is now 75 years old. She was first banned in 1957. In 1962 she became the first person to be placed under house arrest, and in 1971 the last ban was lifted after she underwent a major operation.

Since 1971 Helen has been able to address meetings in various parts of South Africa, although as a 'listed Communist' she could not be quoted. In the weeks before this latest ban she travelled from her Johannesburg home to speak at meetings in Cape Town, Durban and elsewhere in connection with the schools boycott, the Release Mandela Campaign and the detention of political activists.

Sisterwrite catalogue 1979/80

Do you find it difficult to get hold of new feminist books? Ireland still doesn't have a shop specialising in women's books, but London's feminist bookshop Sisterwrite might be able to help out.

They have brought out a mail order catalogue of books that they either stock or can order. About 90 pages of titles cover a wide range of topics. It's 85p (sterling) from Sisterwrite, 190 Upper Street, London N1, England.

Any of the titles can be ordered through local bookshops here at home.

CREDIT: Pics. by Derek Spiers (IFL Report). Inez McCormack (Pg.2). ICTU Executive (Pg.11). Divorce Public Meeting (Pg.12).

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