

Sex, Class & womens' oppression

Articles from Workers Solidarity

PDF ed. 2001

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Equality... for some women!

Originally published in Workers Solidarity No. 35 (1992)

LAST SEPTEMBER the Bank of Ireland was, according to the 'Irish Times', 'basking in an unadulterated glow of approval' from the Employment Equality Agency, the Council of Status for Women and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Womens Rights among others. What the Bank of Ireland had so progressively managed to do was to provide one creche which will cater for up to 45 children.

The Bank of Ireland employs 11,600 people. However, at £55 a week the centre is obviously aimed at helping only a very small section of the workforce. As Bertie Ahern said, it did not make sense having highly and expensively qualified women leaving the workforce because of lack of childcare facilities. However, it does make sense, to industry, to employ over 50% of the entire workforce having either low pay or no security of employment (or both).

It isn't sexism that holds us in the worse paid jobs but rather the economic reality of the capitalism system. To survive in the market place any company has to be competitive, to maximise profits. With wages accounting for 80% of the outgoings in most business, employing the cheapest labour makes good sense. In todays society, creches and child-care are a luxury that the profit motive can rarely afford. To women who accept this system, the provision of expensive inadequate child care is a victory, while the plight of ordinary women workers isn't worth mentioning.

But there is a general feeling that we are now living in a post-feminist world. Women may not be quite equal to men, but the principle of equality has been widely accepted and liberation is only a matter of waiting. We are allowed to vote, to drink in pubs and to work outside marriage. Our right to an equal education system and an equal workplace is enshrined in law. We have a women president.

In Ireland there is now a wide acceptance that women have the right to participate in society on an equal basis with men. However, despite this change in hearts and minds, life on the ground for most women today, is quite similar to those of forty years ago. Though we may not, in general, have the same sexist morality to put up with; economically we are still second class citizens.

For the majority of us, our right to choose the way of life we wish to lead is as limited as it has always been. Rather than being liberated, we are still tied, by virtue of our poor wage earning abilities, to the home and family. A study recently published in *Fortune* magazine indicated that the leading occupations for women in 1990 weren't so different from the top jobs for 1940 (see table). The average hourly earnings of woman are still 68% of those of men. In hard cash terms, men earn on average, £1.83 more per hour than women do.

So, what are the problems facing women in the workforce? The answer you'll get to

that question, will depend very much on who you are talking to. For the last six years, Social and Community Planing Research, a non-profit making institute, has been surveying British social attitudes to everything from should revolutionaries be allowed to have public meetings (only 48% said yes) to should the tax system be changed. Looking at the recently published 1991 survey, it becomes obvious that the key factor preventing women from working is children; i.e. lack of nursery places, lack of creches at work and "guilt at leaving the care of children to others".

It noted that while 51% of those surveyed would have thought a work-place nursery suitable for the care of their children, none of the sample surveyed had access to such a service. Overwhelmingly, children were cared for by a close relative.

On the other hand, the *Financial Times*, in a major article on women managers cited the main problems for women going into business as confidence, training and expertise, credibility and networks. For women at these higher levels, childcare



Workers Solidarity Movement

provision is not a key problem, as they can afford to hire other women to stay at home so they are freed to go out and work. So when women managers seek to overcome sexism, provision of free 24 hour childcare is not a priority. Women may not be equal to men in today's society, but undoubtedly some women are more equal than others.

It is certainly true that there are very few women managers, however this is just a symptom of the general situation of women as a whole, not a cause. The installation of women at the top of a profession won't change the basic ground rules by which society is run. Those women at the top may suffer sexism from their colleagues. They may be ostracised from the old boys network and may find it more difficult to succeed.

However, they also have an interest in seeing the system continue. Their high incomes, standard of living and position in society is dependant on them being on the top of the pile. So while they may lobby on 'safe' issues that affect most women, such as rape and domestic violence, when it comes to issues that question the way society is run and thus threaten their position, sisterhood quickly breaks down.

How many of the Irish women TD's, who support abortion information are willing to publicly say so? On the one hand they may be members of the womens movement while on the other protecting their seat is more important. Mary Robinson may be a women, but she didn't show much sisterhood or solidarity when she signed into law the new social welfare regulations on cohabiting couples. This provision limits couples to 80% of the ben-

efit that two single people receive. Normally the women is the partner who receives the lower income.

Women will remain as second class citizens as long as they are relegated to an inferior position in the work force. They are now in that position because to the

Fortune Magazine Table	
1990	1940
1. Secretary	1. Servant
2. Cashier	2. Secretary
3. Bookkeeper	3. Teacher
4. Nurse	4. Clerical worker
5. Nursing aide	5. Sales worker
6. Teacher	6. Factory worker
7. Waitress	7. Bookkeeper
8. Sales Worker	8. Waitress
9. Child care	9. Housekeeper
10. Cook	10. Nurse

bosses they are an unstable workforce, likely to want pregnancy leave, likely to come in late if a child is sick, likely to require a creche or want to work part time. It is because men in society are seen as the breadwinner that they have more secure, more dependable jobs.

It's a vicious circle, because men are in reality better paid, it makes more sense within the family to assign the role of main earner to the male and housework to the female. The only way to permanently get out out of the circle is to change the system. In a society run for profit women loose out, in a society run for need, womens

fertility is no longer a limiting factor.

Women can of course win gains at the moment. In Ireland women are no longer forced to stop working on marriage, though lack of child care can make it impossible to continue. Attitudes have changed considerably in the last thirty years. Most importantly, the position of women is now an issue.

Where as before it was only addressed by the few socialist or womens groups, now it's taken up by the mainstream media, by chat shows and newspaper articles. However, any of our new freedoms are very much dependant on the economic conditions of the day. So, while in the affluent 1960's British women won limited access to abortion (used by thousands of Irish women), now in recession those rights are being pushed back inch by inch.

When you come down to basics, equal education and job opportunities and equal pay amount to little without free 24 hour nurseries and free contraception and abortion on demand. While a small minority of women can buy control of their own fertility, for the majority, family and child care is still as it has always been the largest problem faced by women workers.

And as a small finishing thought, under capitalism most managers are paid a hell of a lot more than most workers. That's a situation women mangers won't want to change. After all, Margaret Thatcher was the ultimate woman manager, wasn't she?

Aileen O'Carroll

New law aids pimps & protection rackets.

Originally published in Workers Solidarity No. 40 (1993)

IT IS IRONIC that the Act to decriminalise homosexuality also contained provisions for increased victimisation of a marginalised group.

Tagged on to the end of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 were further restrictions on prostitution. Under the new act, prostitutes are now liable to fines of up to £1,000 and up to six months in prison. In addition anybody caught soliciting sex from prostitutes or believed to be "kerb-crawling" face fines of up to £500.

Most political parties raised no objections to this attack on prostitutes' right to earn a living. They wanted to decriminalise homosexuality with the least fuss possible. Governments since 1988 had prom-

ised - but failed to deliver - compliance with the European Court of Human Right's decision in the case taken against the State by David Norris.

FIVE YEARS ON

The Court had insisted on the decriminalisation of homosexual acts between consenting adults. Five years later the government was finally going to do something about it and politicians did not want to rock the boat on this sensitive issue.

The Council for the Status of Women welcomed the proposed legislation without raising a single objection to the sections on prostitution. These restrictions will cause further victimisation and hardship for women working as prostitutes but as suspected, the Council is only concerned with the status of some women.

The Minister for Justice argues that these restrictions will "provide further protection against the exploitation of people who feel they have no choice but to prostitute themselves". In fact, they will have the opposite effect.

PIMPS AND PROTECTION RACKETS

In the past, prostitutes could sometimes call on the police for protection. Under the new act, if a prostitute calls on the police to protect her from attack, she is liable for

prosecution herself. A possible outcome of this is an increase in pimps and protection rackets.

The increased fines means prostitutes will have to work longer hours in order to cover the cost of fines. The increased penalties for keeping a brothel means that more prostitutes will be forced to work on the streets rather than in the safer conditions of a massage parlour.

As anarchists we are against all forms of

exploitation. But restrictions on prostitution will not make it any less exploitative. Rather they will make it harder for a marginalised group of workers to make a living.

We believe that prostitutes have a right to earn a living. They have a right to working conditions where they can feel safe and work without fear of victimisation from the police, pimps or anybody else.

Kathleen O'Kelly

Find out more!!

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WSM, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8.
Or visit
<http://surf.to/anarchism>

Lavinia Kerwick showed great bravery when she spoke out about being raped, thousands took to the streets in support of "X" last February. Violence and discrimination against women are still very real. But for the first time since the early 1980s large numbers of women want to fight back. Aoife Fisher looks at some of the issues that have arisen. Can women of all classes share a common goal? Should women organise separately? Is there a connection between fighting sexism and fighting capitalism?

IT WAS NOT until the French Revolution in 1798, that it began to be accepted that all men are equal. Until then the concept was dismissed as irreligious and against the 'natural order'. Many of the morals, rules and rights that society assumes as constant are actually quite fluid. It is only in the last few decades that the idea of equality has been extended to include women.

Although women still hold a secondary status, the idea of women as second class citizens is beginning to lose ground. Changing attitudes in itself are not going to lead to womens' liberation (all men aren't in fact equal in today's society, though there is no longer strong ideological opposition to the idea of equality). However, the freeing of women from the chains of sexism empowers us to fight for womens' liberation.

However having said all this, why is it that women aren't more active in politics, in community groups, in campaigning? What

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Originally published in Workers Solidarity No. 36 (1992)

is it that is holding them back? Anarchists believe that the core problem facing women is class society. However overlying that core is a layer of sexist ideas. This ideology serves to reinforce and justify womens' inferior status. How does this operate? How does it manage to do this?

It's easy today to underestimate the effects of the conditioning that takes place. Conditioning that tells us, that in the very first place we doesn't have any right to compete on an equal basis. There is ample proof that this occurs, for example the findings of a recent survey on secondary school children indicated that girls had a much lower self-image than boys of a comparable age. Recent studies in American classrooms showed that when girls answered out of turn they were more likely to be told off, while boys were likely to be praised for showing intelligence or initiative. Given this it was not surprising that in later classes girls rarely spoke unless specifically asked a question while boys often spoke out or chatted with the teacher.

RAPE AND 'GUILT'

Researchers into the area of sexual harassment have found that people have difficulty in knowing what type of behaviour amounts to harassment. Women feel unsure as to what are their rights are, unsure as to how much hassle they are expected by society to put up with. In a recent interview a representative of Dublin Rape Crisis Centre indicated that in

her experiences all the women she saw felt guilt in some way, right down to an old age pensioner raped in her own home. Indeed, this is hardly surprising given the type of reporting of trials such as the Kennedy rape trial this year.

One in three of crimes against women arise from domestic violence. Yet these problems are given low priority. Rape Crisis Centres are constantly under threat of closure due to lack of funding. In the first four months of 1990, the Gardai received 1,568 calls for help in domestic violence situations (and all the experts accept that only a small number of such crimes are ever reported). The Womens' Aid refuges, run by volunteers, have only 16% of the space that is needed.

Workers in a Dublin refuge reported that between four and seven families are turned away on average, while approximately another 60 women phone seeking advice each week. Our low status in society is reflected not only by the level of violence against us, but by the complete disregard that is shown for the problem by the government and society at large.

A CURFEW ON WOMEN

Though most rapes are committed by somebody known by the woman (92% of Irish rape victims knew their attackers), police propaganda is still aimed at frightening women into maintaining a self-imposed curfew at night. Even though the statistics indicate she is probably in more

danger at home! We are forced to live limited lives. We don't have freedom of movement even within our own communities. We are denied control over our own bodies. Worse of all, we are told how to look and how to behave.

Women are constantly given cues that they are in some way inferior. This conditioning is a symptom of the position of women in society, not the cause but a symptom with far reaching affects. We learn what is the norm through what is seen as acceptable behaviour in the world around us. The media, be it TV, film industry or pop music occupy a very vocal and dominant position. Next time you watch MTV or go to the cinema try and count how many times you see women portrayed as individuals in their own right, rather than as appendages. You won't need more fingers to count on than you have on your own two hands.

Most womens' magazines are still concerned with beauty, fashion and home making. Articles about working women are almost exclusively aimed at professionals and executives. They don't reflect the reality that most women experience. *Company* magazine (June 1991) asks "Are you scared of success? Career success can be dazzling and very exciting, yet it can go hand in hand with tremendous fear". The article argues that if we just didn't keep holding ourselves back, we could make it in the career world. The truth for most of us is that it is lack of childcare and job opportunities determines our position as low paid workers, not our lack of confidence.

GLOBAL FORUM OF EGOISTS AND BOSSES

Unfortunately much of the womens' movement does exactly the same thing. Dublin recently hosted the 1992 Global Forum of Women. At £180 a head the forum was dedicated to "visions of leadership". Those attending were all "political, artistic & scientific leaders or prominent in the international leadership of the womens' movement". The brochure advertising the conference proclaimed "the president of Nicaragua is a women".

So what! So is the Queen of England and Margaret Thatcher. I don't see things being much better for our 'sisters' over the water or for those in Nicaragua. The election of Mary Robinson didn't make any noticeable difference for the 'sisters' at home either.

The conclusion of the conference, the message they are sending to the low paid, the part-time workers and the unemployed is that what is needed is 40% representation of women at all levels. Overwhelmingly, the message to us was to get up on our bikes, to seize the opportunities, that the only thing stopping us was ourselves. Class didn't come into it.

A gap exists between what women are meant to be like and what we are, between what we are supposed to achieve and what it is possible for us to achieve. Failure on our part to live up to an ideal is attributed to some fault within us, rather than to the type of society we live in. It is for these reasons that women often find it more difficult to speak in public. We are often less confident because by standing up we are reacting against a conditioning that tells us we should sit down.

ORGANISING SEPARATELY?

Women are constantly conditioned to believe that we do not have a right to an opinion, to be politically active, to speak out. Sometimes the first step against this conditioning is to organise separately from men. Partly this is because it is felt that men being more confident and more self-assured tend to dominate discussions. Or even more simply some women feel that when men are present they are more likely to take a silent role and leave the arguing up to them.

Under these conditions women organising together is an exercise in empowerment. It's a positive response to the conditioning of society. It's role should be to make it possible for women to participate as equals with men. It should be seen as a temporary but necessary step, not as an end in itself.

However problems arise when this is taken further and when women begin to campaign separately. This identifies men as the root of the problem, which they aren't. It also isolates men from the struggle, when it is obvious that in order to change society we must work alongside them.

Within many Unions and the British Labour Party there exist women only conferences. A problem with this is that womens' issues are often referred to these conferences as a way of avoiding the issues and forgetting about them. Rape is a womens' issue - refer it to the womens' conference, contraception is a womens' issue - refer it to the womens' conference, etc.

In these instances men are rarely confronted with these issues, rarely have to deal with them and are let off the hook. Therefore while we defend the right of women to meet separately we also think it vital in any organisation, in any campaign, that women present their arguments to the entire body of people and win those arguments and fight as a whole. Tactically, this is the only way to widen and then win the fight for womens' liberation.

Things are better for us today. A lot of the institutionalised oppression, such as marriage bars and property laws has been removed. Often equal pay legislation and

quota systems have been put in their place. Yet while things may have changed on paper, we are still left with class society. As long as this remains, the majority of us will not have equal access to the workplace or much else. As long as we are denied economic equality, society will continue making up morals and invent so called 'natural laws', as a way of justifying it's treatment of us. By tackling the symptom, sexism in society, we will be in a better position to tackle the root cause. By tackling capitalism we will be fighting for womens' liberation.

Aoifre Fisher

"Not unjust to discriminate"?

TEACHERS OF physical education have added their voice to protests against the anti-gay policies Catholic Church. Last year the Vatican said "gays and lesbians suffer from an objective disorder and it is not wrong to discriminate against them". They went on to list the employment of teachers and athletics coaches as cases where "discrimination on the basis of homosexual tendencies is not unjust".

At its annual general meeting the Physical Education Association of Ireland, most of whose 350 members are teachers in secondary and vocational schools, a motion rejecting the Vatican statement was passed. No speaker opposed the motion and it was passed by an overwhelming majority.

Ms. Ger Murphy, President of the PEAI, stated that "sexual orientation is not a criteria that should be used in the hiring or firing of physical education teachers, and being homosexual has no more relevance than being heterosexual". She went on to condemn the Vatican statement as "a fundamental attack on the privacy of the individual".

With the teachers' unions (INTO, ASTI, TUI) rejecting the right of school managements to discriminate against gay & lesbian teachers, rank & file teachers are in good position to push for aggressive strike action should any of their colleagues be victimised because of their sexual orientation.

**Originally published in
Workers Solidarity No. 37
(1993)**

WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

Originally published in *Workers Solidarity* No. 36 (1992)

WE ARE NOW eight years from the year 2,000. Approximately 14,000 years ago the first agricultural communities, and with them human civilisation, were founded. Humanity is 600 generations old.

We hold the position of 'most successful species' because unlike animals we have been able to modify our environment to suit our needs. To early humans nature was a powerful and frightening force, the bringer of plagues, storms and droughts. Nowadays we control our environment to such an extent that nature is no longer a demon spirit or an instrument of the wrath of god. In much of the world nature is way down on our list of worries, it is more likely to fear us. As the capability to control the world around us has increased from the first primitive farmers to the high-technology multinationals, the way we perceive the world around us has also changed. So has the way we perceive each other.

One thing, however, that has remained constant throughout this time is that in the majority of societies half our species (women) has been held in an inferior position to the other half (men). Why is this the case? The answer to this question should explain two things. It should explain why today with all our equal rights legislation women are still second class citizens, and secondly it should indicate the mechanisms and tactics we have to use to achieve womens' liberation. If we know what the problem is, we can find a solution.

CIVILISATION DAWNS

Early humans were hunter/gatherers living in nomadic communities, living from hand to mouth. The discovery of agriculture lead to huge changes in the organisation of humanity. Agriculture was the point at which civilisation began. This is because there are a number of ways in which an agricultural community is different from a hunter/gatherer clan. Communities remain in the same spot. Agriculture can support more people than hunting/gathering so communities get larger. Farming leads to the development of new technology. New skills lead to a greater division of labour. Individuals specialise in certain types of work, be it tool making, leatherwork or defence.

However the key difference is that farmed land becomes a valuable resource. Land provides a surplus, that is land provides more food than is necessary for day to day

survival. More importantly, land will provide this resource in the future, for the next generation. None of this is true of the herd of wild animals pursued by the hunter-gatherer. The concept of ownership developed.

So civilisation began when man began to acquire wealth in the form of land, food and animals. If a rich man wants to ensure that his offspring alone inherit his wealth, he must be sure that his wife is only mating with him. Thus, he has to be in a position of control over her. He needs to portray this as part of the 'natural order'. To accommodate this need society, through the use of religion, developed a rationale to justify the inferior position of woman.

GOD'S CHOSEN RULERS

Rulers have always been good at rationalising unfair practices, take for example the idea of the 'divine right of kings'. Popular for centuries, the church and state argued that kings and queens were appointed by God. The status quo was natural and good, any opposition to it was evil and doomed to eternal hell. These days kings don't have much power, which is why not many people rush to describe Charles and Di as God's chosen rulers.

In much the same way, it was necessary to have women inferior to men to ensure inheritance rights. In order to keep women in this position a whole mythology of women as second class humans was developed. It was the accumulation of a surplus and the desire of a minority to monopolise it that lead to the class division of society and to the oppression of women.

Now we've established the motive and the cover story, but of what relevance is the status of women in early history to their status today. As capitalism evolved it built on the existing model of the family, adapting it to suit it's own interests. Assurance of inheritance rights isn't as necessary today, however the family provides other services which capitalism does require. Initially, when the industrial revolution first began men, women and children were drafted wholesale into the factories.

DEATH IS NOT ALWAYS ECONOMIC

Quickly, however, the bosses realised that this was not the most economic way to run the system. The labour force was weak

and the children who were to be next generation of workers were dying in the mills and mines. The solution was to be found in the family.

Before the rise of capitalism society was based around a system of slaves/serfs and kings or lords. The problem with slaves or serfs is that the owner must provide food, basic health care and subsistence in old age, i.e. maintain the slave at a cost for those times when he or she is not productive. A much more cost efficient way to keep a workforce is through the nuclear family. In this scenario, it is up to the family to provide itself with food, shelter, healthcare, look after the elderly and young (who will provide the next crop of workers). Within this family unit it is normally the woman who fulfils the functions of housekeeper, nurse, childminder and cook.

There are two knock-on effects of women staying at home minding the family. Firstly they are not financially independent. They do not earn any money and are dependant on income received from their partners. Because nobody gets paid for rearing a family it's status as an occupation is at the bottom of the ladder and because women are financially dependant on their husbands it means they, in the past, have had little input into the major decisions affecting the family.

ISOLATION

This led to women having no input into the decisions affecting society. A woman's place was in the home. A second effect of women's position in the family is that they are often isolated from each other and from society in general. Unlike a paid worker they have little opportunity of meeting and sharing experiences with others in the same situation on a daily basis, and do something about it. They, on their own, have little power to change the conditions they find themselves in.

Today the family is a trap for women as much as it was for women at the beginning of the industrial revolution. Women are paid on average 2/3 of the wage that men are paid, so within any partnership it obviously makes more sense for the woman to undertake responsibility for the care of children. It is for this reason, common sense rather than sexism, that that the vast majority of part-time workers are women, juggling two jobs at the same time.

Having said that, why is it that women are among the lower paid in society? Is it necessary for capitalism to exploit women workers to this degree? The simple an-

swer to that is sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't. The only important difference between a male and female worker is that the female has the potential to get pregnant, that is the potential to want maternity leave and need creche facilities. In other words they are slightly more expensive to employ than men. So when women are asked (illegally!) at job interviews if they intend to marry, such discrimination has a material basis. An employer isn't interested on the good of society at large but in obtaining the cheapest most reliable workforce possible.

DISPOSABLE WORKERS

Historically women have been encouraged to work and have been accommodated when it suited capitalism. When there was either a shortage of male labour due to war as during the 1st and 2nd World Wars or an expansion of industry as in the dawn of the industrial revolution or the 1960s. When times are tough, when recession sets in, women are encouraged back into the family.

The conclusion for most socialists is that women's liberation can only be lastingly obtained with the overthrow of capitalism. This is not to say that reforms should not be fought for at the moment, but to recognise that some of the gains may be short-term ones which can be withdrawn.

This conclusion isn't accepted by everyone concerned with women's liberation, and certainly is rejected by large sections of the feminist movement. A good example of the alternative analysis can be seen in the following extract from the British Survey of Social Attitudes (a survey carried out regularly by an independent body).

WHO MINDS THE CHILDREN

It found that the provision of childcare was one of the impediments preventing women from working. Their conclusion was that *"in the absence of changes in mens' attitudes, or working hours outside the home or in their contribution within the family it seems unlikely that even a greater availability of childcare outside the home would alter domestic arrangements greatly. Without these changes, it is conceivable that many useful forms of work flexibility - that might be offered to women such as job sharing, career breaks, special sick leave or term-time working - might reinforce rather than mitigate the formidable level of occupational segregation based on gender, to women's longer-term disadvantage."*

The authors of the survey note that as long as responsibility for childcare rests with the women they will remain trapped in the family. They also point out that concessions to women in the world of work often result in women being pigeon-holed into less well paid job. This already happens in regard to part-time workers who are paid a lower hourly wage than full-time workers. They point out that men have to square up to their responsibility as fathers. The key they emphasise is a change in mens' attitudes.

However what was not mentioned is that no matter how attitudes change, men are as powerless as individuals in regard to their working conditions as women are. With all the good will in the world they cannot change their employer/employee relationship, they can-



not adjust their working hours to suit childcare just as women cannot. A more fundamental conclusion would be that society at the moment, capitalism, does not want to accommodate any of the problems of childcare preferring to leave it up to the individual to make their own arrangements as best as they can.

CONTROL OF OUR BODIES

It is for this reason that the issue of womens' ability to control their own

fertility is key in obtaining womens' liberation. That is the fight for abortion rights, for freely available contraceptives, for 24 hour quality childcare.

Women will remain as second class citizens as long as they are relegated to an inferior position in the work force. They are now in that position because to the bosses they are an unstable workforce, likely to want pregnancy leave, likely to come in late if a child is sick, likely to require a creche or want to work part time. It is because men in society are seen as the breadwinners that they have slightly more secure, slightly more dependable jobs.

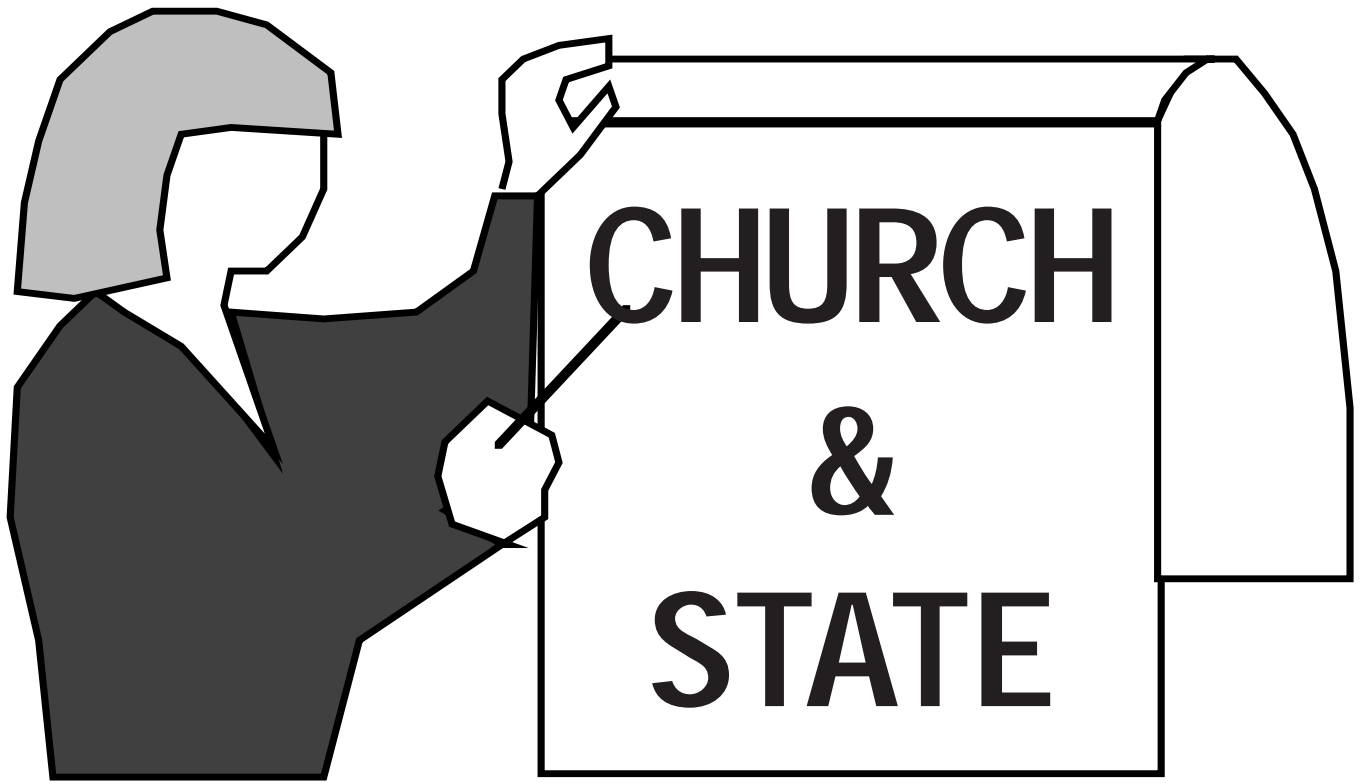
It's a vicious circle, because men are in reality better paid, it makes more sense within the family to assign the role of main earner to the male and the role of carer to the female. The only way to permanently get out of this circle is to change the system. In a society organised to make profits for a few, women loose out. In a society organised to satisfy needs, womens' fertility would no longer be a limiting factor.

INTO THE MAINSTREAM

Women can of course win gains at the moment. In Ireland women are no longer forced to stop working upon marriage (though lack of childcare can make it impossible to continue). Attitudes have changed considerably in the last thirty years. Most importantly, the position of women is now an issue. Whereas before it was only addressed by the few socialist or womens' groups, now it's taken up in the mainstream media, in chat shows and newspaper articles. However, any of our new freedoms are very much dependant on the economic conditions of the day. So, while in the booming sixties American women won limited access to abortion, now in recession those rights are being pushed back inch by inch.

When the reality is weighed up equal education & job opportunities and equal pay are limited without free 24 hour nurseries and free contraception & abortion on demand. While a small minority of women can buy control of their own fertility, for the majority family and childcare is still - as it has always been - the largest problem faced by women workers. In this argument capitalism won't concede, it must be defeated.

Aileen O'Carroll



Originally published in Workers Solidarity No. 32 (1991)

THE CAMPAIGN to Separate Church and State have been busy. They've been taking a court case against the government for employing Chaplains in Vocational schools. The 26 county Constitution prohibits the state from "endowing" religion. Though we wouldn't place much faith in the courts or De Valera's Constitution ourselves we got to admit that they've got a point, paying for these 30 priests and ministers is costing the taxpayer £800,000-£1,000,000. However this is only the tip of the iceberg!

The Catholic church in Ireland has always been massively supported by the State and allowed a huge say in the running of the country. This article will attempt to cover the facts of church power in Ireland and the long history of State support beginning hundreds of years before the establishment of the 26 county state.

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Firstly it must be made clear that we see religion as a personal matter. Everyone should be free to worship as they want and hold whatever beliefs they want. We condemn totally any attacks on an individual's religious freedom.

Equally we are opposed to anyone telling us how to run our lives, including

religious leaders. This article will hopefully show how organised religion works with State and bosses to oppress *all* whatever their personal religious beliefs. Within the Irish 26 counties we are referring of course to the Catholic church ...and now a brief history lesson.

A BIT OF HISTORY

In 1951 Noel Browne, Minister for Health in the "inter-party" coalition government, introduced his "Mother and Child Scheme". This was a proposal for free gynaecological care for pregnant women and a comprehensive health programme for children up to 16.

Following their Autumn meeting in Maynooth the Catholic bishops sent a letter to the government.

"The powers taken by the State in the proposed Mother and Child health service are in direct opposition to the rights of the family and of the individual and are liable to very great abuse. Their character is such that no assurance that they would be used in moderation could justify their enactment. If adopted they would constitute a ready-made instrument for totalitarian aggression"(!)

Such was the power of the bishops (helped by other conservatives and with the strong support of many wealthy doctors fearing for their practices) that this tripe was sufficient to send Labour

and Clann na Poblachta tripping over each other to catch up with Fine Gael in the "No" lobby. Noel Browne was forced to resign.

THE CHURCH AS CAPITALISTS

The church's fear of "totalitarian aggression" (i.e. communism) is of little surprise when you consider it's material base in society. Recently (1987) the church's total assets in Dublin alone amounted to £100 million, with an estimated income of £7.5 million per year.

According to the *Irish Independent* (31/01/83) it owned 234 churches, 713 schools, 473 houses and 100 community centres in Dublin. In 1979 in the midst of appalling poverty they spent £2.5 million on the pope's visit.

Needless to say the ordinary members of this company (i.e. the vast majority of Irish people) have no shares, and voting rights lie in the hands of a non-elected board of management: the Bishops.

As well as it's direct wealth, it has a massive amount of control in State institutions. They control 3,300 out of the country's 3,500 primary schools despite the fact that all the staff wages and 90% of building costs are paid by the State. They also control 67% of secondary schools and own Maynooth College. They have a majority on the boards of most

orphanages, 'reform schools' and hospitals. This allows them to veto even legal operations such as sterilisations in most hospitals.

KEEPING IN WITH THE IN-CROWD

The Catholic church has always known which side it's bread was buttered on. It worked hand in glove with British imperialism (while engaging in a little nationalist posturing to maintain its credibility with the masses) and after 1921 worked to prop up the weak Irish



ruling class. They opposed the first stirring of radical democracy and egalitarian republicanism of the United Irishmen at the end of the Eighteenth century.

In 1795 the English authorities began to recognise their usefulness and helped build Maynooth seminary to replace the one in Paris destroyed by "Godless French revolutionaries". The cornerstone laid by the Lord Lieutenant in 1795 was the rock on which the clerical elite was to build its power over the next 200 years.

In 1799 the bishops met at Maynooth to vote their support for the Act of Union. In 1845 Robert Peel (the English Prime Minister) trebled the annual grant for Maynooth and gave them a large sum to expand the college. During the famine Bishops hardly commented on the mass starvation gripping the country while grain exports to England continued to grow.

KITTY O'SHEA

They opposed the Fenians and even constitutional nationalists like Parnell, whom they hounded out of politics after his affair with Kitty O'Shea. The Catholic hierarchy was in the front-line in condemning the locked-out workers in 1913. Priests and lay Catholic activists physically prevented children of the strikers being sent on holiday to trade

union families in "Godless" England during the dispute.

The 1916 proclamation represented the views of the more radical wing of the Irish bourgeoisie & intellectuals and had a vague aspiration to "cherish all the children of the nation equally". After 1921 the Free State government and the weak Irish ruling class fell back into the arms of the church. The bishops condemned the anti-treaty side in the civil war, recognised the "legitimate government" and attacked republicans for "causing criminal damage".

After the war both pro- (Cumann na Gael/Fine Gael) and anti- (Fianna Fáil) treaty sides were in the palm of its hand. In 1923 the Censorship of Films Act was passed, 1924 saw the Intoxicating Liquor Act, in 1925 divorce was outlawed and in 1929 the Censorship of Publications Board was established.

In 1937 De Valera's Constitution was passed with the bishops being consulted on every syllable. Among its articles was:

"The State recognises the special position of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church as the guardian of the faith professed by the majority of citizens".

(This was not repealed until 1972).

Fine Gael did not allow themselves to be outdone in abject grovelling. In 1947 Costelloe, head of the new coalition government, wrote to the pope:

"on the occasion of our assumption of office.....my colleagues and myself desire to repose at the feet of your holiness the assurance of our filial loyalty and our devotion to your August person".

A NEW IRELAND?

The 1960s and 70s saw an upturn in the Irish economy with international investment. This led to an increase in the number of women working outside the home, and combined with the emergence of the Irish womens' movement, led to a slight weakening of the church's position. In 1979 Fianna Fáil actually went against the hierarchy to bring in limited availability of condoms.

But the 1980s saw a series of defeats for liberal reforms. In 1980 Noel Browne, once again, got the thin end of the stick when not one T.D. would support his divorce bill. In 1983 the Constitution was amended to "uphold the right to life of the unborn". In 1985 a "Lenten Pastoral" forbade Catholic hospitals carrying out sterilisations. In 1986 an amendment to the Constitution allowing divorce in very limited circumstances was

defeated.

However there are some definite signs of a weakening of the ideological power of the church in Ireland. There has been a decrease in both church attendance and "vocations to the priesthood" since the 1970s. For example there has been a 9% drop in Mass attendance between 1974 and 1989, attendance at confession has declined from 47% to 18% (according to a recent survey by Rev. Michael Mac Grail - *Irish Times* 2/3/1991). The recent election of a "liberal" woman President (Mary Robinson) and the Fianna Fáil attempt to widen the availability of condoms would also seem to confirm this.

IS THERE A WAY OUT?

Though we must acknowledge that liberals such as the Campaign to Separate Church and State have the right idea, we don't think that their methods will work. We stand for the complete separation of Church and State. Yes, I know somebody will point out that we oppose the State as well. This is a tactical question, just as our opposition to the wages system doesn't stop us looking for higher wages.

In the short-term we have to fight against clerical control of hospitals, schools, community centres and youth clubs. We also fight against the laws which place restrictions on peoples' personal lives. The WSM is in favour of campaigning for the best possible secular laws in the areas of divorce, contraception, abortion, sterilisation, adoption and gay & lesbian rights.

We fully realise that there are limits to what can be achieved under the present system, but that should stop nobody seeking to win those limited goals that are immediately possible.

A victory in any one of these struggles exposes the wide powers of the church and shows whose side it is on. It creates the possibility of involving more people in future struggles. The long-term alternative we offer of a new free, self-managed world where people control their own lives will be one in which the mystical and authoritarian ideas of most religions will probably attract little support.

Des McCarron

Abortion: A Woman's Right to Choose

Anarchists believe that every woman has the right to choose an abortion when faced with a crisis pregnancy irrespective of the reasons for the abortion. At least 40,000 Irish women have abortions in England every year at present. Women worldwide have always sought to control their fertility through abortion no matter how difficult it is for them to get access to abortion and they probably always will. This is because it is essential for women to be able to control their own fertility and not to be reduced to the level of their biological function as child-bearers only if they are to achieve true equality and liberation.

At present the Irish Constitution with the the Eight Amendment reduces women to being equal only to a completely dependent foetus and it tries to condemn women to become unwilling incubators. To compare an adult woman or teenage girl with responsibilities, social relationships, personal plans, and so on to a completely dependent foetus is unacceptable. The foetus has no independent existence without the woman and the decision about an abortion or a continuation of the pregnancy must be the woman's decision and no one else's.

Women choose to have abortions for all kinds of reasons: poverty, bad health, too many other children, because of rape or

incest or simply because they do not want to have a child at that point in their lives. We believe that all these reasons are valid. Women should not have to answer to anyone, not the church, not the state or even to doctors for their decision. This raises the question of abortion on demand. We oppose any kind of decision making process involving ethics committees or doctors or other variations on this. A woman must have the right to abortion on demand.

The question of free access is a very important one. At present only those women who can afford both the travel costs and the operation costs can get an abortion. Abortion facilities must be made available here in Ireland and they must be free as all medical services should be.

Censorship of information on abortion is a totally insulting attack on women's most basic rights as thinking human beings to know what all the options are when they are faced with a crisis pregnancy. To deny women information, to take books out of libraries, censor magazines containing telephone numbers, all these actions treat women as irresponsible children whose moral decisions need to be policed by small groups of right wing bigots.

The hypocrisy of allowing women to go to England for abortions is no longer acceptable to many Irish people. Apart from all other considerations, having to raise the

money for the travel and to go isolated and afraid to another country adds untold trauma to what should be a fairly simple medical procedure. Abortion facilities must be made available in Ireland free and without restricted access.

Anarchists believe that a woman's right to choose also means the right to choose to have a child and to have decent housing, child care and welfare facilities available in order to raise that child in a reasonable way and in order that her life is not totally given over to child care. At present with the current housing crisis the almost total lack of free child care and the lousy welfare payments this is not a real choice.

We are opposed to all forms of forced fertility control, whether it is the state imposing limits on the number of children a woman can have as in China or the denial of proper contraceptive and abortion facilities as in this country. The right to choose means the right to choose not to have a child or to have a child in circumstances where that means that neither mother nor child suffer materially or socially for that decision.

Anti-abortionists say that abortion is murder. We reject this argument. The foetus is a potential life only - it is not comparable to the life of a person of any age or ability who interacts socially and functions independently. We don't deny that abortion takes the life of a potential human being. The right to choose means that it is the woman's right to choose whether to bring that potential life to full term or not given the circumstances of her life. As anarchists we demand that right and we will be active in the campaign for abortion rights in this country over the coming months.

Patricia McCarthy

IN 1983 anti-choice campaigners pushed the government into holding a referendum on abortion. The *Eight Amendment* was then passed by 33% of the electorate (the turn out was 54.6%). Abortion was already prohibited under the *1861 Offences Against the Persons Act*. The *Eight Amendment* copperfastened this ban preventing any reforming legislation.

SPUC's next step was to take those clinics which provided non-directive counseling to court. In the *Hamilton Judgement* of 1987 the High Court placed injunctions on the Well Women Centre and on Open-Line Counseling prohibiting them from operat-

The story so far...

ing non-directive counseling services. The clinics failed in their appeal to the Supreme Court.

The ruling by Justice Finlay extended the Hamilton interpretation by declaring the imparting of any information relating to the procurement of abortion to be unlawful. It was this ruling that was then used to take the Student Unions to court. The Well Woman Centre and the Open-Line Counseling service then took their case to the European Court of Human Rights.

The Defend the Clinics Campaign attempted to get liberal/left Irish politicians

to raise the issue but many like Emmet Stagg and Micheal D Higgins of the Labour party refused to give even paper support, frightened for their Dail seats.

Student Unions

SPUC continued on the offensive, taking the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), Trinity College and UCD Student Union to court. SPUC lost the case initially on very dubious grounds. There was a large amount of publicity surrounding the case arising from student demonstrations outside the courts. At the last moment the Justice that was supposed to hear the case was replaced by Ireland's only female judge, Justice Mella Carroll.

She ruled that all the evidence against the students was hearsay and so could not be used. This is in spite of the fact that the students had widely said in newspapers and interviews that they would provide abortion information and had included it in Student Union guide books. The judgement seemed to be a cop out for the Irish ruling class who did not want to be seen to be sending students to jail for contempt of court.

This ruling was appealed by SPUC who won, a temporary injunction being placed on the Student Unions. The Students Unions are being brought back to court by SPUC on July 19th this year in order to have this injunction made permanent.

The student union campaign took two turns. The leadership within the Unions toned down the level of campaigning on the issue, concentrating solely on appealing to Europe. Those activists that argued that the law should be publicly broken were told that we would be jeopardising the case by angering the judges. In the end the European Court found that the Students Unions could not give out abortion information.

It is still illegal to give out information on abortion. Within the individual student unions, many anti-choice groups held referenda aimed at overturning the Unions' mandate to distribute information. These anti-choice groups only succeeded in reversing a pro-information policy in one of the universities, UCD. However they were defeated in all but one of the Regional Technical Colleges. Overall, more students voted for giving out abortion information than against.

While the Student Union leaders waited for Europe, the Abortion Information groups in most universities ceased to exist. Meanwhile the *Censorship of Publications Act* was used to ban books and sections of magazines which contained information on where to get an abortion. Cosmopolitan and other British magazines now carry a blank page where ads. for British abortion clinics should be. Recently the *Guardian* newspaper was not distributed because of an advertisement for the Mary Stopes Clinic.

In 1991 the Trinity College Right to Information Group held a public meeting in order to launch a Dublin group. Following from this the *Dublin Abortion Information Campaign* (DAIC) began to meet regularly. Initially they concentrated on defying the ban in order to draw more people into the campaign and to provide information. More public meetings were held to highlight the issue and information leaflets were distributed in O'Connell Street.

Dublin County Council voted to remove two health books from the library which contained abortion information. Though DAIC attempted to replace the book the

issue got very little coverage. DAIC decided to slow down to one activity a month in order to try and maintain some interest over a very bleak period.

On Wednesday February 12th., some of the Irish papers carried a short piece about an injunction being granted against a 14 year old alleged rape victim to prevent her traveling to Britain in order to obtain an abortion. The case was not yet an issue. DAIC called a picket for the following Monday and a rally the following Saturday. Though furious about the case, given the present climate and the lack of advertising many felt no more than about 200 would turn up. However 1,000 people ended up marching to the attorney general's office.

Many of those on the march had not been involved in the campaigning since the 1983 referendum, and quickly jostling took place as to who would 'in charge' of any future campaigns. Secret meetings were called by separate groups of feminists and liberals. Both groups wanted to exclude the left as much as possible, when in fact, it was mainly left wing activists who had been attempting to keep the issue alive for the last 10 years.

Following the unexpectedly large turnout of the march, the press and politicians started to speak out about the case. One grouping held a silent vigil of the Dail. DAIC realised that the turnout for the Saturday rally would be big enough for a march. We hoped for 4,000. It was this march that put the case right on top of the political agenda. At least 10,000, mainly young people, marched and chanted 'Right to Choose'. It was noticeable that there were only five banners present, indicating that many people had spontaneously come out. People were angry.

Pressure was kept on by almost continual protests the following week. The first item on the news was reports of scuffles at the Dail. The Government was coming under huge pressure. On Thursday February 20th. the 14 year old was granted her appeal. The injunction was lifted and soon after she traveled to Britain in order to get her abortion.

These days it's not often that you have such a good example of how far and how quickly public opinion can change. A delegate from the Cork Abortion Information Campaign commented at a recent conference, that before the "X" case had arisen, the Cork group met to consider seeking another referendum on abortion information in University College Cork.

Two years earlier UCC, an extremely conservative university had voted massively against giving out information. The Cork group felt they would probably lose but would attempt it anyhow. Then the 14 year old case happened, and the UCC referendum was won with over 70% sup-

porting abortion information. A week later, Manooth, the university of the Irish Catholic Clergy also overturned their policy and voted to distribute abortion information.

Similarly, it's not often as a socialist involved in campaigns that you can see how your actions are changing society for the better. This case is one of the few exceptions. DAIC consisted of a small group of activists, perhaps 30 in all. Yet when things started happening, when the case arose, we were there, ready and capable of responding. Without DAIC, it is unlikely that the march would have been organised or that the protests would have continued for so long. Without that pressure, it is unlikely that the 14 year old would have been able to travel to Britain.

A section of the feminists called a conference in order to launch the *Repeal the Eight Amendment Campaign*. (R8AC). DAIC affiliated to it. The Conference itself was jumbled and frustrating. Those calling it had a fixed agenda and were very hostile to any democratic attempt to amend it through motions. Many activists found the actual conference demoralising and antagonistic. It did however lead to the setting up of a campaign, weakly based in the cities.

Most of the co-ordinating committee of REAC wanted to run a media campaigning and set about getting sponsors and important speakers. They however ran into troubles. Besides Democratic Left, no other political party would come near it, expressing caution and wanting to wait and see.

Many of Ireland's women's organisations also refused to get involved. Despite efforts the media refused to pick up on press statements. At the moment the main weakness of the campaign is that it is still attempting to become an 'important' force at the expense of organising viable local action groups.

REAC needs to stop looking to the politicians and the media to fight the campaign for us. Stunts and theatrical events do have a place in a campaign but they should be a backup to establishing a mass basis on the ground throughout the 26 counties. REAC has failed to draw in new forces in Dublin to campaign against Maastricht.

If we are to put repealing the 8th amendment on the political agenda we need more than stunts. We need to involve huge numbers of people through activity in the unions and the community. We need to construct action groups based around activities in all areas. This must become the first priority of the campaign. We forced the government to overturn the injunction when 10,000 marched in Dublin. We need to get out similar numbers if we are to have any hope of forcing the government to hold a referendum scrapping the 8th amendment.

1994 Year of the Family; Parents and Poverty

Originally published in Workers Solidarity No. 42 (1994)

1994 HAS BEEN declared the UN Year of the Family. The Irish Committee for the International Year includes state bodies like the Combat Poverty Agency & the Council for the Status of Women and the Catholic ones like the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Family Solidarity were also members but walked out in protest at token places being given to two groups working with single parents. This committee has received £400,000 from Leinster House.

The increased violence in society and fears of social decay have even liberal commentators calling for a return to family values. Yet what does this really mean? What are those values? In this article Aileen O'Carroll will examine the role of the family and the reasoning behind the Back to Basics campaign.

In the nineteenth century Napoleon III went to war to silence popular opposition against worsening conditions at home. In the US, Bush and now Clinton manufactured the 'war on drugs' in part to deflect attention from the US recession. They blamed Colombian cocaine dealers for job losses, pay cuts and factory closures rather than the policies of the Democratic and Republican parties. In Europe all the major parties are pinning unemployment rates on immigrant workers.

EASY TARGETS

In the UK under the banner of 'Back to Basics', the Conservative Party embarked on a vigorous moral crusade. The first victims of their offensive were single mothers. Why single mothers? They are an easy target. Most are burdened down by poverty and isolated within the home (50% of single parents live on less than £100 a week, only 42% of them work outside the home). Though there are groups who seek to represent single parents,

in general single mothers are unorganised. They do not have economic muscle with which to fight back. They are stigmatised and pushed to the margins of society and so it's more difficult for them to form a pressure block.

The government wants to cut down on the amount it spends on social welfare, making us pay for the recession. The changing age profile of western Europe means that as the proportion of old people in society is increasing, so also will the amount of money required by the government to pay out in old age pensions increase. The recovery that the government has been hyping almost since the recession began has yet to arrive, leaving the government with mounting welfare bills.

Alongside the reduction in the amount spent on social welfare the government is attempting to reinforce the Victorian distinction between deserving poor and non-deserving poor. The blame for the cutbacks is shifted onto the poor themselves rather than on the government's own social and economic policies. They're pitting single mother against old age pensioner in an attempt to divide, rule and deflect attention from the real causes of poverty in society.

It has also been argued that Back to Basics is a bid to drive women into the workplace in an attempt to drive wages

down. However the facts don't necessarily agree with this. Trends in western capitalism indicate a shift from full time work to part time work and contract work. Women constitute the majority of the part time workforce. Their wages are less than full timers and in the case of contract workers they have fewer rights (to holiday pay, redundancy payment's etc). They can be hired when required and let go when the market slumps.

Union organisation has meant that employers haven't been able to drive wages down for existing workers. Instead a new level of lowly paid contract jobs (such as the 'yellow pack' jobs in Irish banks) have been introduced, which replace full time work. In Britain the number of women employees will for the first time exceed the number of men with jobs. This trend is mainly attributable to rapid growth in part time posts (often by splitting full time jobs) which had gone overwhelmingly to women (Dept of Employment figures). However, such is the level of unemployment in Britain at the moment, I don't believe the Tories have any problem getting people into low paid jobs as it is. The motivation behind Basic to Basics is to drive down the cost of the Welfare State.

Concerns about Britain's ability to continue bearing the cost of the welfare state due to the rising costs of old age pensions have been "greatly exaggerated" according to a study published by the London School of Economics¹. The scare is used to justify government cut backs. The Irish government also is a skilled master at this line of argument; playing primary schools against third level colleges, the unemployed against the PAYE sector, with not a mention of the money owned in taxes by business (see the £12 million owed by Xtravision in taxes)

The Back to Basics drive arises not

Gas Masks & Pantyhose!

THE 'BACK TO BASICS' propaganda campaign has been undermined because the Tories failed to meet their own moral standards. In condemning the Tory party we must be careful not to take on their morality. There's nothing wrong with shagging. No one should expect human sexual behaviour to be expressed in only one way. It's strange that while we accept diversity in tastes in food, music, book, films when it comes to sex we talk of rights, wrongs and norms.

Heterosexual penetrative sex in the missionary position is assumed to be the norm. Yet, who would ever assume that most normal people eat meat and two veg every day of their lives? Who would think it was peculiar to consume and enjoy curry or chilli or potato soup. While variety is accepted and unquestioned in every other one of our senses, our sexual behaviour is regulated by culturally (and sometimes legally) enforced rules. Rules so deeply embedded in society we often aren't even aware of their existence.

The problem with the Tory party is not that they have extra marital affairs or that some of them enjoy cross dressing. Sure they are guilty of hypocrisy and often of lying to their friends and family. However the trouble with criticising these things, is that given that their morality is the dominant one in society it can look as we support their basic viewpoint. It can seem that we would accept the Tories if only they'd be more honest in bed.

Capitalism attempts to limit our sexuality in order to keep us in line. Most obviously they've targeted gays and women. If only for our only personal well being, we should be aware of how these factors operate upon us and how they curb the range of experiences available to us. However a far greater crime of the Tory party in Britain and of the ruling class world wide is the way it keeps us the working class in either poverty or wage slavery. Once their economic system tumbles down, their rotten and weirdly restrictive morality will crumble with it. And then we will really start to have fun.

a part of there response has been to argue for a revival of 'stable ' family values."

Back to Basics isn't unique to Britain and the Tory party. The 'moral majority' of Regan and Bush in the US has been replaced by Clintons attacks on 'welfare mothers'.

They aim to create a situation where it is socially unacceptable to rely on social welfare for support. Hence it is argued it is 'irresponsible' to have children on low incomes. Instead of debate being centred round the states responsibility to provide for its citizens, it is centred on the individuals requirement to be self catering.

The agenda being set, is that the problem facing society is the poor themselves rather than the rather than the reasons why they are poor. The questions being asked then is how to contain the burden the poor cause rather than how to eliminate poverty.

The state can reduce the cost of maintaining the social welfare by directly cutting the amount of money it allocates. However, many governments are either in too weak a position to do this, or have already cut as much as they can. By reducing the amount of people actually claiming, spending can be reduced indirectly. The ground is also being prepared for future cuts.

The purpose of this ideological battle is to drive people away from the concept of the welfare state and towards notions of individual responsibility. The family rather than the state will bear the costs of child care as well as support for the old, ill and impoverished in society. A vast unpaid workforce is created by pushing women back into the home.

A single mother claiming benefit will now be forced to name the father of her children. In many cases, rather than be forced into contact with violent ex partners, women will simply not claim. Instead they'll be forced to rely on their own families for financial support or indeed for child care if they intend to work.

THE FAMILY

So as well as imposing cuts the Conservative party is waging an ideological war against single mothers and in favour of the family. In this respect

out of pure economic need alone. The Tory party is deeply divided internally over Europe and is presiding over the worst recession since the 1930's. Back to Basics is an ideology that unifies the Eurosceptic and the Euroliberal. It's a strong united front that turns newspaper headlines away from the recession, away from the crumbling welfare state and the divisions within the party.

Initially single mothers were targeted, now sex manuals are banned, sex educationalists are cautioned and "political correctness" is attacked. Following a series of sex scandals, the Tories are trying to turn the tables around. The state funded Health Education Authority originally commissioned the

sex manual 'Your Pocket guide to Sex'. On seeing the Health Minister banned it, describing it as "smutty". The Secretary of State for Education publicly criticised a nurse in a Leeds school for answering children's questions on 'blow jobs' saying he was 'incensed' when he heard how she was conducting her classes.

While there are no direct and obvious economic gains in these moves, in the long term, forcing people into reliance on the family reduces the cost to the state of social welfare. As Dr John Harris argued in *The Family*² "the constant theme of social policy has been the need to ensure stability in family life and whenever social or political elites have felt at all threatened

Capitalism has changed little since its birth. The industrial revolution saw the expounding of the nuclear family as the only acceptable model in society. Responsibilities for child care, housing, health and care of the elderly no longer lay with the community or with the lord of the manor. Instead it was expected that the smaller unit of the nuclear family would undertake all care for the workforce.

Economic circumstance forced women to act as nurses, childminders, cooks and cleaners. Similarly men were forced to sell their labour power to provide food and accommodation. The state reaped the rewards of a self catering, cheaply maintained workforce without having any role in the upkeep of that workforce. Single mothers have been singled out for attack because they do rely on the state for help. Indeed many conservatives have been quite explicit in saying this. Peter Lilley the Social Security Secretary complained that these women were '*marrying the state*', that is depending on the State for financial assistance, rather than depending on a husband.

PROPAGANDA

The entire propaganda of the Conservatives has been consistently aimed at re-enforcing the family as the fundamental unit of society. John Redwood, the Welsh Secretary said "*the natural state should be the two-adult family*". Virginia Bottomley hypes us up with "*without [families], individuals are like a frantic whirl of atoms, attached to no one, responsible to nothing, creating a vaporous society not a solid one*". Michael Howard, the Home Secretary said "*We must emphasise our belief that the traditional two parent family is best, best for parents, best for society and above all best for the child*". To be more honest he might have added best for capitalism.

However, instead of honesty the Conservatives have justified their crusade by making up facts and lying about academic research. The Guardian (9/11/93) reported on a paper commissioned by the British cabinet and prepared by senior civil servants. It dismissed three of the key arguments used by the conservative politicians to support their attack on single parents, that benefit rates encouraged women to have children on their

own, that there was a link between crime rate and criminality amount children of single mothers and that there was evidence that women became pregnant to get council housing. Yet speeches at the Tory party conference, two weeks after they had seen the paper showed when the truth is not useful it's just ignored. Blatantly lying, Peter Lilley said "*I've got a little list...[of] young ladies who get pregnant just to jump the housing list*"

VICTORIAN VALUES

This isn't the first time the Conservatives have manipulated and lied about academic work to justifying implementing it's political agenda. Indeed



though the Tory party are on a moral crusade to bring back Victorian values, they are particular as to which values they wish to keep, a point which was well made by Gwendolene Stuart² in a pamphlet on Thatcher "*[they have] picked from that period selectively the sentiments and values of the most oppressive class...deriding the real values of that period, the values of ordinary men and women who struggled to work collectively together to advance their quality of life.*"

There is nothing new or original about the present campaign. As Dr. John Harris comments "*At the beginning of the 20th century there was already a firmly established belief that the family was in decline and decay as a result of the growth of industrial society*". The introduction of women into the workforce, the growth of unions and organisations representing youth removed them from the family environment, giving them greater independence.

The move to the cities brought with it poverty, overcrowding and crime. The changing structure of the family was blamed for this rather than the effects of industrialisation. The response of

social planners was to re define women's roles within society. Arguments about women being naturally suited to domesticity and about their need for protection in a morally corrupt world were introduced. Concern over declining birth-rate raised "motherhood" to a new level in social recognition. The first Mothers Day was celebrated in 1907 with this in mind. The so called sexual liberation that followed World War I was followed by a moral backlash.

On one hand legislation was introduced which removed many restrictions on women working, on the other ideology was created to prevent women from taking full advantage of the new opportunities available to them. Again and again the family values have been used by capitalism as a bulwark against progression and to deflect from the misery caused by it.

NAME THE REAL ENEMY

It's true that the scandals have undermined much of the Back to Basics propaganda program however this doesn't mean the Tories have failed. The Child Protection Agency, despite negative publicity is still in place. The Agency targets men who are already paying maintenance rather than track down those who pay nothing because this way it is easier to reach target figures. The force of the moral crusade may have collapsed but the policies behind it are still being implemented. More importantly a consensus is being created that the cost of the welfare state is no longer justifiable.

Capitalism is a cruel and unjust system. It has caused people to live in poverty for over 200 years. It couldn't survive without a strong ideology justifying its actions. In England at the moment we can see the repackaging of such an ideology. It is up to us to name the real enemy, not the poor, the weak or disposed in society, but rather capitalism.

¹ published by the Joesph Rowntree Foundation. Report in The Guardian, November 9th 1993

² The Family, a Social History of the 20th Century, edited by Dr. John Harriss (Harraps,1992)

³ The Other Side of the Coin; Margaret Thatcher, from a working women's point of view. (Gwedolen Stuart, 1987).

a Workers Solidarity Movement position paper

Womens' Oppression

1. It has been argued that the oppression of women did not arise until the development of class society. As class society has existed since the beginning of recorded history these arguments rely on factors that indicate the position of women in society, for example, through the worship of female figures, the way in which females were buried and the reflection of an earlier society that can be found in early religious myths. Comparisons with modern primitive tribes are also meant indicate the lines along the society of our ancestors.

The purpose of this arguments was to discover whether it was natural for women to be oppressed due to the basic nature of man and women since time has begun or whether this oppression arose later due to other factors arising (i.e. class society).

However since this is all pre-history all arguments tend to be academic and subjective.

As socialists we believe that men are not inherently sexist. Sexism, racism etc are not genetic traits but rather formed by the environment, to believe otherwise would lead to the conclusion that women's oppression could only be defeated by complete separation of the sexes.

Therefore, what is known is that,with the evolution of class society women have been oppressed, therefore our starting point and emphasis as socialists should be to fight this oppression through the destruction of class society.

This is why the fight for women's liberation is essentially a class issue.

2. Womens' liberation is also a class issue as the oppression of women does not affect all women equally.

Upper and middle class women have always been able to use there wealth to mitigate their oppression; so for example, a struggle for Free Abortion on Demand will not gain the same support from a woman who could always afford one anyway as from a working class woman.

3. Many gains made for women under capitalist society are essentially temporary as is the position of women in the workforce, that is the economic independence of women under capitalism, is dependent on market forces.

In general, women are only employed on an equal basis to men when there is a shortage of a labour force or a shortage of particular skill (as in times of war, etc). Otherwise pregnancy leave, creche facilities etc make it uneconomical to employ a women instead of a man. The only situation where women are employed on a large scale is as part-time labourers; this occurs because levels of pay are relatively lower than that of full time workers (i.e. it's cheaper) and as the women is working part time she also undertakes care of the family (exempting the employer from the cost involved were she working full time.)

The family is the most economic unit of reproduction and maintenance of the workforce, so in times of crisis the family unit, and thus the oppression of women will be enforced. It must be emphasized that "family values" have more to do with profit than with morality.

(An example of the transitional nature of the gains made for women can be seen in the rise and fall of abortion rights in the

USA.)

4. However while recognizing this, it is important for socialists to become involved in struggles against women's oppression, as these struggles set the agenda for how women's oppression will be dealt with following the destruction of class society. That is they force society to change it's underlying assumptions of what is 'right' or 'natural'.

5. Bourgeoisie feminists are faced with an essential contradiction in that they fight for the liberation of women which is incompatible with the existence of the class system which they also support as they gain materially from it. Therefore we oppose bourgeois feminism.

6. The theory of Patriarchy is defined in various ways by various feminist and socialist groups.

We accept that definition that states at present women are living in a society were they are oppressed as a sex. Therefore, as an integral part in the fight against class society we fight against patriarchy. That is we fight against any underlying assumptions that women are in any way inferior to men.

We support feminism in so far as it is women's consciousness of their own oppression as women and we would argue that this oppression can only be completely defeated through anarchism.

However we would oppose any definition that states that women always have, are and always will be oppressed. In this case the fight against patriarchy is a struggle against men, as it it implies that they are unreformable.

We oppose those feminists who identify men as the cause of women's oppression.

7. We recognize that the oppression of women is felt only by women therefore we support the right of women to organise autonomously around specific issues, within any movement (anarchist, trade union, community groups). Within the revolutionary anarchist organisation women should have the right to organise as a faction. However policy decisions or stands on women's issues should be taken by the movement as a whole. Likewise struggles should be undertaken by the movement as a whole. This is because only through the destruction of class society which can only be achieved by men and women will women's oppression be defeated. Also only by exposure to the arguments will male attitudes change.

8. Sexist attitudes and opinions in comrades will be challenged since they are oppressive and incompatible with the principles of an anarchist organisation.

9. Our priorities will reflect our emphasis on the concerns of working class women, as it is only they (in conjunction with working class men) who will struggle to overthrow capitalism. They are the struggles of women at work, equal pay, flexitime, childcare facilities, promotion, training, struggles in communities, health, social welfare, divorce, abortion, education and contraception.

Articles 1st published by WSM, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland
Printed locally by:

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