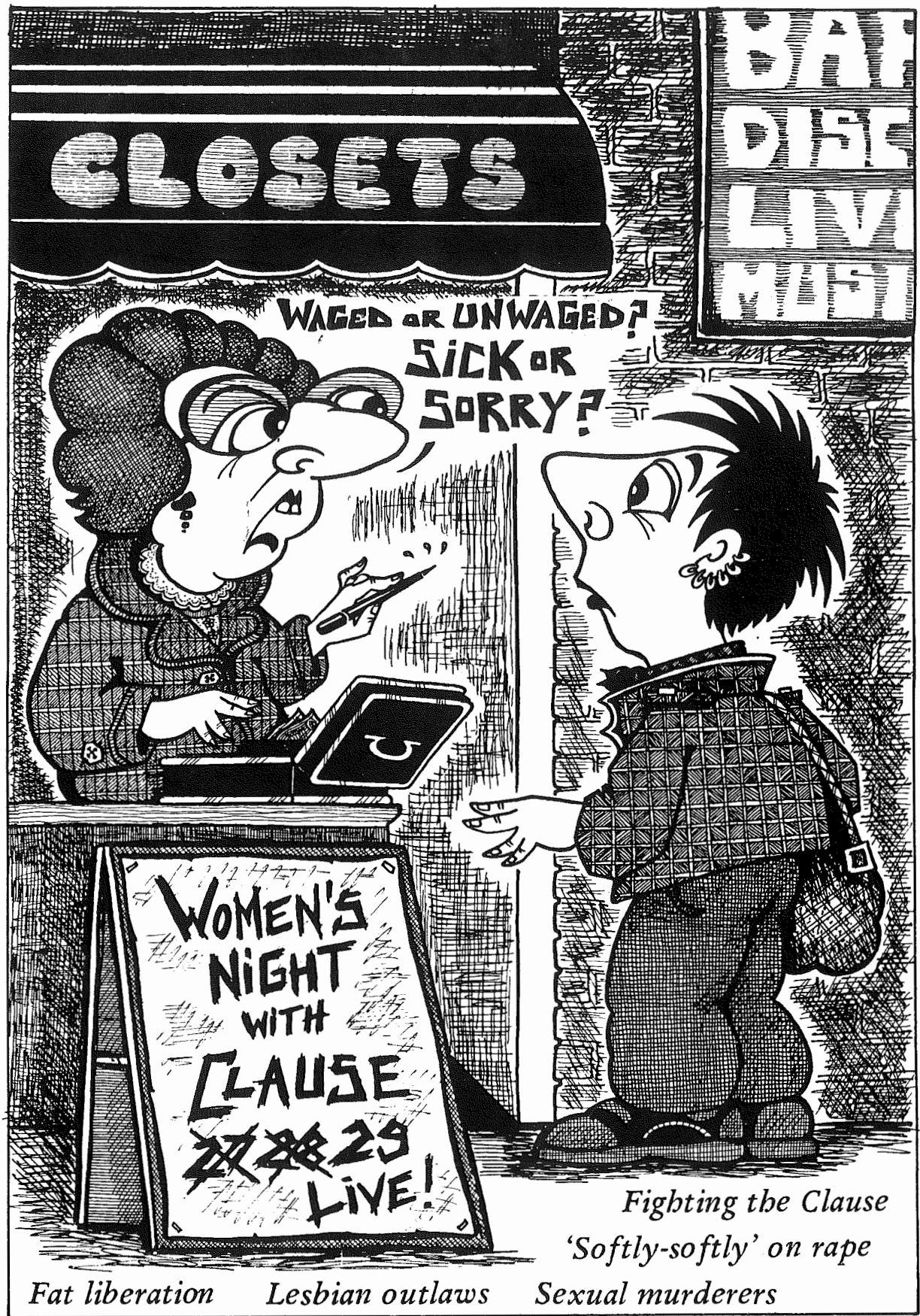


TROUBLE & STRIFE 13



Trouble and Strife is cockney rhyming slang for wife. We chose this name because it acknowledges the reality of conflict in relations between women and men. As radical feminists, our politics come directly from this tension between men's power and women's resistance.

Trouble and Strife is produced collectively by Lynn Alderson, Margot Farnham, Cath Jackson, Susanne Kappeler, Liz Kelly, Sophie Laws and Sara Scott, with help from Alison Dickens (proofing), Nina Jennings, Lyn May, Judy Stevens and Harriet Wistrich (taping). With many thanks to the Women's Reproductive Rights Information Centre and the Women's Health Information Centre for use of their space and resources.

Although we take collective responsibility for the contents, we do not necessarily agree with every article we print – only that we feel it is interesting. The collective is also responsible for titles and illustrations. Unsolicited articles are welcomed; please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. We do not intend to publish poetry or fiction.

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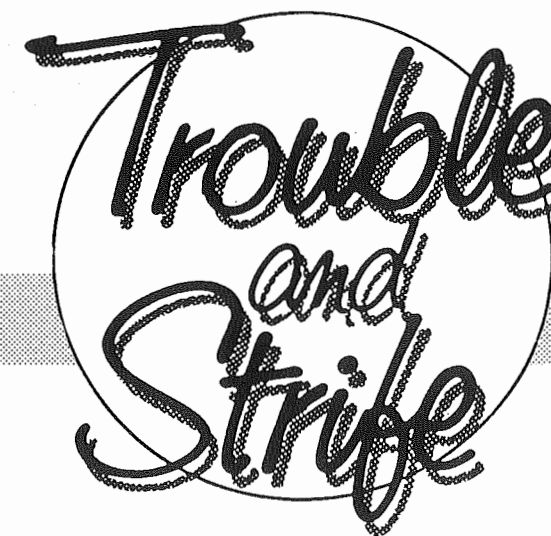
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Contents No13



Letters	2
Clause 29: radical feminist perspectives <i>Lynn Alderson and Harriet Wistrich</i>	3
Lesbian Outlaws: past attempts to legislate against lesbians <i>Annabel Farraday</i>	9
That's Entertainment? Jack the Ripper and the celebration of sexual violence <i>Debbie Cameron</i>	17
As I Am: <i>Tina Jenkins</i> talks to <i>Margot Farnham</i> about fat liberation	20
International Struggles Against Pornography: <i>Susanne Kappeler</i>	27
Who's Holding the Bottle? The politics of breast- feeding <i>Dena Attar</i>	33
Abortion and Disability: issues raised by the Alton Bill <i>Judy Hunt</i>	37
Controlling with Kindness: the 'softly-softly' approach to rape <i>Sara Scott and Alison Dickens</i>	40
Sexual Murder: <i>Jill Radford</i> reviews <i>Lust to Kill</i>	47
The State of the Movement: reflections by <i>Julie Bindel</i>	50

Cover by Cath Jackson

LETTERS

Dear *Trouble and Strife*,

I am convinced that radical feminists must engage in direct action politics now if not sooner in order to revive our spirits and our movement. Certainly we must use the technique for women's issues far more than we have in the past ten years. Consequently, I am grateful to *Trouble and Strife* for publishing an interview with me (summer 1987) about Women Rising in Resistance, a US based direct action network, and for organising a workshop on feminist resistance and direct action which was held in London in July, 1987.

At the conclusion of the workshop sessions women began to raise the possibility of organising networks in the UK to connect radical feminists, women of colour and lesbian activists and to carry out direct actions for our causes and issues. During the discussion several women questioned the wisdom of forming a network of activists when there are few direct action groups currently functioning. They suggested that such groups be organised first. Another woman agreed stating that she had very little experience doing actions and that becoming a member of a direct action network seemed premature, rather like putting the cart before the horse.

I understand the concerns expressed. Since I did not address them either at the workshop or in the *T&S* interview, I would like to comment on them here. First, a woman can join, participate in, be a member of a local direct action group and never participate in the public and visible direct actions. Many workers behind the scenes are needed to carry out actions (planners, producers, publicisers, prop and picket makers). As in the theatre there are both backstage and onstage personnel, and both are essential to creating an action. A woman can be a member of an affinity group, help to plan and organise its actions, without being present or visible at the public event. Some women cannot or do not want to be seen; others simply do not want to take part in the actions. If they support the idea of direct action, they can still contribute and are very much needed in the group. In

some cases it is a privilege to have the freedom or security to be visible. There should be no status hierarchy within the group based on who contributes what. We are all necessary.

Secondly, a woman can be part of an activist network (which in Women Rising in Resistance is primarily a mailing list of feminists who believe in and support direct action) without belonging to an affinity group or participating in direct actions. She could simply be a supporter and want to be informed about what is happening. Perhaps in the process she will hear about an action that moves her to act. Or she may pass the word of an action along to other sisters who are activists. Both the local affinity group and the larger network are voluntary associations, and women are free to participate at whatever level they choose.

To me it makes sense to form functioning direct action groups and to network at the same time. One activity nurtures the other. The network can be small, consisting only of women who are committed to doing direct action. If it is larger, the entire network does not have to be informed of every action. It can be organised by city, county, region, identity group, issue or cause and only the relevant groups contacted in a given instance. In Women Rising, we communicate only with Illinois women for an Illinois action. For our first national action — Women Take Liberty in '86 — we contacted the entire network, about 1500 women and affinity groups.

For anyone interested, Women Rising in Resistance has produced a free brochure, "Practical Protest Planning for Everyday Life" which is a step by step outline of how to organise direct actions. Write to WRR, Box 2096, Station A, Champaign, IL 61820, USA.

A sister resister

Mary Lee Sargent
USA

CLAUSE

Clause 29 does more than limit local government powers to implement lesbian and gay rights. The public debate around it has unleashed a lot of prejudice and hatred. Lynn Alderson looks at what's been happening and argues the need for a strong radical feminist response.

In December last year, a Tory MP introduced a clause to amend the Local Government Bill then going through the House of Commons. Clause 29 (having been 27 and 28) currently reads as follows:

- A local authority shall not:
- intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material for the promotion of homosexuality;
 - promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.
- Nothing above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing disease.

It appears to have been rushed through, in secret, to have taken the opposition by surprise. Indeed, when it was first discussed in the house, the Labour Party did not immediately oppose the clause, but their front-bench spokesman Jack Cunningham, spoke in favour of some aspects of the Clause.

Within days a massive lobby of the House of Commons had been organised, largely by word of mouth. A few back-bench Labour MPs were trying to bring the front-bench to order and reminding them that it was Labour Party policy to support equal rights for lesbians and gay men. Amendments were tabled to try and limit the Bill's potential damage by reasserting equal rights for lesbians and gay men, however, this process was not successful in significantly altering the Clause and the Bill has now made its way through the

House of Lords, is back in committee in the House of Commons and will probably be law by the summer.

The Clause is embodied within the Local Government Bill which is an attack on the powers of local councils and, in particular, on their equal opportunities work. It seriously limits their ability to take race, sex and other 'irrelevant' factors into account when awarding contracts to outside employers. It means in the privatisation process, Councils cannot ensure that they are giving contracts to good employers who will offer decent working conditions and non-racist, non-sexist employment opportunities.

The Clause in question will limit the Councils' abilities to fund lesbian and gay organisations and although the loss of this will be important to some groups, it is not the most serious aspect of the intentions and likely effects involved. Indeed, *The Sun* notwithstanding, local authorities have, by and large, devoted very little of their resources to lesbian and gay issues and their policies remain largely on paper. What is clearly much more frightening is the public debate engendered around the topic, the legitimisation given to the oppression of lesbians and gay men and the attempt to make lesbians and gay men invisible. In this article I want to look at the arguments used to support and oppose the Clause and ask some questions about the political organising which has come about in response to this attack.

"We are asked to believe that when the minister replies he will clarify what promotion means. That will be nice. It will also be totally irrelevant. What the minister thinks will not matter. It is what the judges think that matters..."
Ken Livingstone

"... we have deliberately moved amendments which did not remove the part of the Clause which made it clear that a local authority shall not promote homosexuality... we could easily have done so but we did not because that is not our policy position."
Dr John Cunningham speaking of Labour Party Policy.

29



Pam Isherwood/Format

Fighting the Clause

The mobilisation against the Clause has been very impressive in its speed, energy and diversity. On a national level, large demonstrations have taken place in London and Manchester (25,000 people marched); lobbying was pursued through both Houses of Parliament; a conference of local government employees took place in London; several lesbians stood in the House of Lords to the consternation of the peers and the delight of the media; and, although

there have been a number of television and radio programmes on the general debate. Local lobbying of Councils is taking place in an attempt to get their commitment to continuing the struggle after the Bill is made law, and local groups and information networks have sprung up. In effect, we are seeing the creation of a coalition between lesbians and gay men, politicians and straight gays that has never existed before in this country. Different political strands are apparent in the campaign, there is considerable tension between them, and, in spite of an appearance of public unity, the alliances made are very fragile in many parts of the country.



The impetus and inspiration for all this organising comes not so much from the effect that the Clause will have on local authority actions, but more from the general background of prejudice. The fear that moves such as Clause 29 fuel active hatred of lesbians and gay men very directly seem to be borne out by incidents such as the fire-bombing of *Capital Gay* in the week following the introduction of the Clause and an increase in violence towards lesbians and gay men. It has created a public discussion in which not only our protest is heard, but the hatred, fear and disgust that many heterosexuals feel for homosexuality has been unleashed and validated as a legitimate part in the debate. The tabloid press in particular completely distorts and obscures the opposing arguments.

If any of us had thought that the mild and largely ineffective equal opportunity policies a few Councils have introduced have gone any way towards reducing bigotry and hostility or that the climate of opinion in this country was moving towards a liberal acceptance of our sexuality, then we should now have had a timely reminder that this is not the case. Whilst I don't want to discuss the AIDS issue here, I think it has had an effect on the strength of feeling involved, but we should in no way see that as a root cause of the hatred and fear being expressed towards us.

Generally, the public face of opposition to the Clause has presented a type of political thought broadly falling into the category of liberal humanism. This has meant a civil liberties type of approach with emphasis on individual human rights, equality, tolerance of difference, privacy and freedom of speech. Although liberals themselves have not noticeably been taking to the streets in our support, the language and arguments used by MPs, public figures and the campaign itself has fallen into this line of thought, making much use of the arts and anti-censorship arguments. I do not wish to imply that civil liberties are never important, but I think there are serious contradictions for radical feminists in accepting and participating in the debate on these terms.

In concert with this individualistic approach are the arguments concerning the naturalness of homosexuality. We are as we are, we can't help it, you must accept and tolerate it on this basis, ie we are not a

threat to you. The net result of this is to depoliticise the issue and to completely obscure a radical feminist analysis of the oppression of lesbians and the significance of lesbianism.

Lesbians and feminists have been actively involved in organising against the Clause, as well as in the general campaign there have been specific lesbian meetings and groups formed. However, the impact of the campaign as I have witnessed it has been that of a united gay community, where men and women's positions are not differentiated in any way and their interests represented as being the same. Whilst it is true that we share a common interest in seeing the Clause defeated and the opposition to it has tactically been couched in terms that reflect the phrasing of the Clause itself, now that the Clause is certain to become law it is particularly important to reconsider how to fight its effects.

The poverty of the arguments based on homosexuality as natural are patently clear. It is essentially a biologically determinist idea, and can always be used against us. If we apply that to male heterosexuality contradictions for feminists are unavoidable. Male sexuality has always been presented as a potent, natural force, and as feminists we have spent years analysing and opposing that viewpoint, and insisting that its negative and damaging manifestations are an integral part of the structure of male power and must be fought against.

From a radical feminist perspective, lesbianism represents a positive choice for women and carries with it a devastating critique of male power and its manifestation in heterosexual relations and society. Antilebianism is seen as a response to the threat we pose to male power and the challenge we present to the family as bastion of that power. Homosexuality and lesbianism are not equivalent. There are hostile reactions to both, but for different reasons and with different manifestations (which also vary within different cultures). It is interesting to note that the promoters of the Clause imply an acceptance of such a social construction theory of sexuality, otherwise why would they be so concerned about homosexual propaganda influencing the young? If heterosexuality is so natural, why is it seen as so fragile and in need of protection?

On the fire-bombing of Capital Gay — "I am quite prepared to affirm that it is right that there should be an intolerance of evil."
Elaine Kellett-Bowman

"Recognition of lesbians and gay men is not a threat to those of us in the heterosexual majority. On the contrary, such is the all-persuasive and all-pervasive culture of heterosexuality in advertising and the media that it is homosexuals who have struggled habitually to become heterosexuals."
Joan Ruddock

"We are what we are. It is impossible to force or encourage someone into a different sexuality from that which pertains to them."
Chris Smith

"I see no reason to apologise for standing here and defending the family."

David Wilsbire

"We must ensure that children are not subject to insidious propaganda for homosexuality."

Lord Skelmersdale

"We need to ask how we are to protect children, but we must also ask from whom we are protecting them. I was a member of the ILEA for 13 years. Every example of child abuse in our schools was reported to the chairman of the schools committee, and in every example we were dealing with a heterosexual male teacher sexually assaulting girls."

Ken Livingstone

"I do not regard the practice of sodomy or buggery as being civilised."

Elaine Kellett-Bowman

"... it will lead to an attitude of 'anything goes' in this country. If it is right to encourage homosexuality, one might ask why it is not right to encourage racial hatred."

David Wilsbire

We can't get away with that, and I don't think we should, even if it is tactically desirable or politically expedient. If we consider the part of the Clause which refers to "pretended family relationships" and take into account much of the protecting the family/child language that the supporters of the Clause use then I think it becomes even clearer. It is significant that the implications which the Clause has for lesbian mothers has not been much in evidence in the debate. Over the last few years considerable gains have been made in the feminist struggles for lesbian custody, and against child sexual abuse. There has been a strong pro-family response to both of these issues. Asserting that children do not need fathers (and a great many women not just lesbians are having children without living with men), and naming men in the family as perpetrators of child sexual abuse have led to very strong reactions. I think we must see the Clause partly within this context, partly as a manifestation of anti-feminist backlash and to come back with a strongly feminist counter-argument.

The lesbian threat

They say they are responding to the demands and advances that the homosexual community has made, but, in fact, it is not true that we have operated as a community in this way, nor that we exist in such a community. It is, by and large feminist demands and campaigns that they are responding to. I can't actually think of many instances of gay men organising politically since the Gay Liberation Front.

The Greater London Council (GLC) did go on the offensive with respect to policies for lesbians and gay men — municipal politics have always lumped us together in spite of very real difficulties this causes in defining the nature of our different oppressions, demands and ways of organising.

Lesbians have historically been deprived of a political existence through "inclusion" as female versions of male homosexuality. To equate lesbian existence with male homosexuality because each is stigmatised is to deny and erase female reality once again. To separate those women stigmatised as "homosexual" or "gay" from the complex continuum of female resistance to enslavement, and attach them to a male pattern, is to falsify our history. Part of the history of lesbian existence is, obviously, to be found where

lesbians, lacking a coherent female community, have shared a kind of social life and common cause with homosexual men. But this has to be seen against the differences: women's lack of economic and cultural privilege relative to men; qualitative differences in female and male relationships, for example, the prevalence of anonymous sex and the justification of pederasty among male homosexuals, the pronounced ageism in male homosexual standards of sexual attractiveness, etc. In defining and describing lesbian existence I would hope to move toward a dissociation of lesbian from male homosexual values and allegiances. I perceive the lesbian experience as being, like motherhood, a profoundly female experience...

(Adrienne Rich *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, (Onlywomen Press, 1981.)

Because our opponents do not differentiate very clearly between us, does not mean that we should not.

In any coalition, one must organise to take differences into account. Not go for the lowest common denominator, an assumed unity or a simple cry for solidarity. (See Bernice Reagon and Beth Ritchie's articles in *Trouble and Strife* issues 6 and 12.)

Our attempts to organise across races and cultures should have taught us some of this. I do not know what Black participants in the anti-Clause campaigns have experienced but the impression given has been of a white organisation, with a strong Christian input.

So, we lost the fight against the Clause itself, but the battle that rages around it is still in full flood. We need to be present in this as feminists, as lesbians, as radical feminist lesbians, and we need, for our own sakes, to be arguing what we really believe. Let's not underestimate the impact and the gains that our politics and analyses and actions have made. We have seen a dearth of feminist organising over the last few years. This Clause has re-involved many women by its threat to our hard-won existences.

To silence is to render invisible. They say we can exist in private only, because our existence is a threat to them. We will not be rendered invisible either by those with the power to enshrine in law notions of our inferiority, nor by being submerged within the ranks of our 'allies'.

With thanks to Frankie Green for discussion and ideas.



In this second opinion on Clause 29, Harriet Wistrich takes issue with the use of imagery about the Nazi's treatment of Jews to lend power to our protest.

On 20 February, Manchester was host to a march against Clause 29 which drew crowds of around 25,000. It was probably the largest gathering of lesbians and gay men this country has ever seen, and it wasn't even in London! It is the first time, certainly since the early '70s, that so many feminists are politically organising alongside gay men. Inevitably some pretty dubious arguments dominate the campaign. Among these are the analogies with fascism and the Nazis. "The road to Aushwitz is clearly signposted" (*Capital Gay*); Clause 29 "has no precedent since the Nazis seized control in Germany" (*City Limits*); "if we don't organise now, we'll be in the camps before we know it", (overheard at a meeting). It has become almost a motif of the campaign to summon up images of the gas chambers as the inevitable logical destiny of Clause 29.

To suggest that a law against the promotion of homosexuality by schools and local authorities will lead us to the

gas chambers, is symptomatic of a style of "victim politics" which is widely pervasive on the Left and in the Women's Movement. Why is it that we have to evoke images of the most extreme suffering to gain greater moral credibility for our cause? Why can't we see the Clause for what it is — a severely regressive step against gains made by lesbians and gays as well as a frightening indicator of the extent of the backlash against feminism? We are not about to be incarcerated, tortured or gassed, to imply so is insulting to Jews and all others (including lesbians and gays) who suffered at the hands of the Nazis. I think it is also the case that when an outrageous historical fact such as the gas chambers gets referred to so easily and hazily, its real significance can become obscured. This has happened to a certain extent, for example, with that old piece of film from Aushwitz of started inmates standing behind barbed wire fences. It has been so over-used, often inappropriately,

that its original impact has been lost and its meaning debased.

We should attempt greater accuracy in assessing precisely what and who we are up against. The Tories, despite all the horrendous things they are doing to this country, are not equivalent to the Nazis. (Witness recently, for instance, the party's attempts to suppress extreme Rightists in the Young Conservatives.) Tory philosophy is often contradictory, Right wing Libertarianism sits side by side with the Moral Majority. For instance, look at divisions in the party over the Alton Bill and Margaret Thatcher's decision to distance herself, as head of state, from the family politics of the anti-abortionists by opposing the Bill. The government's chief motivation in supporting the Clause should be seen in the context of the Local Government Bill, as an attempt to undermine and disempower all autonomous institutions which are currently controlled by its political opponents. Of course there is a very strong populist strand of the Tory party that seeks a return to traditional values, law and order and the family which would quite happily support a recriminalisation of homosexuality. However, the more "libertarian" wing of the party (which supports the Clause on the grounds that it frees ratepayers and parents from the stranglehold of "loony Left" policies), would not so readily outlaw private relationships between consenting adults.

Hence, I think another argument which has been widely used by opponents of the Clause, that it is a direct attack on individual liberty or on people "who just happen to be gay" (Colin from Eastenders), is also not quite accurate. It is not a law against homosexual practice or gays as individuals, but against Homosexuality as a political concept or social choice. Of course the law will have massive repercussions for individual lesbians and gay men, in terms of the oppression and validation of our identities. But, it is not comparable to the Nuremberg Laws, which attacked Jews as individuals simply because they had a Jewish grandparent. The Jews were never funded by Local Authorities or the Jewish way of life promoted in schools before the Nazis seized control.

Homosexuality is a choice. Being Jewish

is not. I chose to be a lesbian, I did not choose my Jewish parents, although I have chosen to politically identify as a Jew rather than assimilate. When I have said this recently in relation to the Clause campaign, I have been shocked by the number of feminists who have disagreed with me. "You might have chosen it, but it is not that simple for everyone." Well, I can't say I ever woke up one morning and decided, "hmm, yes, I'll be a lesbian"; it is hardly a "choice" on a par with that between Ariel and other brands of washing powder. It is also true that some lesbians, many gay men and an awful lot of heterosexuals *feel* very strongly that they have no choice about their sexuality. But, sexuality is not something we are born with or that is instilled in us via psychological trauma before age five. How can genes, or whatever the supposed innate quality is, determine who you relate to in a sexual (or any other) way? Clearly, even the promoters of the Clause realise how volatile "sexual preference" is or they wouldn't see the need for banning education and information about alternatives to heterosexuality!

Sexuality, like gender, is a social construction; this seems to me fundamental to feminism. Heterosexuality, as a social construction, benefits men at the expense of women; this idea (barely around these days it would appear) is fundamental to radical feminism. We should not just be saying, "please, it's not fair, validate my lifestyle too", but lesbianism is a choice we want to promote as a positive alternative to heterosexuality: an institution which oppresses women. Clause 29 seeks to restrict information about homosexuality and to promote heterosexuality and the nuclear family as the morally correct form of existence. My primary fear about it is not incarceration as a "gay person", although certainly I am worried about the inevitable escalation of anti-lesbian and gay prejudice. I am primarily opposed to Clause 29 because it represents a frightening reassertion of old fashioned patriarchal ideology and the continued submission of women. □

(A shorter version of this argument appeared in the 'Out in the City' section of *City Limits*, co-written with Julie Bindel and Julia Statman.)

LESBIAN OUTLAWS

Lesbians have never specifically been banned by law. The reason, ironic in the light of Clause 28, was legislators' fear of promoting sex between women by officially acknowledging its existence. Annabel Farraday provides a historical context to today's legal and parliamentary debates.

Before the French revolution, lesbian sexual acts were regarded in Europe as legally equivalent to acts of male sodomy and were similarly subject to capital punishment. In his study of capital laws against lesbianism Louis Crompton shows how the earliest secular laws against sexual relations between women date from the 13th century and called for punishment by clitoridectomy.¹ In mediaeval times, the capital laws against lesbian acts were largely church-inspired; they referred back to St Paul's condemnation in Romans I,26 against women who "changed the natural use" of their genitals by "using" them with other women. Crompton also cites Cino da Pistoia, an Italian jurist whose authority extended for centuries, who wrote in 1314:

There are certain women inclined to foul wickedness, who exercise their lust on other women and pursue them like men.

These women were, according to Crompton, punished by the "avenging sword" throughout the continent during the late middle ages and the Renaissance.

In Germany records show that a girl was drowned in 1477 "for lesbian love"; two Spanish nuns were burned in the 16th

century for using "material instruments" in love-making, so the remaining documents record.

Crompton argues that many communities in Europe adopted laws which made lesbian sex an offence, the Spanish appearing to specialise in finer distinctions and punishing women who used any form of "instrument" more heavily than those who didn't. In 1591, during the Spanish Inquisition, more than ten Brazilian women confessed or were denounced for having practised "carnal meeting" among themselves. Although no woman claimed to have used a dildo or "instrument", their sexual relations were sometimes referred to by the court as "sodomy", carried out in their "nefarious Friendships". There was no suggestion in the transcripts that any of the women cross-dressed, and they received only probationary sentences.

Punishment

More often, the punishment for lesbian sex was to be burned at the stake, although drowning, hanging and beheading were also commonly used and in France and Germany



Cath Jackson

the belief in capital punishment for lesbian acts continued into the 18th century. One such instance of "lesbian execution" has recently been uncovered in the translation of an 18th century German trial; Catharine Linck had lived as a man and married another woman, making love with the use of an artificial penis and testicles which she permanently strapped to her own body. The 'husband' was beheaded for 'sodomy', while the 'wife' received the lesser punishment of imprisonment, although she pleaded ignorance of the other's true sex.

As Lillian Faderman has pointed out, in most cases of harsh punishment for lesbian sex the accused was a transvestite; she argues that it is doubtful whether the penalties would have been so severe had women not tried to hide their female appearance, since to do so was to claim

men's privileges. "It would seem", Faderman argues, "that they were punished less for unorthodox sexual pleasures than for a usurpation of male prerogatives".² Judging by the penalties for using 'instruments', it seems that lesbian sex was only punished in women who passed as men, since they provided tangible 'proof' of sexual contact which non-transvestic women, who didn't use dildos, did not. To fully understand how the law was used we would need to have more precise details of whether the 'wives' knew of their 'husbands' true sex, or whether they had instituted the proceedings themselves on discovery of deception, as Linck's wife seems to have done.

Linck's wife was punished by the courts even though they appeared to accept her plea of ignorance. This would certainly suggest that proof of sex between women constituted grounds for punishment even if one partner believed the other to be a man; Linck's use of artificial testicles suggests that she wished to deceive her wife as much as anyone else. Penetration could be defined as "usurpation of male privilege" as could the social gains of cross-dressing, since women did not 'naturally' possess penetrative genital organs. As lesbian sex in Europe was usually punished under the 'sodomy' laws, it follows that what was being punished was penetration.

Cross-dressers

In more recent years the law in Europe has distinguished social transvestism from sexual transvestism. Women cross-dressers have not necessarily been assumed to have sexual motivations.

In France and Germany in the 19th century women were required to have police permission to dress as men in public. The lesbian painter Rosa Bonheur, for example, had to obtain a permit, renewable every six months, in order to wear men's clothes to attend the horse markets where she sketched. This was granted "for reasons of health" and was countersigned by a doctor. In Germany women who cross-dressed were required to have police permits as recently as 1923; one of Dr Wilhelm Stekel's female 'cases' came to see him with the sole intention of getting a permit, which he eventually secured for her.³

There was no such strict legal control

over women's cross-dressing in England however and the law seems to have viewed it as largely unthreatening. In the 19th century women were still evidently free in the eyes of the law to cross-dress with impunity and to live as husband and wife as long as they didn't try to obtain a marriage certificate. In 1875 a woman cab-driver, who had passed as a man for ten years and lived with her 'wife' for most of this time, was sentenced in Liverpool to two months' imprisonment for theft. When she was discovered on arrest to be a woman the court Recorder merely showed a passing curiosity in her disguise, stressing that it was no offence and adding, "I don't know that there is any reason why I should treat you differently from any other prisoner".⁴

Several English cases of legal punishment for women cross-dressers do exist on record, however. Henry Fielding's account of Mary, alias George, Hamilton, tells how she was publicly whipped and imprisoned after posing as a man and obtaining a marriage certificate on three different occasions.⁵ It seems not to have been her transvestism or her sexual practices that were condemned so much as her bigamy and fraud. Faderman notes that a similar case came before the London courts in 1777 and with a similar outcome.⁶

Reasons why

Whatever really motivated women to dress as men, in popular English mythology they have traditionally been explained away as having heterosexual reasons. Ballads of the 17th and 18th century which told of women who passed as soldiers and sailors usually claimed that their were following their fiances or boyfriends.

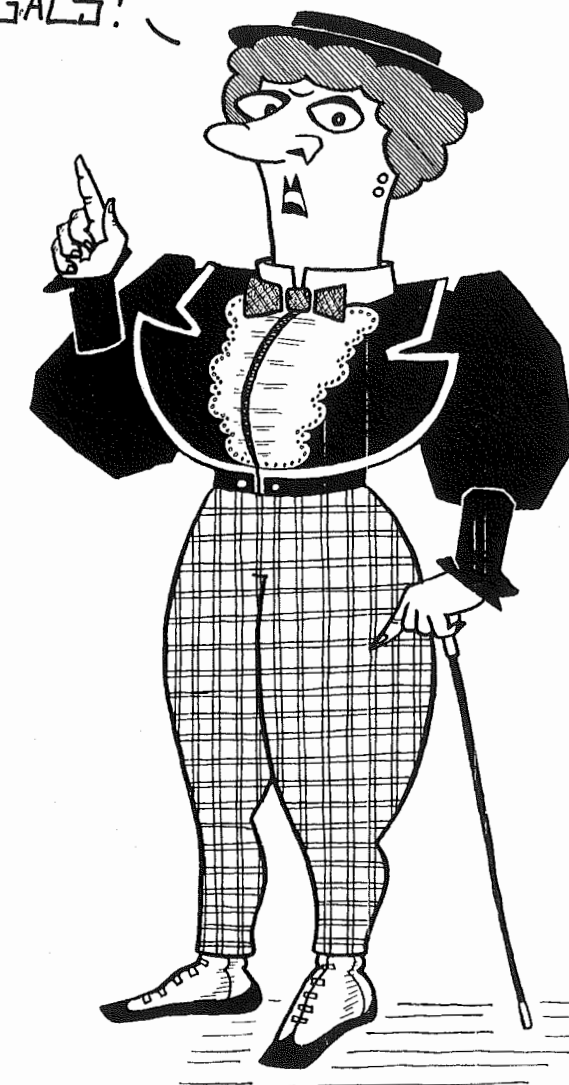
A similar conclusion was reached after the First World War, when female skeletons dressed in soldiers' uniforms were discovered in front-line trenches. They were presumed either to have been secreted there by the soldiers themselves for their own purposes, or to have impersonated an enlisted male whose presence was desired at home.⁷ Either way, the women were accorded no independent motivation of their own. This refusal even to acknowledge potential or actual lesbian existence has historically characterised legal definitions in England; if lesbians could be made invisible by defi-

inition, formal legal control would remain unnecessary.

Libel and slander

Lesbians have been 'seen' by the law in the last hundred years only when their presence could not be wished away, the latter being the more usual response. Mostly lesbian sex has been acknowledged by law only in the context of libel and slander, reflecting the belief that to accuse a woman of being a lesbian is to cause untold damage and humiliation; equally, it reflects the belief that to be a lesbian is to be a worthless social outcast.

BURN Y'BUSTLES,
GALS!



Cath Jackson

NAE COMMENT



... Well did they or didn't they?

One of the most publicised lesbian libel cases which illustrates this legal reluctance to 'see' lesbians occurred not in England but in Scotland in 1810. Two women teachers who had set up their own boarding school sued a pupil's grandmother after she had accused them of 'copulation' with each other in a bed shared by the grandchild. The teachers had gone bankrupt as a result of this 'libel' since most of the other children had been withdrawn. After a lengthy trial, during which it was argued that for women with normal sized clitorises to "copulate" was "equally imaginary with witchcraft,

sorcery or carnal copulation with the devil", the accusation was found to be "justified" although it was never conclusively proved that the women had been "indecent" or had indulged in "unnatural behaviour".

Two years later, Dame Cumming Gordon, the grandmother, was ordered to pay damages and her appeal was sent to the House of Lords. The case, as in the earlier Court of Session in Edinburgh, was to be heard behind closed doors, and the entire hearing was, by order of the court, shrouded in secrecy to prevent publicity of the details; the trial judge in Edinburgh had proclaimed:

Regardless of precautions, a discussion of this nature can produce a general contamination of that innocence of thought which is a distinguished feature of the manners of our country, a natural guardian of female virtue, and the best attraction of female youth.⁸

In 1885, the same year in which the Labouchere Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act made acts of gross indecency between men illegal, one Justice Lopes found that a woman could be found guilty of indecent assault on another woman.¹¹ He was presiding over an abduction case involving a midwife and a young woman and the timing of his pronouncement in this particular year may indicate an isolated attempt to equalise the law by criminalising lesbian as well as male homosexual acts; if so, it was not to be the last of such attempts.

Just before the First World War, in 1913, an MP tried to alert the House to the occurrence of sexual acts between women, with the aim of including them in the legislature. No debate took place, however, as the Home Secretary turned down the proposal before it could appear on the Order Paper.¹² We can only surmise the reasons for the Home Secretary's reluctance, but this silencing about lesbian sex was to characterise the Home Office's position throughout the inter-war years and was to be reflected in numerous internal debates.

Age of consent

In 1921 a second attempt was made to bring lesbian sexuality into the statute books, again during the debate of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill. This time the motion reached Parliament and was debated at some length in both Houses before being finally rejected.

The motion — to make acts of gross indecency between women punishable under the same law which applied to men — appeared suddenly as a new clause during the third reading of the Bill. This Bill had been introduced by the Bishop of London and supported by over 50 women's organisations, including the National Council of Women, The Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, The National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship and the Six Point Group.

The main aim of the Bill was to raise the age of consent for indecent assault from 13 to 16 and to abolish the defence, in unlawful sexual intercourse, of reasonable cause to believe the girl was over 16. The new clause was slipped in during the late hours of the debate and without any previous discussion. It was passed by 148 votes to 53 in the Commons, but was rejected in the Lords, which had the effect of defeating the entire Bill.

The Parliamentary debates on the clause showed an equal reluctance by both supporters and opponents to discuss the issue in any great detail, for fear of either polluting the House or advertising the subject. The supporters of the clause justified it as an equalising measure between men and women.

The new clause was introduced by Frederick Macquisten, a Conservative member and Scottish lawyer, who claimed to have had professional experience of divorce

cases involving female "homosexual immorality". His aim was not only to protect the interests of hapless husbands of defecting wives; his crusade was to protect the foundations of the Empire. Macquisten claimed that both the early Greek civilisations and the Roman Empire had crumbled as a result of women's immorality, and that history would repeat itself if this spreading evil were not soon eradicated. He was reluctant to elaborate in public on the nature of this evil, seeing it more as a matter for medical science, but spoke as one of an army of lawyers battling against this "undercurrent of dreadful degradation".

Supporting Macquisten's stand was Sir Ernest Wild, Conservative member for Upton, who was less loathe to go in to details. He pointed out that, following the 1885 Amendment, it took years before juries could be convinced that such behaviour actually happened; this particular clause was merely dealing with a "corresponding vice" among women, and he claimed a barrage of evidence to prove its existence. This included the testaments neurologists, judges and criminologists, which declared that lesbian seduction led to nervous disorders on the part of the 'victims' and that asylums were largely populated by its perpetrators. Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis were cited for the benefit of those most ignorant of the mechanical details involved in Lesbian love, rather than "pollute" the House in elaborating. Women,



... battling against the spread of women's immorality.

Wild said, were being constantly diverted from any desire for men. Hence not only male pride but motherhood, marriage and the future of the race were all in jeopardy.

What was in effect the first women's Bill since extended suffrage had been won was being diametrically turned against them.

Arguments against

Opposition to the clause in the Commons centred on the impossibility of proof and the risk of blackmail and false accusation. The Home Secretary's previous reluctance in 1913 to consider a similar amendment seemed proof of its undesirability. It was also argued that lesbian practices should be seen as the result of brain abnormalities rather than moral digression and that to advertise the existence of this perverse minority would be more harmful than leaving it to inevitable self-extinction. At midnight in the House of Commons, however, MPs were more convinced that it was an escalating vice, and the clause was quickly passed by an overwhelming majority.

Support for the clause in the Lords originated more from a concern not to lose the entire Bill by rejecting one amendment rather than from any conviction of its necessity. The Bishop of Norwich opened the debate by moving that the clause be accepted, although he entirely opposed its content and later retracted in the light of arguments against it. Likewise, the clauses' opponents did not necessarily reject its ultimate aims. It was seen as an inappropriate adjunct to this particular Bill, and their Lordships felt its hasty passage through the Commons had precluded the necessary legal preparation.

Moreover, it was argued, such a move should originate with the Government rather than private members. Those opposing the content of the clause reiterated the danger of blackmail, but also emphasised that it would not equalise the law between women and men because men and women were not *naturally* equal; it was in women's nature to be more fearful and dependent than men and to seek each other's company for mutual protection. Moreover, there was a danger of misinterpreting the romantic friendships which young women often make and the need, through poverty, to share the same beds. Although it was argued the "vice" had increased since the war due to "nervous

conditions", legislation would, through advertisement, lead to escalation and women would indulge in lesbian practices in epidemic proportions. Such an argument suggested that knowledge of its possibility would inevitably lead women to crave the experience and one Lord Desart, speaking as a former Director of Public Prosecutions, drew "cold comfort from the realisation that there are not many people who read the debates of either House".⁹

On this basis, the clause was rejected, thereby defeating the entire Bill.

Secrecy

This was no straightforward 'nature v nurture' or 'biology v society' debate between supporters and opponents. Whilst the clause's supporters largely saw lesbianism as 'acquired' and escalating, opponents were divided on its causes and secrecy was the policy of the day. Publicising lesbianism could lead to false accusations (and we have seen what such a 'slander' implied) and confusing the 'real' thing, whether biological or not, with natural feminine sentimentality. No longer was evidence of the use of 'instruments' considered the only adequate proof. The confusions of sexology had certainly filtered through selectively and had become even more inconsistent when combined with a terror of admitting lesbians even existed; the issue was whether women actually *did* these things and the term "lesbian" was used only once in the entire debate, as an adjective to describe such "practices".

This Bill as a whole had been one of the first measures demanded by women voters since suffrage had been extended in 1918. In the debate's early stages, the feminist journal *The Vote* had warned "we must be on the watch to prevent the insertion of objectionable clauses during its passage", being fully aware that such clauses alone could kill the Bill, although the Home Office had not objected to its existing form.¹⁰

The feminist press reflected the outrage which many women felt, not so much at the implications of the new clause itself but at any attempt to forestall the Bill's implementation, and the clause was seen as a strategic ploy for dismissing their demands.

The Shield, for example, argued that the clause was used specifically to prevent the abolition of the defence of "reasonable cause to believe" a girl to be over 16. The

editorial argued:

There were a group of members in the House who were determined to retain that defence in law and, as they were defeated on a straight vote on this clause, they resorted to a notorious way of killing a Bill, namely by moving a new clause of a purely wrecking character.¹¹

More explicitly, the National Council of Women argued:

It was obvious that there existed in the House of Commons a number of men who were absolutely determined to protect their sex in assaults on young girls.¹²

In general, however, press coverage on the new clause was minimal, referring only in passing to an attempt to make "certain offences between women" punishable by law. It was far from headline news. However, *The Shield*, which was the journal of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene — the leading pressure group behind the new Bill — quoted and endorsed Havlock Ellis's opinion that such acts, when committed in private, should not be subject to legislation. There was no discussion of lesbian acts as such, or the attempt to legislate against them, concern being shown more for decriminalising male homosexuality. However, in a letter to the Law Lords in response to the insertion of the new clause, the Association described the issue as:

so repulsive and indeed unintelligible to many people that the new clause is not likely to obtain much public discussion nor receive much outside criticism.¹³

Their forecast appears to have been accurate.

Indecent assault

Despite the fact that in 1921 Parliament had not succeeded in outlawing lesbian sex, in 1933 a Mr Justice Avory deemed that under Section 52 of the Offences against the Person Act (1861) a woman could be guilty of indecent assault upon another woman. This decree — which reiterated Justice Lopes' conclusion of 1885 — came in his final comments on an appeal case in which a woman was found guilty of indecently assaulting a 12 year old boy. The issue had been a matter of interpreting whether the law recognised that a woman could actually commit indecent assault, the appellant having claimed that the term 'whosoever' within the statute applied only to men. Justice Avory dismissed the appeal and the

woman was sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment. In discussing possible ambiguities in the statute, Avory remarked that as it was phrased, "there can be no reason for saying that a woman cannot be guilty of indecent assault upon another female", and hence liable for up to two years' imprisonment with or without hard labour.¹⁴

Grounds for divorce

The discussion of lesbian practices was again raised in 1937 during the passage of the Marriage Bill which aimed to extend the grounds for divorce to include desertion and prolonged insanity. During the Committee stage in the Lords, it was argued that habitual homosexual practice should be seen as suitable grounds for divorce, within the context of insanity. The explicit aim was to include lesbian practices within the statute, since wives had been able to petition against homosexual husbands since 1861 under the Offences Against the Person Act.

In introducing the amendment, Lord Dawson expressed his "sad experience" that "homosexual women could break up a home" and for this reason they ought to "protect the man against the Lesbian". This was to include women who still maintained



... to "protect the man against the Lesbian".

sexual relations with their husbands, rather than applying only to latterly exclusively lesbian relationships, since "such people would frustrate the purpose for which marriage existed". Moreover, Dawson allowed for what he saw as the surfacing of latent or dormant attraction, arguing that it is only after marriage that homosexuality becomes apparent; there was little way of telling beforehand that "the natural attraction of sex was absent". At the same time, he stressed that homosexuality was a universal element which "in all decent people hid its head", a notion which seemed to suggest some element of choice rather than a dormant condition of the few.

When asked to clarify whether or not he viewed lesbian practices as a sign of incurable disease, Dawson seemed to put more hope in prevention than cure; "potential" lesbians, caught in the early stages, could be helped, while "actual" lesbians had reached a point of no return and for which there was no cure. Such was Dawson's readings of the current scientific view, and one to which he subscribed, putting great faith in moral and physiological guidance to re-align those who could still be saved.¹⁵

Here, then, was the notion of lesbianism as both a crime and a disease. Scientists were still unsure, but whatever else, husbands needed legal protection and the assurance of dutiful wives in the name of equality of the sexes.

Dawson's amendment was blocked by one Judge Atken, former president of the Medical Legal Society where, he claimed, homosexuality had been discussed. In his view, it was the result of "wicked impulses" and, far from being a disease, could be checked at any time without permanently threatening married life. Atkin persuaded the committee that the move would be immature and that it was mistaken to expect the Commons to be able to discuss it — a reticence reminiscent of the debates of 1921. Again it was argued that, rather than taking any impulsive measures, the area needed thorough research which may lead to valuable legal changes in the future.

The amendment was rejected on these grounds, but Lord Atkin later went on to move that "failure to comply with a decree for restitution of conjugal rights" be made grounds for judicial separation. This, he

believed, would cover cases of homosexuality which Dawson had been anxious to legislate against. This time the motion was cautiously accepted for later consideration in the Report stage of the Bill.

Not to be outdone, however, Lord Dawson went on to move that evidence of homosexual practices in either party within 12 months prior to marriage should be made grounds for nullity. This, he argued, would allow for a husband's ignorance of his wife's "true" nature hidden from him during their period of engagement. The amendment was again rejected, and it was not until ten years later in 1947 that lesbianism was cited as grounds for divorce when a decree nisi was granted acknowledging lesbian practices as constituting cruelty to the husband.¹⁶



"... cruelty to the husband".

This was the contradictory nature of patriarchal definitions embodied in legal discussions of lesbians in the inter-war years. On the one hand, there was an unwillingness to acknowledge and a terror of publicising lesbian existence. On the other, there was increasingly self-fulfilling debate concerning such anxieties.

But, paradoxically, in attempting to deny and silence lesbian existence legal and official attempts at erasure served only to publicise, by prohibition, many of the claims and contradictions of sexology. Such acts of official silencing demonstrate the extent to which lesbian existence threatened patriarchal dictates embodied in the law. □

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT?

One hundred years ago an unidentified man mutilated and murdered numbers of women. The 'Jack the Ripper' legend has glorified and legitimised the man and his acts. Preparations are already under way to celebrate this gruesome anniversary. Debbie Cameron calls for feminist action.

The British are famous for their sense of history, their love of pageantry and traditional celebration. And what, after all, could be more traditional, more part of our history than male violence against women? This particular tradition is currently marking a notable centenary which comes around this year. 1988 is the hundredth anniversary of Britain's most illustrious mass sexual killer, the man whom we know by the name 'Jack the Ripper' — and the celebrations have already begun, for the pleasure and profit of all concerned. The 'Ripperologists', as they laughingly call themselves, are busy getting ready for a massive birthday party. The publishers are churning out various new titles re-examining personalities and events of the case; by the time we get to the actual centenary next autumn we'll be caught up in a flurry of commemorative events, features in the media and Ripper memorabilia (there are plans to sell T-shirts and badges and mugs). What will be glossed over in these mindless festivities — except perhaps by feminists with no sense of fun — is the actual significance of what Jack the Ripper did, and what sexual killers still do a hundred years later.

A tourist attraction

It's worth pointing out that public interest in the Ripper will not begin and end with his centenary year. That will just intensify what already exists, a whole cultural industry founded on 'Jack'. For a good many years now, the Ripper has been part of what people refer to as 'the national heritage'. He's a symbol of a vanished Victorian London, a romanticised East End of cobbled streets and gaslight.

This version of history is relentlessly sold both as a tourist attraction and a source of local pride. It appears throughout the country in waxwork museums; in London it confronts you in a dozen different forms.

Thus the Trocadero in Piccadilly Circus offers visitors the authentic 'Jack the Ripper Experience'; in the East End you can take a guided tour of 'Jack the Ripper's London', and finish up with a pint in the Jack the Ripper pub. No-one seems to find this especially offensive (is there a pub in Boston called The Boston Strangler?, or one in Cambridge called the Cambridge Rapist?). Jack the Ripper has been thoroughly sanitised, turned into a folk-hero like Robin Hood. His story is packaged as a bit of harmless fun: only a spoilsport would be tactless enough to point out it is a story of misogyny and sadism.

The thin end of a very nasty wedge

If those who market Jack as a quaint London character are guilty of disguising or ignoring his misogyny, others are explicitly fascinated by it, and determined to exploit it for financial profit. For example, a Jack the Ripper computer game has just appeared (the blurb suggests the timing is not a coincidence) which re-enacts the murders in gruesome detail. The images that appear on the player's VDU screen include women with their throats cut and intestines ripped out. And these are not computer graphics or cartoons by the way, they are photographs of models and fairly realistic. This game has been refused a general certificate — it is classified '18', ie for adults only, and is the first computer game to receive this restrictive rating.

It will be interesting to see whether a new genre of 'adult' sado-pornographic computer and video games develop in the wake of this pioneering example. If so, Jack the Ripper will have played yet again his insidious role as the bridge between what is considered 'entertainment' and what is more clearly perceived as offensive. The thin end, in other words, of a very nasty wedge.

1. Louis Crompton "The Myth of Lesbian Impunity: Capital Laws from 1270-1791", *J. Homosex*, vol.6 (½) Fall, Winter 1980/81.
2. Dora Ashton and Denize Browne Hare *Rosa Bonheur: A Life and a Legend* (Viking Press, New York 1981).
3. Wilhelm Stekel *Sexual Aberrations* (Vision, New York 1953).
4. *Liverpool Mercury*, February 13, 1875.
5. Claude E. Jones *The Female Husband and Other Writings* (private print, 1960).
6. Lillian Faderman *Scotch Verdict* (Quill, New York 1983).
7. *The People*, December 30, 1928.
8. *Hansard*, Commons, August 4, 1921.
9. *Hansard*, Lords, August 15, 1921.
10. *The Vote*, March 4, 1921.
11. *The Shield*, Nov/Dec 1921.
12. *The Times*, September 28, 1921.
13. *The Shield*, Nov/Dec, 1921.
14. *Times Law Reports*, December 22, 1933.
15. Susan Edwards *Female Sexuality and the Law* (Martin Robertson, Oxford 1981).
16. *Gardner v Gardner All England Law Reports*, vol.1, April 19, 1947.

Ripperology

Another place where misogyny is rife is in the pseudo-intellectual writings of the so-called 'Ripperologists'. As I mentioned earlier, the approaching anniversary has inspired a fresh outbreak of 'scholarly' publications, studded with such gems as the following observation:

Sex was surely plentiful enough for any man to obtain without murder . . . rape was, in a sense, unnecessary in nineteenth century England.¹

What comes across in this kind of writing, apart from wilful ignorance and complacent male stupidity (for all the Ripperologists I know of are men) is a barely suppressed erotic excitement with the idea of killing for sexual pleasure — and in the case of Jack the Ripper, of *getting away with it*.

The actual history of Jack the Ripper is rather less cosy than the official tourist version and rather less heroic than the Ripperologist fantasy. Let us recall the salient facts of the case, and let us make connections with events in the present.

In the East End of London in 1888, a man whose identity has never been discovered carried out a series of particularly horrible murders.² The victims — as far as we know, five in all — were poor working class women who engaged in prostitution because their earnings from street trade or charitable relief were inadequate to support them (here nothing much has changed!). All the women's bodies were found in a similar condition: hideously mutilated and disemboweled. During what came to be known as 'the autumn of terror', London police received letters from a man who claimed to be the killer and signed himself 'Jack'. One letter contained an account of his motives: "I am down on whores and I shan't quit ripping them till I do get buckled."

The murders were talked about in various ways. Some people saw prostitution itself as the problem, and greater control of women's sexuality as the solution. Others urged the government to clear the East End slums in which, it was felt, the killer's bestial urges flourished. Still others blamed the whole thing on foreigners, or the Jews.

In this welter of misogyny, classism and racism it was left to a few women to make a connection between the acts of the Ripper

and the general level of male violence against women. Such violence was part of the everyday experience of women in all classes, communities and conditions, 'respectable' and 'fallen' alike. Furthermore, this violence was condoned by the same people who could now be heard howling for the blood of the Ripper. As Mrs Fenwick Miller put it in a letter to the *Daily News* in 1888,

Week by week and month by month, women are kicked, beaten, jumped on until they are crushed, chopped, stabbed, seamed with vitriol, bitten, eviscerated with red-hot pokers and deliberately set on fire — and this sort of outrage, if the woman dies, is called "manslaughter": if she lives, it is a common assault.

It's interesting, by the way, that the writings of the 'Ripperologists' never refer explicitly to the kind of feminist protest Mrs Miller's letter represents — at least one author quotes her directly but without acknowledging his source. That women both analysed and resisted male violence in 1888 is an important fact which has often been concealed: nor is it likely to be mentioned in the anniversary celebrations.

As we can see from Mrs Miller's remarks, little has altered in the last hundred years. Male violence against women continues to go unpunished, and the kind of murder pioneered by Jack the Ripper has since been repeated at regular intervals. The 'Blackout Ripper' of the 1940s, 'Jack the Stripper' in the 1960s and the 'Yorkshire Ripper' in the 1970s, are only the most notorious examples of men who have set out to continue the Ripper tradition.

A cultural hero

The word 'tradition' is appropriate here, for it is clear that many men have been conscious admirers and imitators of this killer with the status of a cultural hero. During the Yorkshire Ripper case, for example, the police received a tape from a man calling himself 'Jack'. This man — a hoaxer whose efforts seriously misled the enquiry — quite obviously took his cue from the Whitechapel murders, the details of which he was clearly familiar with. The actual murderer, Peter Sutcliffe, was also familiar with the legend of the Ripper. He used to visit a model of 'Jack' in a wax museum in the seaside town of Morecambe (misogyny as tourist attraction once again — and the museum has since installed a model of Sutcliffe!). He also used

the same defence of being "down on whores": as he expressed it to his brother, he was "cleaning up the streets". His attitude was as acceptable in 1981 as it had been to Victorian London in 1888.

The Ripper Centenary makes me want to ask, why all the nostalgia for 'Jack the Ripper's London'? To all intents and purposes we are living in it still! The sadistic sexual murder of women by men did not disappear with the cobble stones and gas lamps. On the contrary, the attitudes and structures of power which give rise to sexual murder are with us to this day, while the Ripper himself provides a powerful inspiration for appalling acts of violence by men here and now. To propose the centenary of the Jack the Ripper murders as a suitable occasion for national celebration is not only to trivialise past womanslaughter but to rejoice in the continuing violence against us. Such rejoicing is an insult to the memories of those women who have died at the hands of men in the past hundred years. For us who survive, it is a painful reminder of how little society values our lives.

A grotesque anniversary

As this grotesque anniversary gets nearer and nearer, we must do what we can to ensure that women's suffering and women's resistance are not just forgotten. Various kinds of protest and direct action are called for.

CAMPAIGNING

STOP PRESS: Since this piece was written, an organised campaign by East London women supported by a local woman councillor has drawn the issue of the Jack the Ripper pub to the public's attention, with the result that the brewery has now agreed to change the name back to the original 'Four Bells'. This shows that feminist agitation can be effective — but the pub is only one target among many. The others include:

THE COMPUTER GAME: If you would like to complain about this (or indeed to take any other appropriate action against it) the address of the manufacturer/distributor is: CRL GROUP PLC, 9 KINGS YARD, CARPENTERS ROAD, LONDON E15.

OTHER PROTESTS: A variety of possibilities are being discussed, including the production of leaflets, marching through the East End and so on. If women would like to receive information, to become involved in actions or support them in any way, or if you are organising actions of your own, two contact addresses for London groups are:

Annie at WAVAW, c/o A Woman's Place, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London, or telephone 01-923 1374.

Debbie at Sexual Violence and the Law Group, c/o Rights of Women, 52-54 Featherstone Street, London, or telephone 01-874 3142 (evenings).

At the very least, feminists should write letters of complaint to those who manufacture and sell 'Jack the Ripper' goods (we could start with the video game, see address below). We should also consider disrupting and/or picketing tourist attractions like the Trocadero, as well as any events specially organised for the centenary.

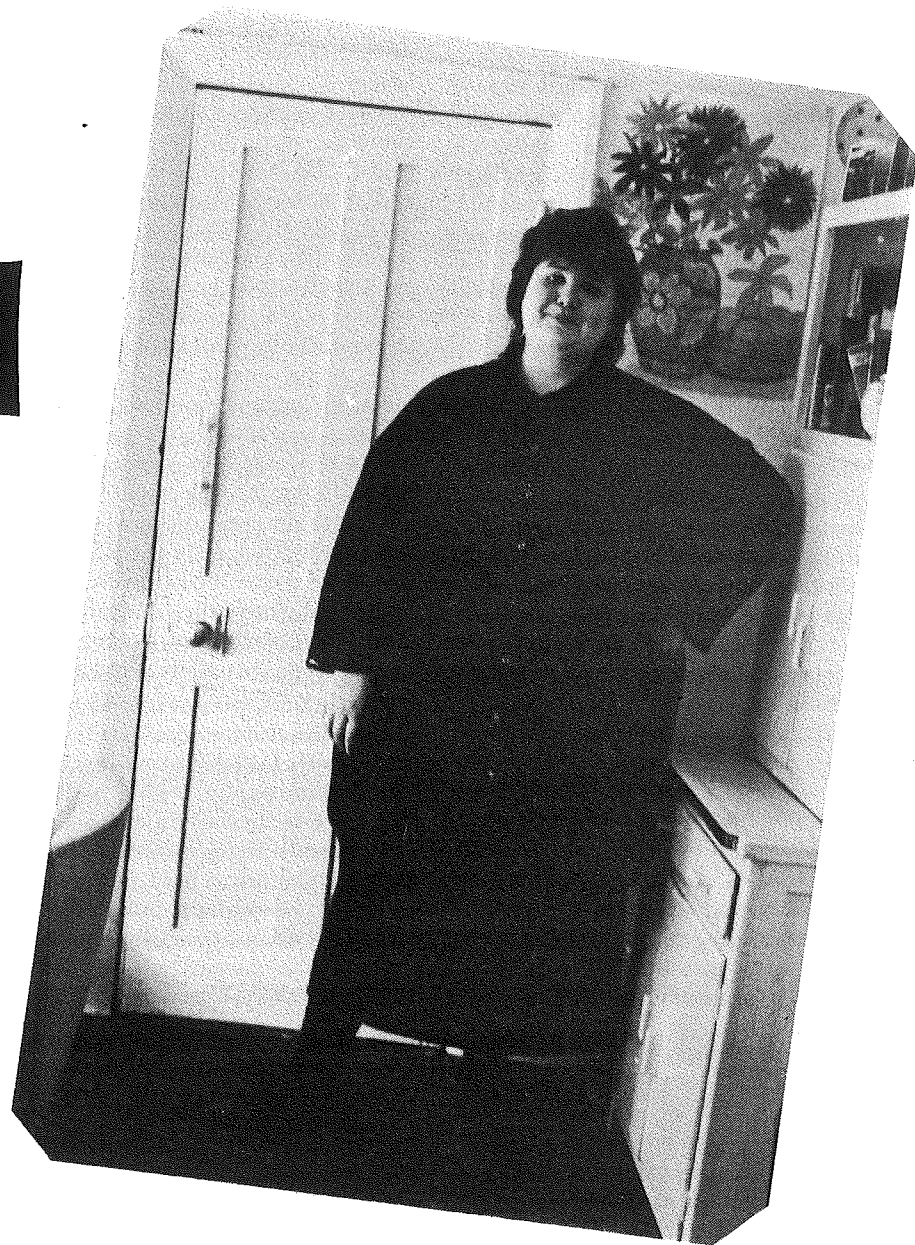
I would also like to see feminists organise our own alternative events, designed to draw attention to what the others try to hide: the prevalence and significance of sexual killing, and more broadly, the way society is permeated with male violence. One of the things I feel strongly is that we should find some way to publicly commemorate the five women who were killed by Jack the Ripper, along with other women who have died at male hands since. Those who glorify the criminal should be forced to remember the victims — and though feminists usually avoid that word *victim*, in the case of sexual murder it is no more than accurate.

Finally, I think that whatever we do, we must be aware, and make others aware, that our resistance to male violence has a context and a history. We are saying what our sisters before us have said: that we condemn male violence in all its forms, and we protest against the attitude which regards sexual murder as a harmless amusement and a cause for celebration. □

Notes:

1. Colin Wilson and Robin Odell (1987) *Jack the Ripper: summing up and verdict*, Bantam.
2. Speculations about the identity of the Ripper are an industry in themselves, and range from the idle to the wholly ludicrous. Women may be familiar with the theory that the murders were committed by the Freemasons or by a member of the Royal Family. Liz Frazer and I considered these ideas during the research for our book *The Lust to Kill*, and we did not believe there was much evidence to support any of them. All we know for sure is that 'Jack' must have been a man.

As I am



Tina Jenkins of the Fat Women's Group talks to Margot Farnham about growing up, self-image and the impact of fat liberation on her life.

MF: *Can you tell me about your weight as a child and about diets then?*

TJ: It's interesting. I went for a medical when I went on a school trip when I was about 14 and the doctor showed me a letter that my mum had written to the school when I was something like five or six. The

school must have suggested that I went on a diet; they had this thing: 'A fat child becomes a fat adult' and my mum wrote a letter saying, 'Don't be ridiculous, it's just puppy fat. She'll lose it when she gets older — she doesn't eat any more than other children'.

But then when I was seven the school put me on a diet and they sent me to the hospital for tests to see why I was fat, so by then she was obviously going along with it but they couldn't find anything wrong with me so they put me on a diet. That's my earliest memory of being fat and obviously my mum was part of it all and she used to encourage me by saying, 'When you lose a bit of weight, I'll buy you some clothes and you'll get a whole new Christmas outfit'.

But on the other hand I think she used to feel a bit guilty and a bit sad that I was only allowed one roast potato for Sunday dinner and then no sweets and one iced lolly a week and there were all these rules to this diet. I reached the required weight for the hospital and I didn't have to go back any more and I think basically I kept it up for a while and then I forgot it and my mum let me forget it. I don't remember her really going on at me at that point, when I was eight, nine. I think she always felt that as soon as I became conscious about my body then I would diet for myself and it wasn't fair to impose it on a child. I think when I became a teenager, then the fights began.

MF: *What kind of fights?*

TJ: We were only at peace if I was dieting. If I was dieting then we were in it together and we were happy and there were all these rewards promised. You know, 'Won't it be lovely when you get thin; I'll buy you some nice clothes'.

But when I wasn't dieting, it was just terrible; I felt really policed about food by my mother. I mean, she knew exactly how many biscuits were in the tin, how many cakes were there and so if I took anything without her giving it to me then there would be uproar. I mean terrible rows: 'You don't want to help yourself. You don't care what you look like. You've got no willpower'. And then on the other hand, because she was very loving and very giving, and a lot of the time with mothers and daughters that can be through food, when I was on a diet, sometimes she would say: 'Oh, two potatoes won't matter'. Then she would start to feel slightly guilty.

MF: *What about your father?*

TJ: Somehow he kept out of it. I mean, he would make the odd comment. He still

does, but it was never a constant thing where he would go on and on at me.

MF: *What happened at school?*

TJ: After a certain age I hated sports day. I didn't want to do sport. I'm sure that was to do with being fat. I was a really active kid; I had a bike and I really loved swimming and I played rounders. I was in the rounders team in my secondary school but in my primary school I think just at the end, I began to feel self-conscious. I didn't mind playing sports in school in the playgrounds or when we had PE but I hated sports day somehow because there was all these people watching and you had to compete. And I felt, because I'm fat I'll come last.

I wasn't a fast runner. I didn't mind rounders or netball or even gym, but I wasn't a good runner and I hated the thought of coming last and being laughed at. And also there were some real bullies in my school and if you were on somebody's team and you lost for the team (laughs), you had to take the consequences.

When I was seven I was put on a diet and my mum was a dinner lady at my school for the first couple of years and then she knew all the dinner ladies and they used to police me about food. I wasn't allowed pudding, so they were all told about it. I remember that.

MF: *How did you feel, when somebody always had their eye on what you were eating?*

TJ: I don't remember how I felt then but it must have been the start of an obsession with food, really wanting things that I couldn't have. I was really terrified because they said at the hospital where I went for the tests: 'If you don't lose weight, we'll have to keep you in'. And that really terrified me, so I was literally too scared to eat. At that age, why else would you diet except through total fear.

MF: *What made them say they would keep you in? Was that a bluff as far as they were concerned?*

TJ: I suppose so. I remember it just vaguely and I've never talked about it with my mother. But what I remember clearly is these big iron scales and this chart, that they showed me when I first went. The doctor said, 'Well, look. This is the average weight

for your age and you're not even on the chart'. I think it must have been the beginning of this thing: 'You don't fit. You're not normal'. Somehow I was something floating in mid-air off the chart. And then as I lost weight this red line appeared at the top and then zigzagged down. That must have been the beginning of feelings of difference. I was seven. I suppose you are bullied but I don't really remember being conscious of my body. I don't remember looking in the mirror and not liking it. I was a fairly happy kid.

MF: *And your dancing classes, that you were doing all this time. How was that? Dancing for girl children seems very much about clothes and spectacle.*

TJ: I was always put into a class that was a year or two older than me, because I was always bigger and tall. When I was seven and I lost weight, I can vaguely remember feeling better about myself because all these rewards came, all these new clothes. I know that I was in a school show and part of the costume was shorts and I remember thinking, 'Now I look all right with everybody else'. I can remember being conscious of my weight at seven because I was made to be. I was just terrified of being carted off to this hospital, like having a disease.

MF: *Did you ever have strong feelings about your body. If you did, when was that?*

TJ: I suppose it came with puberty. I was always told, 'You're really pretty; you've got a lovely face'. My mother said, 'You're really beautiful; if you were thinner'. I was quite vain in a way. I became obsessed with my face because my body wasn't what it was supposed to be. I spent hours doing my hair; I somehow discarded the rest of me. But clothes were important to me.

MF: *Was there a fashion that was right for you?*

TJ: I always made an effort and I was always quite fashionable but there were still things that I would have liked that I couldn't buy. I never went to Biba to buy clothes, for example. My friends used to go to Biba and buy pencil skirts. I had to go down Walthamstow market with my mum or shop in Marks and Spencers.

MF: *When did you become conscious of boys?*

TJ: I had boyfriends. It was a mixture of feeling sexually confident and attractive and on the other hand feeling very vulnerable and terrified. And girls can be very cruel at that age. I was quite proud and I didn't want people to think that I ever suffered. I always fought back about things. I wouldn't put myself in a situation where they all got picked by boys and I didn't. I still got boyfriends. At 15, although I was fat, I felt that I was still semi-acceptable. I wasn't that fat and I could carry it quite well; I was quite tall. I would go to disco's and I would be asked to dance. It was more about what my own friends and other people might think, rather than it ever happening.

MF: *Did you diet as a teenager?*

TJ: Yes, from about 13 to when I went to university I was on and off diets all the time. I would diet for a couple of months, then stop. I would lose weight very slowly and then I put weight back on really quickly once I stopped dieting, and usually more weight than I'd taken off. Just this whole vicious cycle. So I began to get fatter through my teens and I think a lot of it was through dieting because I'd then eat junk after my diet. I don't think I ever ate in a serious way, compared to some women, really compulsively, but after a diet I would have a cream cake every day and a packet of crisps. I'd eat loads of junk, because they were all the things I wasn't allowed when I was on the diet.

MF: *Was it pleasure or consolation? How did you feel about those foods?*

TJ: It was a mixture. Because there was so much guilt involved, it could never be totally pleasurable. And I would always eat those things in secret because if you're fat you're not supposed to be eating things like that. I was obsessed with food and my attitude to food was totally unhealthy. Some nights I used to lie in bed and see these biscuits throbbing in the tin. I would think about food constantly. I was totally obsessed because it seemed like an enemy and I really wanted it. And sometimes I used to save up my pocket money and get this whole feast, bunk off school and go home and secretly eat it in my bedroom and put the wrappers down the rubbish chute. I don't do that any more.

MF: *Have you been able to stop dieting?*

TJ: Yes, I stopped. I haven't dieted since I was about 18, but it wasn't a conscious decision at the time. I always thought, 'I would still diet'. It's this thing that fat women always do, you postpone your life. You always think, 'I'm not always going to be like this'. It's too unbearable to think like that. 'Tomorrow I'll start my diet. I'll be thin, one day. That's when I'll lead my proper life'.

When I went to university, I started going out with somebody and he really pressurised me, because he was quite threatened by me and it was something he could use against me. I could spend ages getting ready to go out and he would say one little thing like, 'Do you really think you should wear that skirt?'. Because I was so vulnerable, my confidence would collapse and I couldn't go out.

Food was really important in that relationship, in that he cooked mainly and it was really nice food and it was something we really enjoyed together. Then I think he really didn't like it if I dieted and he used to say, 'Oh well, it doesn't matter'.

There was also this thought that, when I got thinner I would leave him. I used to say, 'If I wasn't fat, I wouldn't stay with you'. He would say, 'Everything else about you is perfect. If only . . .'

People always say this to fat people. What you could have been and what you are, so you are not allowed to be yourself. I still have so many resentments against my mother because I thought of all the things that were good about me, and all the things I was, as I was, which included me being fat. They didn't count with her because what counted was being thin.

MF: *What happened when you wanted to start a relationship?*

TJ: In the past, I was always scared, but not so scared that I wouldn't get involved with somebody, but usually fat wouldn't be discussed. I wouldn't bring it up. With the man I went out with at university, it was a whole three months before the fact that I was fat was actually mentioned; I would never talk about it. People always avoid the word. As soon as it was on the agenda, then it carried on being on the agenda and it could be used against me.

'You'd look lovely in that — if only you could wear it'.

When I was younger, 15, I felt really vulnerable and I thought, 'It must be going through their heads that they are with a fat woman'. I always used to feel that, even if somebody fancied me, social pressure would put them off and they wouldn't want to have a fat girlfriend. I come from a London working-class background and part of that culture was that your status was bound up with who you went out with, because you would get terrible ridicule from friends.

When I was young it was all disco's. That's where you met boys, a real cattle market. I wanted university to be more about being interesting and talking to people, so I'd have more time to just be myself. Because I met my boyfriend in the first week, I never really went to socials or disco's. I had also slowly got fatter since I was 15, so I don't know how I would have felt about going out to disco's again.

MF: *You said your attitude is different now to then?*

TJ: Now I would talk about it. I wouldn't go out with somebody who was going to punish me in that way, at least I hope I wouldn't. I'd make it clear that there were certain things that I won't put up with. I always worry because I think there's part of me that hates myself, which gives room to allow somebody else to hate me and to punish me, but I'd like to think that I'm strong enough now, and I feel good enough about myself not to take it anymore. So I would say, 'If you don't like me as I am, then there's no point' or 'I'm not going to change and you have to accept that.' But in the past I felt grateful and I used to promise, 'I will get thin'. I'm sure that I still have all those vulnerabilities: 'They don't really fancy me', or 'Do they find me attractive? Do they really want somebody thin?'.

You do make yourself vulnerable in a sexual relationship. If somebody on the street abuses me, it's upsetting, but I can deal with it. With my mother — somebody who's supposed to love me and care about me — or with friends, it's much more upsetting if they're abusive. And with a lover, that's really upsetting because it is about trust and being vulnerable with somebody.



I must be about four and that's on holiday, so I'm chubby but acceptable. I've got loads of photos from this time. They all stop when I get to about five.



This is the ballroom dancing class. Again I look quite confident but that's after I lost weight as well. I am eight. I can remember liking myself, being pleased at wearing those sort of dresses. You had to do a display and then you got your prize. I think because I always did quite well at school and at the dancing class, I was always proud of myself in one way. Being fat then never made me think 'I'm a disgusting person'. I've always valued myself.



I lost weight. I must be about eight, nine, so again tubby and I've got taller. I felt happy about the way I looked; I was still confident; I still like myself at this time. There's loads of photographs of me from this period. I kept them.



I took this myself. I did this photography class a couple of years ago. I'm doing one now. It's interesting because I'm hiding my chin because I've got a double chin. It's a typical pose to put my hand under my chin or to be really conscious about what angle I'm taken at. I would hate to be photographed from the back because then you can't see my face and I hate being photographed from the side. I always want to be photographed head-on because I think my personality is contained in my face.

But it makes me feel good to be in a sexual relationship and to be fat. It's validating to be a sexual person. Because when you're fat and you're not in a relationship or not having sex, you feel you confirm all the things that people think about you: 'Fat people are asexual; they're unattractive'. So part of being in a sexual relationship is really wonderful because it's like saying no to all of that.

I'm quite a confident person. I'm quite outgoing. I like sex. It doesn't scare me. I don't feel I'm really traumatised about it through being fat and I'm able to enjoy it, but on the other hand all those other things never go away. And I'm really hypersensitive about how someone looks at me or touches me. Like this man I was going out with at university — he would only touch certain parts of me. Parts of my body that were acceptable, were overtly sexual, whereas I felt he would never take a lot of time with all of my body. And a lot of that I think was just him. He was a man and he was insensitive. But of course you blame yourself for everything. It's like, 'If I was thin, my life would be better; if I was thin, he would love me more.'

MF: *You started talking about harassment. What had been your experience of that?*

TJ: I think there's a way of being on the street or in a social situation which is like saying, 'I'm not scared to be here; I'm not ashamed; you can't abuse me'. So I would always keep my head up and stare back at men who were being abusive and then they get really embarrassed. I don't get a hell of a lot of abuse but you always think that people are looking at you or sometimes people will shout something. In the past I would have felt really ashamed but now I always get angry and fight back, and I also tell people if something bad happens. I used to keep it all to myself. It was all part of not talking about being fat and not wanting to admit that those things happened to me. Now if something happens to me I always make a point of telling somebody.

MF: *How did you get involved in the Fat Women's group?*

TJ: I read *Shadow on a Tightrope* three years ago and that was the first time I'd come across these sorts of ideas. And it was really devastating for me. I'd skim read *Fat*

is a Feminist Issue but I didn't identify with it at all and I didn't find it at all helpful — because although I'd eaten compulsively at certain points in my life, I don't think I fit neatly into what Suzie Orbach sees as a 'compulsive eater'. And I think I'd eaten compulsively because I was fat already and because of diets, it wasn't that I was thin once.

So I got that book and that was wonderful but really painful. I remember it was like a coming-out experience, to talk about being fat, which I'd never done. I remember I was talking to a friend about it and just shaking while I was saying it. I just let it out slowly over a period of two years after that. There were all these things I wanted to say and all this anger.

MF: *What do you remember most about the ideas in the book?*

TJ: Just that there were women who had always been fat like me and that I wasn't to blame. It wasn't because I was lazy or disgusting or ate too much. It was just how I was. And the fact that we could be angry and it was a political anger! It's something just to stop blaming yourself. On TV and in magazines there are always successful slimmers and they are paraded before you and you think, 'My god, why can't I do it?'. It's always your fault.

The book allowed me not to blame myself and finally to feel that all my anger at people was justified. It allowed me to stop feeling that I deserved abuse.

MF: *And the group itself?*

TJ: A woman who'd also read the book and wanted to write an article for *Spare Rib* phoned me up. A few of us met for about a year and then the article was published and out of that about 25 women contacted us through the article and we met and that was really exciting. That was about three months ago and lots of ideas came out of it: things like a weekend conference; swimming and sports classes; an anthology; a video. I'm getting involved in doing a photo exhibition. Women's health Information Centre are going to do a bulletin on fat and health and there's going to be a workshop.

MF: *What are the health issues that have been raised for you?*

TJ: There is always this thing that fat is

unhealthy, so I have all these fears about being fat and I think I'm a real hypochondriac because of it. I'm the sort of person that needs to go to the doctor a lot but because I feel so harassed by them I just won't go. It's almost phobic.

So I do and I don't take care of myself. I think part of me is self-destructive, usually out of real fear. It's terrible because if you're not well, or you're worried, you need somebody to listen to you, not someone being abusive, ignoring what you are saying, just going on about you being fat and patronising you.

On the other hand, I do take care of myself. Health is a big issue for me. Obviously I think your body is different if you're fat. I don't feel like I could climb up a mountain. I'm sure some fat people can, but personally it is a lot of weight and it does stop me from doing certain things. But I feel it's what I am and I can't do anything about it.

There is exercise like swimming which is really comfortable if you're fat, and there's no reason why I shouldn't be able to swim every day instead of walking up a mountain. But then I can't do that because of abuse if you go to the swimming pool. I hope through the group to go swimming and do exercise classes.

MF: *The other thing I wanted to ask you about was photographs.*

TJ: I've got quite a lot of photographs, mainly taken in the last five years. With old photos, I've kept the ones from periods when I was thinner, say just after the diet when I was seven or before I was five, when I was just chubby. There's a period between five and seven when I was properly fat and all of those are hidden away in a drawer at my mum's — I haven't chosen to put them into albums. I still find it quite difficult to face my own image and accept it so I'm always really selective about photographs and feel really vulnerable, which I think is true of most fat people.

MF: *Have you been taking photographs of other fat women in your group?*

TJ: Not yet. Heather is my friend who's fat and I've taken really nice photographs of her. We went on holiday together and I was very conscious then that I was photographing a fat woman and wanting her to

look good. I remember taking a lot of time waiting for the photograph so she wouldn't look self-conscious.

And we went swimming together in the sea and I hadn't swum in years and I was really happy and we took photographs then. I had a big T-shirt on but she had a swimming costume and we trusted each other enough to do that. Heather and I would like to do a photo project for fat women — interview them and take pictures.

MF: *Is there anything else you wanted to talk about?*

TJ: Because I've always been fat, my whole life coincides with it so it's such a big topic. The general feeling that I have is that I don't fit. So I just can't get on with my life and be a person. I have to be a fat person. Very rarely do I stop being conscious about my body; even if I'm sitting on a bus, somehow I'm always aware that I'm a fat person. I'm a fat person walking down the street. So I have to be me 'plus'. I suppose part of accepting myself is to stop seeing it like that, although it is very difficult.

What's sad is that fat women are really self-conscious and don't want to talk about being fat, are scared to identify as fat and be with other fat people. I still have that; just being on the street with two other fat women can be traumatic. It's like this fat ghetto — you want to be a normal person with thin people like everybody else, which is terrible because it should be the opposite because strength in a way comes from being together. Somehow I feel all right with Heather.

MF: *Would you go out with the group, with 25 women?*

TJ: I hope so. I find it really daunting, I must admit. But I'll do it. But part of me thinks (laughs) 'Oh, god, the last thing you want to do is draw attention to yourself.

But that's where the strength is and that's what's wonderful, to go beyond that and be able to draw attention to yourself and not feel bad about it. □

International struggles against pornography

Susanne Kappeler reports on the bizarre happenings in Germany, where the radical feminist magazine 'EMMA' has launched a new debate and campaign against pornography.

West German feminists have once again launched a frontal attack on the issue of pornography. Ten years ago, the radical feminist monthly magazine *Emma* took the mainstream picture magazine *Stern* to court, charging that its use of nearly naked women on its covers was degrading and humiliating to all women. It was an important test case which, although it didn't win, had considerable impact on public consciousness, and indeed for a while on the policy of *Stern* which temporarily changed the style of its covers (admittedly not for very long).

In October 1987, *Emma* began a three-part discussion of pornography in its magazine, introducing research carried out by members of the *Emma* collective, as well as feminist theory and research from the United States. In November, *Emma's* own publishing house published the translation of Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (now unobtainable in Britain until its projected reprint in Spring 1988), and on 26 November launched a feminist legislative proposal to deal with pornography. At a public conference organised by *Emma* in Cologne, Alice Schwarzer from *Emma*, Andrea Dworkin, and CDU (Christian Democratic Union) Minister Rita Süßmuth debated the feminist legislative proposal with politicians of all parties, journalists, sexologists, and over 3000 women and men in the audience (another 1000 had to be sent away).

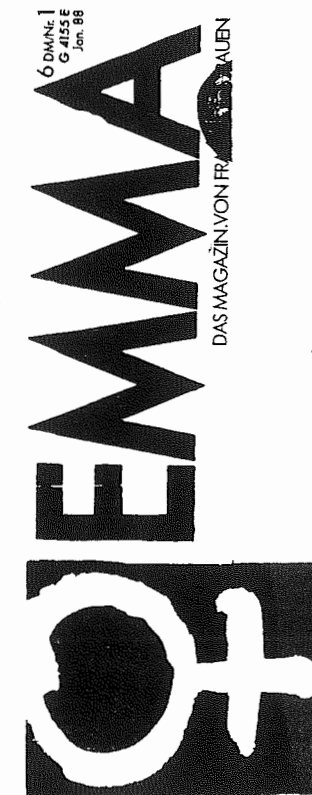
However, such forays into the public sphere and a domain treasured and heavily

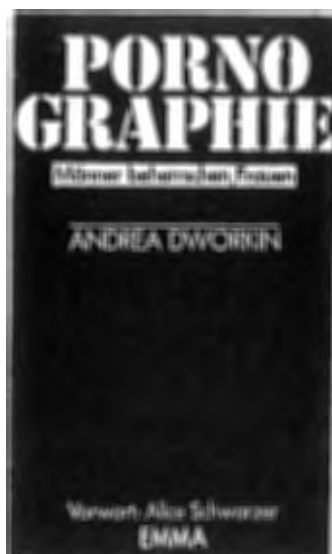
defended by men did not go unopposed. After the first part of the pornography debate had appeared in the October issue, many women began to contact the editorial office of *Emma* that they couldn't find the November issue at their booksellers or newsagents.

Public prosecution or private sabotage?

Rumours began to fly and other newspapers reported that *Emma* had been censored by the public prosecutor under the law prohibiting hard core pornography (para.184 StGB). However, *Emma* itself had heard nothing from the public prosecutor, who indeed had done nothing of the sort. *Emma* began to investigate and discovered that particularly in the region around Munich, distributors and retailers had been warned about the alleged prosecution of *Emma* and been told that retailers themselves would be liable to prosecution if they distributed and sold copies of *Emma*. These warnings came from two Munich lawyers, one Dr Auer, and one Dr Kuner. A brief inquiry by *Emma* revealed that Dr Auer is amongst other things the legal representative of *Penthouse*. Dr Kuner is known to have specialised for years in the defence of pornographic magazines, such as *Sexy*, *Schlüsselloch* (Keyhole), *Traumgirls* (Dreamgirls) and *St Pauli* (the Soho of Hamburg).

We can hardly claim to be surprised by the porn industry's foul play in its own self-defence, since we have seen the porn industry of the United States attack feminists,





feminist publications and feminist publishing houses in similar fashion, buying or trying to buy up feminist presses, vilifying feminists personally in their porn magazines, or issuing death threats to feminist activists and their associates. The case of *Emma* shows us the first step, economic assault (although ten years ago Alice Schwarzer of *Emma* suffered public vilification and defamation in the media during the *Stern* court case). Many of the newsagents and distributors either returned their copies of *Emma* or else shredded them; few of them sold them. Although *Emma* tried to increase sales through individuals and alternative organisations, it clearly made a massive loss on that issue since its bills had to be paid regardless. Rumours of the demise of *Emma* also began to circulate, which to me didn't seem all that fanciful given the situation of feminist publications in this country. Whilst the wide distribution of *Emma* throughout Germany might seem enviable to British magazines apart from *Spare Rib*, it is also sobering to see how vulnerable any feminist project may be which relies either on mainstream structures — or indeed public funding, as we are reminded ourselves in Britain by Clause 28.

'Emma' goes to Bonn

So it was with pleasure that I read in my January issue of *Emma* how things had developed. On 25 November *Emma* delivered 539 copies of the feminist legislative proposal to the Bundestag (Houses of Parliament) in Bonn, one for each representative personally addressed, as well as copies to the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Family. Three hours later *Emma* held a press conference, with Andrea Dworkin as a guest, and the next day the huge public meeting in Cologne. And apparently *Emma* is selling better than before the boycott, since in addition to commercial distribution there are now lots of women (and even right-on men) selling the magazine in the streets, in cafes and alternative venues, in the good old manner of self-reliance.

The rest of the January and February issues, with a nearly complete transcription of the public meeting debate, a report about a further public debate, and the first responses to the legislative proposal and to Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography*, gives less cause for celebration.

Free speech

Public debate in Germany seems depressingly similar and no less primitive than it has been in the US and in Britain. The Freiburg 'University Federation against Conformism' quickly 'challenged' Alice Schwarzer with a nasty rhyming slogan (loosely translated) 'Even where the shit is deepest Alice Schwarzer will be there', the title of a tract which trashes not only Schwarzer personally but the whole German women's movement. (The German media still like to pillory a single 'leader' of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), much as the media here used to focus on Germaine Greer.) So she decided to go there, on the invitation of women from Freiburg, to participate in another public debate.

From the trendy press via the gutter to the intellectual *Die Zeit*, from the unidentified man in the audience to the politicians, editors and other worthy office holders, German men come up with the same startlingly new arguments that feminist critique of pornography 'is' censorship, is fascist, an attack on human rights and freedom, retrogressive, anti-sex, growing out of the knitting mentality of small-brained women, etc, etc. And lots of very right-on and 'alternative' men and magazines are right in there with the rest — nothing new on that front either.

Meanwhile in Britain and the US

In Britain *Everywoman*, on 1 February this year, published the complete transcript of the public hearings on the Dworkin-MacKinnon Ordinance, in book form as *Pornography and Sexual Violence: Evidence of the Links*, as part of a new campaign against pornography. The hearings were held at Minneapolis City Council in December 1983, when the Ordinance was first being considered, and have never previously been published: it has proved impossible to persuade any publisher in the US to publish them.

To recap briefly the history of the ordinance [see also *Trouble and Strife*, no.7]: in 1983/4 the ordinance was twice passed by the Minneapolis City Council, and twice vetoed by one man, the Mayor of that city. A similar version was passed in 1984 by Indianapolis City Council and became law, but was at once challenged in

the District Court, which ruled the ordinance unconstitutional on the grounds that it violated the guarantee of free speech in the First Amendment of the US constitution.

On 24 February 1986, the United States Supreme Court upheld the ruling of the District Court that the ordinance was unconstitutional, which therefore extended the validity of that ruling over the whole of the United States, making the introduction of any similar ordinance in any other State impossible.

Guarantee of oppression

The ruling of the US Supreme Court, however, is of significance far beyond its role in terminating the struggle over the Dworkin-MacKinnon ordinance in the US. The ruling constitutes a mile-stone in the history of the struggle for women's rights, and provides a crucial input into any future debate on the links between pornography and violence against women. For the Supreme Court upheld the feminist analysis of women's oppression which underlies the Dworkin-MacKinnon ordinance, and enshrined in its ruling that:

Depictions of subordination tend to perpetuate subordination. The subordinate status of women in turn leads to affront and lower pay at work, insult and injury at home, battery and rape on the streets.¹

(Never mind that battering and rape mostly happen at home.) That this led to the ruling against the ordinance can only be explained by the extraordinary kinks of male logic, for while, in Judge Easterbook's own words, 'this simply demonstrates the power of pornography as speech' — demonstrates, in other words, the much looked-for 'link' between pornography, the subordination of women and male violence against women rather than the rights and lives of women, he concluded that this power of pornography needed the protection of the constitution.

Can the debate move on?

So the US Supreme Court ruling is a monumental step forward in the legal recognition of the present status of women in society and the mechanisms which perpetuate our oppression, among which pornography is central. We should therefore no longer need to argue it; the argument can now turn to the question: is there any

reason why the subordination of women should end, why equality for women should become a goal?

The published account of the Minnesota hearings provides an interesting spectacle, much like the public debates in Germany, of men producing every reason under the sun why nothing should be done about pornography. No-one disputes the 'links' between pornography and the harm it does to women, set out in the clearest, simplest, rational and horrific testimonies of women. Among the reasons offered why the subordination of women should remain untouched are the overcrowded offices of the Civil Rights Commission who would have to administrate the ordinance; the fact that gay men also suffer discrimination; the possibility that the *Wife of Bath* might be found to represent a subordinate woman; the fact that booksellers might lose money or be taken to court if selling pornography; the fact that there exist already a lot of complicated laws; and the opinion that no redress is in fact required: the status quo is just fine.

Alongside, there are the singularly sane voices of women describing the status quo for those who seem to lack insight into it from their privileged points of view. Since these are still rarely heard in the pornography debate in the media, here or anywhere else, *Trouble and Strife* decided to reprint some extracts from them.³

MS. A: The game of art

My first introduction, before I began in the game of art or more directly under the guise of art, my earlier recollection is of my boyfriend and he was an art student, we were sitting together, I 17, he 19. He showed me art books and also books, magazines of pornography. And as he was showing me these works, he was doing critique of women's bodies, of their facial expression, of parts of their bodies and of their dress. Following this was a critique of my too athletic, too muscular body. I was 17, it was very devastating to me that my body was being torn apart in this way.

Within a year my boyfriend had a photography assignment and he came home from school and asked me if I would help him with his assignment. When I asked him what it was, he said it was a photography

Ich bekomme:
20 Aufkleber
PorNO



assignment where he had to photograph a series of pictures in which he had to use a woman. He said the woman had to be naked and said he thought that I would want to help him do this. When I objected to doing this he came up with the reply, "You don't want me to see another woman naked, do you? You never know what could happen and I really thought you would want to help me." He said he had the perfect site, it would only take a few minutes.

I was home from school with the German measles at the time. The next day he picked me up, we went to the perfect site, it was an abandoned bus in an overgrown field. When we got there he asked me, he told me to take off my clothes and to pose in various positions, either draped over the corroded, rusty seats on in positions where I acted as if I was running towards the door. And then he asked me to put my body in contorted different positions, draped down the stairs of the bus, and they were quite jagged, and at that moment I realized that we were depicting a murder. I became very terrified and scared and I was really cold. I told him I didn't want to do this and that I wanted to go home and that I was really scared.

While we were doing this, I would like to backtrack for a minute, I wasn't achieving the right facial expressions for the pictures so he started telling me stories that depicted pursuits during rape so that I would have the right expressions on my face like the women in the magazines. I remember being very distant from him and just wanting to get home. I remember being very scared.

After this he switched to water colors. At the time when I was 21 I graduated from college, I was thinking about going to medical school and I wasn't receiving a lot of support at that time for that decision. "Women weren't supposed to do that" was the message I was getting. I married this man and for the next two years we mainly pursued our careers.

During the second year of our marriage he started reading more and more pornography. He started out reading *Playboy* and started picking up magazines like *Penthouse* and *Forum* and as I would come home from work and fix dinner, he would read excerpts from the magazines. Some of them were

articles and some of them were letters to the editor, ranging from group sex, wife swapping, anal intercourse and bondage, to mention a few. I was really repulsed at the things he was reading me and I was really in disbelief. I kept saying "people are just making these things up for this magazine, I don't believe it." He brought more and more magazines to prove to me that people weren't making it up, that all of these people were saying how wonderful these things were.

About this time when we went out we started meeting his friends at wet T-shirt contests, amateur strip nights or elsewhere. We would meet together as a group at pornographic adult theaters or live sex shows. Initially I started arguing that the women on stage looked very devastated like they were disgusted and hated it. I felt devastated and disgusted watching it. I was told by those men if I wasn't as smart as I was and would be more sexually liberated and more sexy, I would get along a lot better in the world and that they and a lot of other men would like me more.

About this time I started feeling very terrified. I realized that this wasn't a joke any more, that this was something that he was really serious about. I called my mother and I told her that there were things happening in my marriage around sex that I really didn't like, and she told me that divorce was something that she didn't want in our family and it was very disgraceful and she knew how competent I was and she said, "I know you can hang in there and give it your best."

About this time, to kind of numb myself, I remember that there was a lot more drinking with my husband and I and with our friends. When people would come over to dinner, there was a lot of alcohol consumed, he would bring out a drinking and stripping game. After the game began he started to ask the people to live out the various different scenarios that he had been reading to me in the magazines. A few times the people participated in this. A couple of times I stayed, once I left.

Following this we would have incredible arguments with each other. I would tell him I loved him, I only wanted to love him, I wanted to be a good wife, I wanted our marriage to work but I didn't want to be

with these other people. It was he I wanted to be with and no one else. He told me if I loved him I would do this. And that, as I could see from the things that he read me in the magazines initially, a lot of times women didn't like it but if I tried it enough I would probably like it and I would learn to like it. And he would read me stories where women learned to like it.

During this time, once when I was asleep at night and a friend of his was over, he asked the friend — he set up with a friend to come into our room and sleep with us. I woke up finding this friend in bed with us. Once he realized that I was not a willing participant in this experience, he apologized to me and said he was sorry and he left.

To prevent more of these group situations, which I found very humiliating and very destructive to my self-esteem and my feeling of self-worth as a person, to prevent these I agreed with him to act out in privacy a lot of those scenarios that he read to me. A lot of them depicting bondage and different sexual acts that I found very humiliating.

Things were getting really terrible and I was feeling suicidal and very worthless as a person, at that time any dreams that I had of a career in medicine were just totally washed away. I could not think of myself any more as a human being.

About this time he started having to go away a lot and I was left alone. I started studying karate and I also started feeling again like I had some kind of control over my body. And I started really feeling in touch with the fact that I was a person. I started travelling, I did a lot of travelling by myself and I started feeling more and more courageous.

I went to the Philippines on one of my last visits overseas and I was there for three weeks. During the time that I was there I was staying mainly at a Navy base. Outside of that navy base the prostitution was very visible and very explicit. Everywhere you went there were men hiring prostitutes, those were the only women that I saw there. I was one of the few American women.

One night when I was in one of the pornographic institutions, I was sitting with a couple of people that I had known, watching the women on stage and watching the

different transactions and the sales of the women and the different acts go on, and I realized that my life wasn't any different than these women except that it was done in the name of marriage. I could see how I was being seasoned to the use of pornography and I could see what was coming next. I could see more violence and I could see more humiliation, and I knew at that point I was either going to die from it, I was going to kill myself, or I was going to leave. And I was feeling strong enough that I left.

Pornography is not a fantasy, it was my life, reality. It involved abuse to my body to create it.

MS. Z: Pornography was our textbook

Before I start, I just want to say what is happening right now is very incredible to me and I know it is very hard for everyone in this room to be here and to be listening to these horror stories. And I hope that people stay with their full concentration for the rest of the evening.

I am speaking for a group of women, we all live in Minneapolis and we all are former prostitutes. All of us feel very strongly about the relationship between pornography and prostitution. Many of us wanted to testify at this hearing but are unable to because of the consequences of being identified as a former whore.

We have started to meet together to make sense of the abuse we have experienced in prostitution and how pornography endorses and legitimizes that abuse. These are some of our stories. The following has all happening to real women who are the exception because they have survived both pornography and prostitution. And as we sit here, this abuse is happening right now in the City tonight.

One of the very first commonalities we discovered as a group, we were all introduced to prostitution through pornography, there were no exceptions in our group, and we were all under 18.

Pornography was our textbook, we learned the tricks of the trade by men exposing us to pornography and us trying to mimic what we saw. I could not stress enough what a huge influence we feel this was. Somehow it was okay. These pictures were real men and women who appeared to be happy consenting adults, engaged in human sexuality.

Before I go on, one might make the assumption that if a woman got involved with pornography and prostitution after she was 18, that she is a willing participant. And since the women I speak for were all under age when they began, it is easier to see them as victims.

Personally, I feel this to be very dangerous. By talking to women who got involved in prostitution and pornography in their early 20s, the powerlessness and victimization they described and experienced is the same that young women and children feel.

Here are specific stories we have shared, about how pornography encouraged and taught us and how it was used to brutalize and terrorize us as women.

Men would constantly want to do what they have seen in pornography. If pornography was not actually in the room with the client, there would be constant references. One example is that a woman was in a room with two clients, one man told the other that he had seen some pictures of women who had shaved their pubic hair and that it had turned him on. They then proceeded with a jackknife to remove the woman's pubic hairs, plucking and burning what the knife missed. They made comments of how her hairless vagina reminded them of their young daughters' genitals. They then, of course, engaged in intercourse.

Women were forced constantly to enact specific scenes that men had witnessed in pornography. They would direct women to copy postures and poses of things they had seen in magazines and then they would take their own pictures of the women. One man paid a woman in the 6th Ward \$35 to recruit another woman so he could direct them in a lesbian scenario he had seen in a movie. She was supposed to recruit the other woman for him. When *Deep Throat* was released, we experienced men joking and demanding oral sex.

The other thing, very briefly, that I need to address tonight is the specific abuse of women of color in our community, specifically black women and the Native American women living here. There is a native woman, C. L. who will testify tomorrow night, who six months ago was brutally

raped and beaten. And the men that attacked and raped her were making continuous comments about *Custer's Last Stand*, which is a video thing about these men chasing a squaw and they do things to her. They said, "This is better than *Custer's Last Stand*, let's try the chase scene in *Custer's Last Stand*." I want people to know that there is pornography dealing with color and that is happening in our community right now.

It is very amazing to me what happens when a group of ex-prostitutes get together in one room and tell stories. One of the things we discovered was that the men we had serviced were very powerful men in this community. Especially interesting to us are the amounts of men involved in the media, in this community, that use prostitutes and pornography. These are the same men that perpetuate the myth that Minneapolis is a clean city with exceptional morals and a high quality of life.

In closing I would like to say that in my experience, there was not one situation where a client was not using pornography while he was using me or that he had not just watched pornography or that it was verbally referred to, and directed me to pornography.

I know that this is a very complicated issue. I am asking you to recognize the pure simplicity of it. Men witness the abuse of women in pornography constantly and if they can't engage in that behaviour with their wives, girlfriends, or children, they force a whore to do it.

My wish is that you could see with my eyes just for a day how clear the relationship is between pornography and the systematic abuse of women. The other thing I just need to stress is that every single thing you see in pornography is happening to a real woman right now. There is no way out of the connection and that we are responsible for knowing and having that information. □

Anti-Porno-Kampagne

If you would like to join the newly launched Campaign Against Pornography, please write to:
CAP, c/o Everywoman (address as above). Please also send a donation if you can.

WHO'S HOLDING THE BOTTLE?

The debate on how women 'should' feed babies has usually been couched in moral and emotional terms. Here Dena Attar takes a hard look at women's differing experiences, the conflicting advice we are often given and the vested interests of the baby milks industry.

Breastfeeding gives women a bad name. It isn't a topic close to the heart of many feminists, let alone most *Trouble and Strife* readers.

These are the thoughts which tugged at me as I tried to write this article, and wondered whether I ought not to keep quiet instead. For I envisage my reader as someone who is faintly hostile, who probably hasn't decided if she can bring herself to read about an issue which has been so sentimentalised, which appears to deny women the right to use our bodies as we ourselves wish, and which has been portrayed as a middle-class preoccupation.

Why continue? Because I am now sure those attitudes do exist, though not just amongst feminists, and that we have not given enough thought to them or how they arose, who has been encouraging them, and their consequences for mothers and children everywhere. There is an apparent consensus that human milk is the most appropriate food for human infants, even if the 'breast is best' slogan makes some of us shudder. But for women, infant nutrition is not the only facet of the feeding process, what about experiencing ourselves as autonomous, free to refuse an activity we may dislike, free to work, travel, or even to refuse the role of primary caretaker? And if breastfeeding is impossible for some women for whatever reason, should they be forced to suffer, because the whole business has been made into such a moral issue?

Reactionary rubbish

These reactions are understandable, given the immense amount of rubbish which has been spoken and written about breastfeeding, the lies that have been told us, the use

of nursing-mother-and-child imagery for religious purposes and for other strictly anti-feminist ends. Moreover we have always had a certain amount of ambivalence about how to approach anything to do with biological motherhood, seeing it as such a major, though not inevitable, source of our oppression that we don't want to reinforce messages which equate womanhood with motherhood, however much we want to support mothers.

So the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in Britain has tended to leave campaigns directly about mothers and babies to other organisations, often mixed, often non-feminist. Then when they mess it up by coming out with all sorts of reactionary lines we have even more grounds for keeping aloof. We have not had a feminist childcare, childbirth or breastfeeding campaign. We have either fallen in with work done by various other groups or we've condemned them as being, for example, too narrowly white and middle-class, and stayed away. In the long term, it is not good enough for us to react in this way. It is meaningless for us to support women's choices without seeing that for a great many women there is no real choice. Breastfeeding should not be made into a moral issue for individual mothers, but both nationally and internationally there are moral and political issues involved which I think we ought to face.

I used to believe, like a lot of women, that concern about breast or bottle-feeding belonged in the past. True, there had been a major scandal about baby milk promotion in countries where mothers were too poor or uneducated to use the product properly or where water supplies were unsafe, but the consumer boycott of Nestles had

'No woman worthy of the name of mother would bring her child up by hand, unless she were advised to by a medical man'. C F Picton-Gadsden, Practical Housewifery, 1905.

"A mother ought not, unless she intends to devote herself to her baby, to undertake to suckle him. Proper nursing means that she must forgo the so-called pleasures of fashionable life. There ought, in a case of this kind, to be no half-and-half measures; she should either give up her helpless babe to the tender mercies of a wet-nurse, or she must devote her whole time and energy to his welfare..." Dr Pye Henry Chavasse, Advice to a Wife, 1913 edition.

Notes

1. Quoted in *Off Our Backs*, vol. xvi, no. 4 (April 1986)
2. Catharine A MacKinnon, 'Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech', *Harvard Civil Rights - Civil Liberties Law Review*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1985); reprinted in Dworkin and MacKinnon, *The Reasons Why: Essays on the New Civil Rights Law Recognising Pornography as Sex Discrimination* (1988).
3. These testimonies have been edited. They are taken from *Pornography and Sexual Violence: Evidence of the Links* (Everywoman, 1988).

Pornography and Sexual Violence is available from Everywoman, 34 Islington Green, London N1 8DU, for £5.50 (incl. p+p).

... a well-known medical authority, speaking on this subject recently in an after-dinner speech, quotes a collective investigation on the future of bottlefed babies as showing that "intellectual obliquity, moral perversion, and special crankiness of all kinds result directly from the early warp given to the mind of the child by the gross and unworthy deception to which it is subjected..." from W B Drummond, *The Child*, 1900.

'Let not the mistaken husband insinuate that you will be less charming in his sight by doing your duty to your little ones... "O! that I could prevail upon my fair countrywomen to become still more lovely in the sight of men! Believe it not, when it is insinuated, that your bosoms are less charming, for having a dear little cherub at your breast. I speak from the feelings of a man... Trust me, there is no husband could withstand the fond solicitations of an endearing wife, should she be earnest in the desire of bringing up her own children... His love, tenderness, and gratitude, being thus engaged - with what raptures must he behold her, still carefully intent upon the preservation of his own image?", from *The Female Instructor*, 1812 (c).

worked, the World Health Organisation had stepped in, and babies were no longer dying in horrific numbers from the effects of inadequate or unhygienic bottlefeeding.

I also went along with what seemed a general belief, that the decline in breastfeeding in this country had now stopped and that all middle-class mothers breastfed because it was now fashionable. Never mind that I felt slightly defensive about having breastfed my own children, and that hardly anyone seemed able to accept that I could have seen it as being in my own interests, rather than complied with external pressures to be a perfect, selfless mother. I did occasionally try to explain to people who asked if it wouldn't have been easier to bottlefeed twins because someone else could have taken over some feeds, that this wouldn't have helped me at all on the days when there was no-one to take over, and anyway there were plenty of other chores to go round. I felt especially distressed talking to women who had given up breastfeeding because of the bad times they had had.

Breastfeeding didn't 'fulfil' me or bring me endless joy. It could be enjoyable at times and it could also be tiring, sometimes painful, or boring. Mostly it was the quickest, easiest way to feed a baby and something of a non-event. I can't think why my experience should seem exceptional or unusual, but in Britain today, apparently, it is.

Going along with the idea of defending a woman's right to choose how to feed her baby, I recognised that 'choice' might really be curtailed by her need to return to work, by a general lack of support for breastfeeding, by public or family disapproval, or by lousy medical practices and advice. But I didn't recognise how far I'd been made to explain my behaviour as if it was a 'choice' which needed justification. I didn't see, until recently, the extent to which the idea of 'choosing' between breast and bottle as reasonable alternatives had been carefully constructed by the baby milk industries in their interests, not in ours.

Following the instructions

Women exercising 'choice' does not offer us a real explanation for the huge, dramatic decline in breastfeeding worldwide which has been accelerating since the middle of this century. Did billions of women all at

once gain access to jobs outside their homes, or freedom from exclusive motherhood? It is not men, after all, who are doing most of the bottlefeeding, and bottlefeeding is by far the most expensive option, taking anything from 10% to 75% of the family budget in some countries if the manufacturer's instructions are followed. Did we all spontaneously decide that compared with the alleged freedom and joys of bottlefeeding, breastfeeding was a drag? In fact we don't, know enough about what went on or about what is happening now. The main responsibility for women's current loss of confidence in our ability to feed our children, though, lies squarely with the baby milks industry and its aggressive and unethical marketing practices, and with the medical profession with its takeover of childbirth and ignorance of, even hostility towards, breastfeeding as a process not enough under its own control.

We have somehow been brought to believe that the industry, and hospitals, are behaving better these days, but what grounds do we have for thinking this? After much consumer pressure the World Health Organisation (WHO) came up with an International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes, meant to set *minimum* standards. The Code was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981 and was intended to be used worldwide, not just in so-called developing countries where the baby-killer scandals first made news. As Rita Brauner¹ writes, the Code has *never* been implemented in Britain. Instead, a watered-down version produced by the Food Manufacturers Federation (FMF) was circulated by the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS).

The FMF represented the very groups the code was supposedly trying to control: Cow & Gate, Milupa, Farley Health Products, Wyeth (who make Soya Milk Alternative, SMA). Needless to say their version undermined the original WHO code, allowing the practices most important to the industry in terms of securing profits, such as reaching mothers through the health service, while agreeing to outlaw direct advertising to the public which affected sales less anyway. So baby milk can't be advertised in ordinary magazines (except for 'Progress' milk for older babies, an unnecessary product



"Most mothers will not nurse, and do not even attempt it, yet nothing else would so establish their own and their children's health, or afford them, if rightly performed, so much real enjoyment". Mrs E W Bowdich, Confidential Chats With Mothers, 1890.

Judy Stevens

probably only invented to get round the ban) but is still promoted in free 'health' booklets which apparently carry the clinic or hospital endorsement and are given to mothers at ante-natal and baby clinics. The FMF code also restricts only baby milk advertising while it allows bottles and teats to be freely advertised, unlike the original WHO code which was seeking to restrict the general promotion of bottlefeeding.

The point for the industry of course, however much it squeals about consumer's rights and freedom of choice, is to create a climate in which bottlefeeding is regarded as the universal norm, not to 'inform' women about particular products. The most effective place to create such a climate is inside maternity hospitals and wards, where most British babies are born. There the FMF was even more successful in altering the code of practice to its own advantage. The FMF code is 'monitored' by a DHSS committee, one third of whose members repre-

sent the infant food industry itself, and which does not include any official representation for consumer groups, pressure groups or non-government organisations. In any case, they are concerned with the weak FMF code, not the WHO code, although that was meant to set *minimum* standards.

Set up to fail

Meanwhile, groups such as the London Food Commission (LFC) and the Baby Milk Action Coalition (BMAC) have done their own research to try and find out what is happening. Rita Brauner's summary of some recent findings shows how the WHO code is still being breached:

The survey [by the LFC, 1987] found that nearly 25% of London's infants are never breastfed at all and that by the age of six weeks over 50% of infants no longer receive breastmilk. The LFC expresses greatest concern in its report at the presence of ready-made bottles of infant formula freely available on maternity wards and at the practice

"Two of the things that worry husbands most about breastfeeding (or at least the two things they most often talk about which isn't necessarily the same thing at all) are whether their wives will (a) go off sex and (b) lose their figures". Drs Penny and Andrew Stanway, *Breast is Best*, 1978.

"During the period of suckling the sexual relations should be kept in considerable check. Sexual emotion of frequent occurrence deteriorates the milk". Dr Henry Allbutt, Every Mothers Handbook, 1897.

of providing free samples of formula to women leaving the ward. 20 of the 28 hospitals, including seven out of ten of London's prestigious teaching hospitals, are providing samples to mothers. Not one of the hospitals advised mothers, when providing ready-made bottles, on the superiority of breastfeeding nor the difficulties of reversing the decision to bottlefeed or the health hazards of giving infant formula . . . Only nine hospitals employ breastfeeding counsellors and 15 they allow volunteer counsellors onto the ward. Hospitals stated that bottlefeeds save the time of often overworked personnel caused by inadequate staffing levels and underfunding . . .

The picture is clear: many hospitals are still endorsing or promoting bottlefeeding while failing to support breastfeeding, and many mothers are still being set up to 'fail' at breastfeeding, although at the same time they are being given the message that 'breast is best'.

No wonder women get angry. Maureen Minchin² has argued that feminists, amongst others, may be unwittingly taking part in a backlash against breastfeeding, partly because so many women have had high expectations of breastfeeding and then felt duped and angry when the reality proved to be so different. Reality often doesn't deliver when there is so little practical help and support, when we're lied to about what to expect, given completely wrong advice, and offered an 'easy' alternative which we're told is nearly as good. In this situation, according to Minchin:

articulate women could create a climate of opinion, a backlash, in which public breastfeeding was once again difficult. They could influence women's and feminist networks to ignore the issues of lactation leave, nursing breaks and so on . . . These traditional divisions among women will lead, as always, to the continuation of a status quo, handicapping all women and children. Industry advocates have been quick to assert that those opposing the misuse of formula are really trying to restrict women's freedom to choose — as though anyone can make a free choice in the absence of true knowledge of the problems of both alternatives.

In her view, going on about the moral or psychological superiority of breastfeeding — dubious inventions anyway — or simply pressurising women without taking steps to challenge the promotion of bottlefeeding and to give active help to breastfeeding mothers, is only going to make things worse:

I am sure that further mindless 'breast is best' publicity and promotion will trigger such a

response. Women do not need more propaganda. The problems with breastfeeding lie elsewhere.

Arguments against

Minchin lists the specious modern arguments being currently used to undermine breastfeeding, including the lines that breastfeeding is inherently repugnant and painful and that breastfeeding mothers are trying to create dependency; that it is middle-class and anti-feminist, keeping women at home; that it "deprives fathers of important contact with their children and isn't compatible with modern parenting styles"; that it's wrong to raise any public anxiety about infant formulae because this would make women feel guilty, though this doesn't apply to the unfounded theories that breastmilk itself is hazardous.

She criticises Margaret Mead and Dana Raphael for giving credence to the notion that isolated mothers, without a support structure, end up unable to breastfeed. Raphael³ suggests that the nursing mother has to have a 'doula', another woman to effectively mother her, before she can feed her own child, although Sheila Kitzinger⁴ among others rejects this and argues that the last person some women want around after childbirth is their own mother or stand-in for her. In Minchin's view Mead and Raphael are too "uncritically accepting of pressures that harm both mother and child" to rank as true feminists. She describes them instead as "formula apologists".

I've seen some evidence here of the backlash Minchin fears, and certainly the counter-arguments she describes are exploited by the babymilks industry in their advertising. In 1986, *New Socialist* published two counterposed articles, one by Liz Bisset called "Public virtue, private vice", and "Breast is best?" by Madeleine Fullerton⁵. They described the hostile atmosphere which breastfeeding mothers still have to contend with, the intolerance women feeding older babies face, how childcare help gets withdrawn on the grounds that breastfeeding mothers are failing their side of any shared-care arrangement, and also the guilt and shame involved in bottlefeeding when women are made to feel failures on all levels if they give up breastfeeding. Taken together, the articles made clear that neither breast nor

. . . continued on page 46.

ABORTION AND DISABILITY

Should mental or physical impairment of the foetus be grounds for abortion? Writing on behalf of the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, Judy Hunt explores the issues for women.

The current debate about the use of technology to intervene in pregnancy has raised new concerns which have particular meaning for women, physically impaired people and black people. Pre-natal tests can now be used to identify Spina Bifida, Sickle cell disease, Thalassaemia, Down's Syndrome, Muscular Dystrophy and some other chromosomal disorders, as well as sex. With the means to identify physical characteristics of foetuses we have been faced with the possibility of social engineering.

Is it a question of morality or of ideology?

Two organisations, called Life, and the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC), have for a number of years tried to seek legislation to outlaw abortion and, if successful, will return many women to the horrors of the back street abortionists. In their propaganda campaign to persuade the public and the government, they have publicised the widespread use of amniocentesis to identify physical impairment so that women can be offered the choice of abortion. The question of the morality of abortion and the practice of aborting physically impaired foetuses has been repeatedly put before the public for examination.

From their experience of being on the receiving end of social rejection some physically impaired women have argued that to abort foetuses because they were physically impaired was a stone's throw away from the German Fascist policy of political euthanasia. This emotive issue has highlighted an apparent contradiction between women, who demand more control over their bodies and lives, and physically impaired people, who demand from society the material means to full integration.

Two sides to oppression

Our daily experience demonstrates how women have remained the primary carers of children. Employment continues to create inflexible work routines which assign many women to the lowest paid, lowest status jobs. Our society perceives children as the private property of parents and despite increased demands there has been minimal attempt to provide enough nurseries and supervised play facilities to enable mothers to participate on equal terms in paid work. Women's labour in general is devalued and so too are women. Under these social conditions women demand control over their own sexuality and reproduction as part of their struggle for equal opportunities in all aspects of living and the right of a woman to

"Make sure your husband doesn't feel left out — physically or emotionally . . . Wear a good nursing bra and remind him you're doing it for his benefit so he'll have your breasts looking good years from now. Respect his wishes not to feed in public or in front of certain people if you know it upsets him". Stanways, op cit.

"Patrick [husband] is getting fed up with me breastfeeding. He doesn't say so in so many words but he said: 'Goodness she looks much too big to be breast fed now, it's as if you're feeding a grown-up little girl.' It's partly probably because he wishes we could get back to a normal sex life . . . He still tends to feel that part of my body belongs to the baby and he's had enough of it . . ." Barbara, quoted in Dana Breen, Talking with Mothers, 1913 edition.

choose to end her pregnancy safely and without financial strain remains central.

In its analysis of the social position of disabled people the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), has been able to demonstrate how disabled people are oppressed by being excluded from participation in productive employment. From this exclusion has emanated a whole system of restriction and segregation which prevent disabled people from participating in the normal social activities taken for granted by the majority of the population. Part of the struggle of physically impaired people is to confront attitudes held by many able bodied people and especially by many medical professionals which perceive disabled people as expensive tragedies living off the rest of society. Unemployment and dependence are often seen as the inevitable consequences of physical impairment. UPIAS however has been able to show that it is not physical impairment as such which causes unemployment and dependency but the inappropriate organisation of work, and lack of access to helpful technology and personal help. Disability is defined as a social condition which can be ended by changing facilities to take account of the needs of physically impaired people.

Ideologies of birth control

Because of the (incorrect) set of assumptions that surround disability, when it is known that a foetus is physically impaired, the ideas that influence the decision to end the pregnancy can be expected to be based on the notion that the baby will grow into a socially expensive, non-productive and dependent adult.

Black people who experience racism from all aspects of British Society when faced with making the decision of whether to abort a foetus because of sickle cell disease have the added complication of possibly racist attitudes as well as negative attitudes towards disability within the health service which may be influencing the advice they receive.

Our media has reported some cases of amniocentesis being used to identify the sex of foetuses so that girls could be aborted. In societies where sons are a better financial insurance than daughters, parents may be

pushed into making these decisions.

Official policies arising to eliminate a foetus because it is black or female are at present perhaps unlikely. What then do we think of the widespread and generally accepted practice of terminating pregnancies because the foetus has certain types of physical impairment?

The important question is that of who controls the decision-making, whether by deed or persuasion, and under what conditions the decisions are made. It may not be widely known that if a woman wants to have a test by the NHS she may have to sign an agreement to terminate her pregnancy if the test proves positive. It is one thing for an individual woman to decide to end her pregnancy because she does not wish to spend the many years it takes to rear a child. But it is another thing when women en masse are being persuaded to have abortions according to an ideology that promotes the oppression of a social group. At that point we have a responsibility to examine the context in which the decisions are made.

Potential parents will be imbued with the ideologies with which they have grown up. Because of media brainwashing we carry mythical notions of perfect human beings and in line with this model it becomes important to us to produce perfect babies. For many the ultimate ambition is still to have a perfect boy child. Because of the widespread 20th century practice of segregating physically impaired people, many people are ignorant and out of touch with the realities of impairment, and consequently are full of fear about having a disabled child. Parents' fears may easily be fuelled by professional persuasion. The medical profession is geared to the production of 'normal' babies and to a large extent it is isolated from the social developments that have taken place for disabled people in the last 30 years. Because of their medical orientation they tend to perceive people as 'normal' or 'abnormal' specimens rather than social beings and are therefore in general not the right people to be advising parents whether to go ahead with abortions.

Freedom to choose or freedom to struggle?

The choices women face when put in the

position of making decisions about abortion are anything but free, particularly when it is known that the baby is likely to be impaired. To bring up a child with a severe impairment whether physical or intellectual in this society is likely to mean years of struggle, often in isolation, just to provide the child with necessary treatment, decent health care, proper education and social integration.

When trying to resolve the apparently contradictory interests of physically impaired people and women outlined here we have tried in UPIAS through discussion, to work out some guiding principles. Firstly we consider that until the time of birth women must have the right to choose. Once a child is born it should have the right to all help and support needed. We consider it is of paramount importance that parents should have access to reliable information about the other side of the question, ie that physically impaired people have a present and a future. They need a perspective on the progress that is continually being made by the struggles of disabled people to achieve social integration in education, employment, mobility, and personal independence from the family.

It is important that social reforms incorporate the needs of parents of disabled children. All parents need access to play-groups, nurseries, babysitting circles, and social networks that provide friendship and social integration for themselves and their children. We need to replace segregated special schools and institutions with good quality integrated facilities with the necessary available help to make it possible for children to develop their full potential. Parents joining together with disabled people can ensure that progress will continue.

A question of politics not morality

In conclusion I would suggest that when examining the conflicts surrounding abortion we have to keep in mind the oppressive social conditions under which people live and suffer. Within that context we can make valid basic distinctions between the rightful freedom of individual women to make choices about their own personal lives and futures and also criticise the propagation of social policies and mass ideology that direct large numbers of women to make a particular choice. □

Alton update

David Alton's Bill which seeks to reduce the time limit on abortion from 28 to 18 weeks, passed its second reading on 22 January with a majority of 45. It has now entered committee stage. The committee will sit on Wednesday mornings, beginning at the earliest, on 24 February, and at the latest, on 2 March. The make-up of the committee will be nine anti-abortionists, and eight pro-choice members. Also, Edwina Currie will be present as government representative — technically allowed to vote, but unlikely to — and there will be a chairperson, who normally does not vote.

There are five Fridays between the beginning of April and the end of May which are reserved for private members' bills to come back to the floor of the Commons for debate and a third reading. The Alton Bill is likely to come up on one of them.

So far Alton has said that he will consider two exemptions in the 18-week limit. First, some named disabilities, for example Spina Bifida and Ancephaly, would count as grounds for late abortion. He would regard Downs Syndrome as a borderline case. Alton has been advised that employment legislation distinguishes between different disabilities and thinks similar schedules could be drawn up for abortion law. Second, women who have been raped would qualify for exemption, but only where the woman had reported the rape to a police station within a set time limit.

Committee:

Chair — uncertain

For the Bill — Alton, David Amess, Sir Bernard Braine, Kenneth Hargreaves, Patrick McLoughlin, Elizabeth Peacock, Cyril Smith, Anne Widdecombe, and Nicholas Bennet.

Against the Bill — Frank Doran, Mildred Gordon, Teresa Gorman, Dr Lewis Moonie, Jo Richardson, Peter Thurnham, Audrey Wise.

Government representative — Edwina Currie.

For further details contact either FAB, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2 — 01 831 6838; or WRRRC, 52-54 Featherstone Street, London EC1 — 01 490 0042.

Controlling with kindness

The police have recently been advertising a 'Softly Softly' approach towards women who have been raped. Sara Scott and Alison Dickens ask, what are they up to?

Every woman has the right to be safe. We ought to be able to go wherever we want and do whatever we choose.

This is not a quote from the feminist press, but the opening line of a video on women's safety made by the Metropolitan Police. Feminist rhetoric has filtered through to places it has never been heard before, and the police are promising widespread improvements in their treatment of women reporting rape.

So why aren't we celebrating?

Firstly, because we suspect the proposed changes are more of a public relations exercise than symptomatic of real progress. (We have no evidence that pastel coloured interview rooms will increase the likelihood of police officers believing women.) And secondly, in a Tory era of 'post-feminism', it seems unlikely that our ideas could be having a major impact in such a traditionally misogynist quarter.

The scale and importance of the problem of rape is gaining widespread accep-

tance. But the increasing focus of the government, media, medical profession and police, is neither on the perpetrators of the crime nor on the causes of rape, but rather on the 'victim' and the impact of rape on her life. Having acknowledged the long term effects that rape can have, they are jointly insisting on the necessity of what they consider expert intervention, undermining the feminist insistence on women regaining control over our own lives and obliterating years of work by Rape Crisis Centres. Against this background their interpretation of caring looks like just another form of social control.

For the most part feminists are absent from the new discussions about rape. We are sitting in the stalls watching in stunned silence as different professional and political interests compete for possession of the problem. The police are not major creators of ideology. It is therefore essential to examine their initiatives within a wider context.

We asked for it

In early 1982 an episode of the BBC series "Police" showed an interrogation of a woman reporting rape. The origins of the current wave of police concern about their treatment of rape can probably be found in the public outcry which followed that display of "unmitigated toughness" and "low key brutality" (*Guardian* 19 January 1982). Such exposure served to reinforce what women already feared: if they reported rape they would not be believed. In immediate response various police authorities issued public statements. They were sometimes as contradictory as this:

Mr Anderton said "I want to assure the authority and the public that Greater Manchester Police has always been very sensitive to the problems of women involved in this awful crime." He added, "It is quite extraordinary the extent to which complaints are made which prove to be wholly unfounded".¹ By early 1983 the Home Office had updated its guidelines on police treatment of women reporting rape. These now recommended the exercise of tact and understanding by investigating officers and the promotion of an atmosphere of care and concern. The woman should be informed of

relevant local services and kept up-to-date with subsequent legal proceedings. Although for the most part gender-blind, they acknowledged that *some* women might prefer to be interviewed or examined by another woman. But given that these guidelines upheld the popular belief that women make false allegations of rape, they look more like a male response to the problem of hysterical women — from whom, moreover, the police are obliged to get factual information — than a genuine re-evaluation of police practice.

Feminists had long accused the police of insensitivity in their interrogations of women reporting rape. Now we added that the most important courtesy the police could offer was to believe us.

Softly, Softly Task Force

A nebulous concern for sensitivity and nice surroundings preoccupies much of the new police strategy.

The emphasis is on the needs of the victim and the new measures are designed to make her feel as comfortable as possible in what is always a 'distressing situation'. (Metropolitan Police Press Release.)

West Midlands police nominated eleven hospitals to designate special areas for the

Lyn May



treatment of rape victims, while the Met proposed setting up "rape suites" throughout the region:

The police examination suites have a comfortable sitting room, a medical examination room and a bathroom, where you can have a bath or shower after the medical examination. Replacement clothing suits are available, also personal toiletries such as combs, toothbrushes, shampoo, talcum powder, flannels and bath towels. (Metropolitan Police, publicity leaflet.)

Each one is decorated in pastel colours and designed to provide a mood of relaxation. (*Guardian*, 25 January 1985.)

Other initiatives include the use of Victim Support Scheme volunteers to provide aftercare for women: "enhanced (police) training to guarantee a sympathetic approach"² for the senior officers recommended to investigate rape and the women police constables designated to take initial statements.

Women police officers have always fulfilled, what are designated, caring roles within the police force, and this has recently been exploited to the full. Thames Valley, noting the "embarrassment involved in giving intimate details to a man"³ set up an all-female rape squad and the Met strategically deployed 121 women police constables "chosen for their compassion, sympathy, tolerance and empathy"⁴ throughout the district.

The main objective of the police: to improve the reportage rates for rape and sexual assault continues through the 1980s. The results of a survey⁵ which claimed that 76% of women who have been raped do not report to the police and only 45% of those who had reported once would do so a second time, were published in *Police Review*. But by 1985 Police Authorities were claiming that the sensitive approach was already encouraging more women to report. However, as Scotland Yard admitted, they were unable to say whether "the figures reflected an increase in the number of women coming forward, or simply a greater readiness by investigating officers to record each complaint as a rape."⁶

By 1986 the Home Office Guidelines directed that a clear distinction be made between the recording of unsubstantiated and of false complaints, thus acknowledging the difference between lack of evidence, a woman's unwillingness to pursue a rape

complaint, and the making of a false accusation. Feminists have always argued that the unwillingness of the police to believe rape complainants is central to the problem. It is a point the police have been slow to accept, but in a recent book, policeman Ian Blair⁷ argues that ridding themselves of the idea that women lie about rape is in the police's own interests. As work in the United States has shown, such a change in attitude improves the quality of evidence and ultimately increases the number of convictions. An initiative in this area might actually represent the possibility of genuine change.

However, so far we have only statements of good intent rather than evidence of actual behavioural improvement. As the GLC Violence Against Women Working Party pointed out, police statements tend to be high on publicity and low on actual information. We suggest that this public relations exercise has concealed the police's failure to make the fundamental changes in attitude that would undermine the institutionalised sexism and racism within the police force. The recommendations carry no guarantee of implementation and there has been no indication that action might be taken against police officers not following them.

Right-wing views of rape

It looks as if the subject of rape no longer belongs exclusively to feminists. We have shown that it occupies a significant place in the power relations between men and women. Others, recognising the truth of our observations, but rejecting our revolutionary conclusions, have begun to pay serious attention to a subject that was once shrouded in silence. The new interest of right wing ideologists in the subject of rape emanates from two related sources: the first, and most straightforward, is the overall emphasis on law and order and the right of the majority of law abiding citizens to be protected from 'criminal elements'. Out-dated notions of the protection of the weaker sex and a 'manly' desire for the punishment of violators of women have helped to popularise the government's concentration on law and order. This ties in well with the second source. The New Right has a profoundly anti-feminist stance. In their enthusiasm for the 'traditional' family and rigid sex

roles they make much of abuses against women. The sanctity of the family demands that rape is a serious crime because sex is a serious business, or ought to be.

The Right's ideology of separate spheres may well mean stiffer sentences for rapists and a new and chivalrous attention to women as victims; the result is not an end to rape, but the reinforcement of women's helplessness and the stabilisation of the family within a law and order society in which the police have a prime role.

There has been an unprecedented growth in professional interest in identifying, classifying and treating both victims and perpetrators of rape and child sexual abuse. Although it has largely been admitted that rapists cannot be identified by the distance between their eyes or the dirtiness of their mackintoshes, psychologists, unlike feminists, still claim to be able to identify features which both set them apart from normal men and allow for the possibility of individual cure. However, the real focus of interest has become the trauma and treatment of girls and women who have experienced assault. When considering the medical profession's current part in constructing the identity and cure of the raped woman, it is worth keeping in mind that this has not always been the case. In the late 19th century medical experts and the gutter press "helped create and maintain a belief in the lying, imagining, hysterical and malicious rape complainant".¹⁰ In the 1960s, when the emphasis on female chastity was declining, the effects of rape on a woman were taken even less seriously. Rape became unwanted sex, a cost of sexual liberation on a level with abortion or divorce, and one which women were expected to 'get over' in much the same way. From the beginning of the modern Women's Liberation Movement in the early '70s, feminists have fought for rape to be regarded as a serious crime and for recognition of its meaning and impact on all women. For the most part we were ignored. Unless rape was accompanied by loss of virginity or death, it received little serious attention from police officers, medical staff, judges, jurors or the media.

Feminists exploded the myth that most rapes are committed by strangers in dark

under direct attack. In many parts of the country police forces are collaborating with Home Office funded Victim Support Schemes to train rape counsellors, and thereby provide an alternative to Rape Crisis Lines (RCLs), while the medical profession is claiming that only within its ranks can the skills be found to deal with anything as serious as rape trauma. For many RCLs these changes could lead directly to cuts in funding.

In relation to rape, we think it is unlikely that there will be a backlash equivalent to that taking place in the Cleveland controversy around child sexual abuse. The reaction of Stuart Bell MP et al has been that of men defending the 'ordinary' man and his family against professional intrusion. However non-feminist Esther Rantzen has been, the simple acknowledgement of the scale of the problem makes it impossible for society to avoid some uncomfortable conclusions. The new attention to rape does not necessitate a similar re-evaluation. That rape is more common than previously believed can be accepted without challenging women to deal with the after-effects of rape. We describe the same 'symptoms', but while therapists claim that a woman's new perceptions of the world are the result of trauma and that they can 'cure' her, we state that the change is a realistic response, and see our role as enabling her to make sense of her new understandings.

The various medical responses to the problems of women who have been raped are intent on getting women back to 'normal'. At a time when the 'natural order' of marriage and the family are being reasserted by the Right, the popularity of these medical responses to rape is not surprising. And it allows us to see the new police initiatives, which are sometimes presented as conscientious responses to feminist criticisms, within the context of a thorough reworking of ideology around rape.

The new Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) at St Mary's Hospital, Manchester (much heralded as the first of its kind in the country) is a joint initiative between Greater Manchester Police and South Manchester Area Health Authority. The following quotes show something of the competing purposes those involved wish the centre to serve:

This article is adapted from a chapter of a forthcoming book from Virago Press.

Notes

- i) 'Positive Steps' video on Women's safety, Metropolitan Police, 1987.
1. Rochdale Observer, 10

treatment of rape victims, while the Met proposed setting up "rape suites" throughout the region:

The police examination suites have a comfortable sitting room, a medical examination room and a bathroom, where you can have a bath or shower after the medical examination. Replacement clothing suits are available, also personal toiletries such as combs, toothbrushes, shampoo, talcum powder, flannels and bath towels. (Metropolitan Police, publicity leaflet.)

Each one is decorated in pastel colours and designed to provide a mood of relaxation. (*Guardian*, 25 January 1985.)

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Women police officers have always fulfilled, what are designated, caring roles within the police force, and this has recently been exploited to the full. Thames Valley, noting the "embarrassment involved in giving intimate details to a man"³ set up an all-

We hope the centre will dispel unwarranted scepticism about Police procedure. (Robin Thornton, GMP Press Officer.)

The counsellors at the Centre "will attempt to persuade the women to formally report the matters to the police". (Minutes of visit to SARC by Manchester Community Health Council Community Care Review Group.)

Will the police be involved? Only if you want them to be. You will be put under no pressure to report the incident to the police. (SARC publicity leaflet.)

The Centre offers the ubiquitous 'pleasant surroundings': showers, full-time nurse counsellors, women police surgeons on call who offer pregnancy and VD follow-up as well as the 'morning-after pill', WPC's to take initial statements and psychiatric referral. The promise that SARC is nice to women seems to rest on the role of the counsellor rather than the behaviour of the police.

If you have been assaulted or raped either recently or in the past, the Centre's trained counsellors will help you overcome any trauma you may have experienced as a result of the attack. The counsellors will continue to help you for as long as necessary to help you recover from the assault and become a survivor rather than a victim.¹¹

As this initial publicity shows, feminist words and phrases are being incorporated, but become meaningless without the politics which underpinned them. Feminist counselling is increasingly dismissed by references to the need for 'trained professionals'. It is even expressed as a sad reflection on our society that something so important could be left in our hands for so long:

Professional bodies have done hardly anything to help the victims of violent crime, especially victims of sexual assault and it has been left to self help groups to do the little that has been done. Organisations such as Rape Crisis Centres have been set up because the professions have failed the public in this respect.¹²

The significance of reporting rape to a hospital rather than a police station lies in its contribution to the emerging reconstruction of rape as a medical problem. The focus of interest around rape and child sexual abuse in the 1980s is on the after-effects on the victim, and this is reflected in the changes in police ideology. But the powerless, feminised victim is not an image we wish to see become any more prevalent.

Placing the new police initiatives within the context of the medicalisation of rape allows us to see that services for women who have been raped are now a contested area in which professionals are competing for control — a process which invariably results in the marginalisation of feminist understandings. At best we become bumbling do-gooders, at worst fanatical brain-washers. Either way we are seen as being in danger of doing more harm than good. The existence in Manchester of a 'respectable' alternative to feminist services threatens the very existence of funded rape crisis work.

Focus on the victim: the new charities

Outrage about rape is nothing new, but outrage against the rapist has been replaced by concern for the victim. The media has a well-established role in the creation and dissemination of myths about rape, and its most recent priority has been to display the devastating after-effects of rape and child abuse on 'people's' lives.

The media has always adopted and discarded issues with alarming regularity. What has changed in recent years is that its dabblings in subjects such as Aids, drugs and child sexual abuse have been reinforced

by state campaigns and direct charitable interventions. Both charity and the issues with which it is concerned, have been given a trendy new image.

The media individualises and sensationalises the problems it adopts, and in the cases of rape and child abuse, this fits well with the depoliticised version of the problem beloved of the 'experts' now claiming it as their own. The portrayal of individual tragedies undermines even quite radical conclusions. The *Women's Own* survey on rape "that every woman should read and no man can ignore", found that most women knew their attackers and that women failed to report rape primarily through fear of disbelief, but their presentation of the problem continues to dramatise and individualise its effect on women:

For the last 47 years she might just as well have been dead. Ever since that moment her life has been wrecked. She has been filled with panic each time the door bell rings or the wind rattles the windows of her tiny one-bedroomed flat. There have been no smiles or laughs in those 47 years, just the constant fear that it could happen again.¹³

The emphasis on 'help' for the victim, on 'charity', runs through the new initiatives. They are using a vocabulary of words and images of vulnerability and helplessness which run entirely counter to the feminist emphasis on women's strength and survival.

In the case of Esther Rantzen's "Child-watch" and "Childline", the media has taken it upon itself not only to expose a problem but also to provide a solution. Predictably there has been no acknowledgement of the role of the Women's Liberation Movement in raising public consciousness about child sexual abuse or in providing counselling and support services. In the professional and media rush to answer public concern, feminism is written out: only the experts count. The media's addiction to doctors and therapists who will verify the seriousness of the problem while offering neat and tidy personal solutions and absolving men of responsibility is no accident. The police feel just the same way.

Feminist Rape Crisis work threatened

Some of the aspects of police practice which have been most heavily criticised by feminists during the last 15 years appear to be changing, but at the same time, our analysis of rape is

under direct attack. In many parts of the country police forces are collaborating with Home Office funded Victim Support Schemes to train rape counsellors, and thereby provide an alternative to Rape Crisis Lines (RCLs), while the medical profession is claiming that only within its ranks can the skills be found to deal with anything as serious as rape trauma. For many RCLs these changes could lead directly to cuts in funding.

In relation to rape, we think it is unlikely that there will be a backlash equivalent to that taking place in the Cleveland controversy around child sexual abuse. The reaction of Stuart Bell MP et al has been that of men defending the 'ordinary' man and his family against professional intrusion. However non-feminist Esther Rantzen has been, the simple acknowledgement of the scale of the problem makes it impossible for society to avoid some uncomfortable conclusions. The new attention to rape does not necessitate a similar re-evaluation. That rape is more common than previously believed can be accepted without challenging the myth of rapists as sick or sex-starved, 'ordinary' men stay clean.

The previously dominant definition of rape as an issue of crime and punishment left the field free for feminists to define the response of women who had been raped; because no-one else was interested. With the reconstruction of rape in medical terms, and the growing concentration on the 'victim' by police and media, our territory is being usurped. If we wish to maintain any place in the debate we must start fighting on the new front this change represents.

We believe that for Rape Crisis Lines around the country to survive financially and maintain their radical bases in the face of non-feminist alternatives we must form ourselves into a national federation. Our isolation from one another increases our sense of vulnerability and marginalisation. Many Rape Crisis Centres in the States have long since severed all connection with feminism, and in Britain there are already centres which work in close co-operation with the police and others which counsel men. We do not believe that assimilation is the only possible survival strategy, we must find other ways of fighting back. □

This article is adapted from a chapter of a forthcoming book from Virago Press.

Notes

- i) 'Positive Steps' video on Women's safety, Metropolitan Police, 1987.
1. Rochdale Observer, 10 February 1982.
2. Thelma Wagstaff 'The Job' 25 January 1985 (Met. internal newspaper), Chair of Met. Working Party on force procedure regarding rape.
3. DCI Brian Warren 'Daily Mail', 2 June 1982.
4. Police Review, July 1985.
5. *Women's Own* Survey on rape; 25,000 women responded, July 1986.
6. *Guardian*, 31 July 1985.
7. Ian Blair 'Investigating Rape' A New Approach for the police, pub. Croom-Helm, 1985.
8. Harry J O'Reilly in *Perspectives on Sexual Assault*, ed June Hopkins.
9. Roger Scrutton, *Times*, 15 February 1983.
10. Susan Edwards 'Female Sexuality and the Law' 1987.
11. St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre publicity leaflet, 1987.
12. Raine, E Roberts "Sexual Offences — is there any justice" in *The New Police Surgeon*, November 1983, ed W S McKay.
13. *Women's Own* Survey, *ibid*.

... continued from page 36.

bottlefeeding are really acceptable everywhere when it comes down to it. But they implied that women are policed by other groups of women, and *only* other women, failing to direct the blame where it really belongs. They didn't ask who benefits. Patriarchal society offers women, on becoming mothers, a somewhat spurious choice of feeding practices and then condemns us on the basis of our 'choice'. We're taught an immediate lesson that mothers can't be autonomous and are expected to feel guilt.

Fighting the fictions

We should stop colluding with the idea that most bottlefeeding mothers have freely chosen to do things the independent modern way and face the fact that this is a fiction the industry would very much like us to believe. We should stop treating either breastfeeding or bottlefeeding as moral issues, stop equating breastfeeding with Earth Motherhood and bottlefeeding with progressive, classless attitudes. As Minchin says, we have a lot invested in the presumed safety of baby milks but wanting a really safe, affordable, entirely adequate alternative to breastmilk should not stop us admitting that we haven't got such a product and its invention is unlikely. And if we collude with the industry now, mothers in a generation's time will not thank us.

We should monitor what the industry is up to, as BMAC does. Last year there were stories about radioactive milk powder, post Chernobyl, being shipped out of Europe to consumers in poorer countries. We should also demand that anyone who writes about breast or bottlefeeding stops telling us lies; hardly any easily available publications give an honest account of breastfeeding, as many misled women will affirm. We have to stop equivocating.

Compare this passage (Dr Miriam Stoppard, 1986), which tries to encourage breastfeeding whilst not actually discouraging bottlefeeding, with the strong statement that follows from IBFAN-Africa.

As there are no real arguments against breastfeeding, a converse of this is that there are no arguments in favour of bottlefeeding. However, for you in your particular circumstances with your particular predilections, breastfeeding may not be a feasible or workable alternative, in which case bottle-

*feeding will be your choice. If it is, don't feel that your child is getting second best.*⁶

*Why is breastfeeding a feminist issue?
Breastfeeding*

- * involves the promotion of a central aspect of women's self-reliance
- * ensures women's economic self-reliance during the first months of their children's lives
- * challenges the commercial promotion of consumption patterns which seek to control what women feed themselves and their children
- * challenges the popular view of the breast as a sexual object and thus contributes to women's struggle for sexual equality
- * links women's rights with those of their children and thus contributes to women's struggle for paid maternity leave.⁷

We're deluding ourselves if we think we're supporting women by refusing to say that bottlefeeding is second-best. Not long ago we woke up to the fact that the rich countries of the world had been successfully exporting the ideology of bottlefeeding, along with the milk powders which sent the infant mortality statistics climbing again. There has been a short period of confrontation with the industries and health professionals involved, and a few battles have been won.

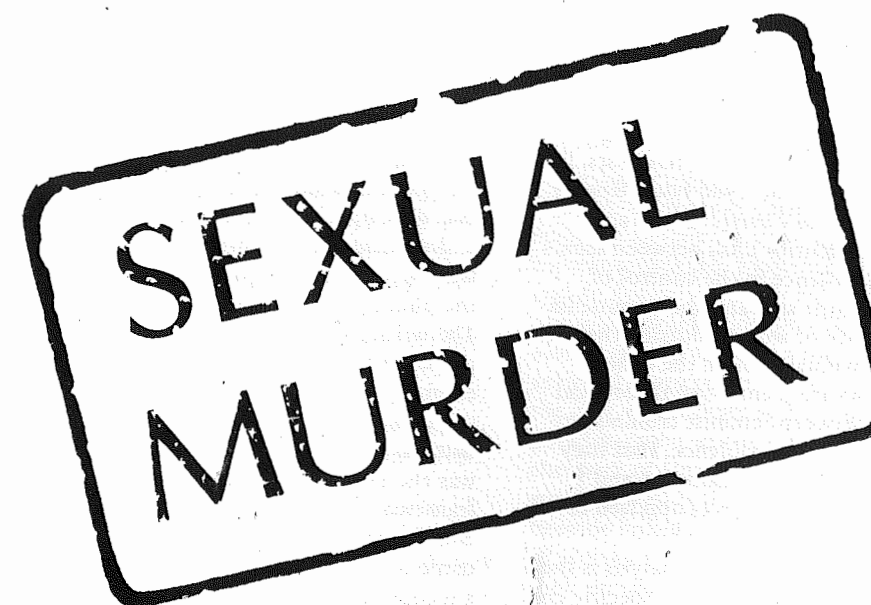
The industry makes about £200 billion profit worldwide, about £50 million in the UK. They are not going to stand back and watch their profits dwindle, which means we have to watch out for them. The latest marketing strategy here is artificial milk in cartons (at around 35p a carton this could mean it costs over £14 per week), which Wyeth are promoting as even easier to use. Easier than what? Their trade ads tell retailers "Ready-to-Feed is the newest idea in the growing baby milk market for over a decade, helping you to build business by selling products that meet the needs of the 1980s", and that a "comprehensive support programme" will help sell the product.

They're telling us that what we need in the 1980s is a more expensive version of an inferior product. In the 1980s, infant feeding is a poverty issue here too, as it is in less affluent countries. The baby milk scandal is still alive and well, and living in the UK. □

For more information about the BMAC campaign contact:
Patti Rundell
c/o Blinco Grove
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Tel: 0223 210094

Notes

1. Brauner, Rita; *The International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes: A Situation-Analysis of Action taken in Great Britain*, unpublished report, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Dept of Human Nutrition, 1987.
2. Minchin, Maureen; *Breast-feeding: what we need to know about infant feeding*, George Allen & Unwin, 1985.
3. Raphael, Dana (ed); *Breast-feeding and Food Policy in a Hungry World*, Academic Press, 1979.
4. Kitzinger, Sheila; *The Experience of Breastfeeding*, Penguin, 1979.
5. Bisset, Liz; *Public Virtue, Private Vice*. Fullerton, Madeleine; *Breast is Best?*, both in *New Socialist*, June 1986.
6. Stoppard, Dr Miriam; *Pregnancy and Birth Handbook*, Dorling Kindersley, 1986.
7. IBFAN-Africa; *Breastfeeding - a woman's issue*, Nairobi, Kenya, 1985.



In this review of Deborah Cameron and Liz Fraser's challenging book, 'Lust to Kill', Jill Radford asks whether sexual murder can and should be analysed separately from other forms of sexual violence.

Growing out of their involvement in radical feminist work around pornography and violence against women, Debbie Cameron and Liz Frazer have produced a study of male power and male violence as expressed in what they refer to as 'the lust to kill'. It is the first feminist analysis of sexual murder, that is murder by men, motivated by sadistic sexual impulses, of women, children and other men. Their well-documented analysis focuses on mass sadistic killers, Peter Sutcliffe, Denis Nilson, John Christie, the Boston strangler and other men who have killed repeatedly and 'eroticised the act of killing in and for itself' (p16).

A male monopoly

A central point in the analysis offered by Cameron and Frazer is that sexual murder is something which historically as well as in modern times, has been monopolised by men. This will come as no surprise to radical feminists whose work around sexual violence has focused on the problem of men and masculinity as constructed in patriarchal cultures. But as the authors document, this very basic fact is something which has been obscured by criminologists, sexologists, psychiatrists and other male experts who

established the 'scientific' discourse on mass killers and sex murderers. Their detailed critique of this malestream discourse, like the rest of the book, is well researched and takes male experts to task for their failure to problematise gender power relations and to identify any connection between masculinity, sexual aggression and sadism. Not only is this discussion important for feminists, it would make for good remedial reading for the male theorists who have dominated these disciplines, although whether these will take it on board is another question. Cameron and Frazer are also critical of marxist approaches:

In a famous work of radical criminology, Stuart Hall and his associates' *Policing the Crisis*, the year 1966 is located as the end of consensus and the 'moment of force'. Public hysteria about the moors murders is mentioned as a factor in the swing to "Law and Order" *Policing the Crisis*, by its tone and what it does not say, conveys an impression that a few sexual murders are not a legitimate reason for concern about the culture. (p142)

Feminist criminology is also taken to task for neglecting this debate. As the authors point out, so long as feminist criminology remains limited by the parameters

laid down by the founding fathers of criminology to a study of law making, law enforcement and law breaking, the analysis of sexual murder will remain an all male preserve. This criticism is fair, although it overlooks the work of radical feminists, like the contributors to the 1986 book *Women, Violence and Social Control*¹, who are attempting to identify links between men's use of sexual violence in the control of women on the one side and the criminalisation by the state of women outside the control of an individual man on the other. Some feminists are identifying theoretical continuities between feminist criminology and analyses of sexual violence. Had they acknowledged this, then Cameron and Frazer could have built on as opposed to overlooking this work.

A possible difficulty of their analysis is their definition of sexual murder as a specific cultural category, separated off from other forms of male violence including for example those murders of women by men, which the police label 'domestic'. The authors accept that this distinction is difficult empirically as the extent of sadism involved in these killings is unknown to all but the killer. It also has theoretical difficulties as it places sadistic sex killings outside of what Liz Kelly² has identified as a 'continuum of sexual violence'. Through the idea of a continuum, we can highlight the continuities between all forms of sexual violence from coercive heterosexual, the sexual abuse of children through to pornography, rape and woman-killing. The location of sadistic sex murder within this continuum rather than outside of it, would, I think, strengthen the analysis of Cameron and Frazer in identifying links between sadistic sex killings of the Ripper type and forms of sexual violence women have to confront on a more regular basis. Such an approach would complement existing radical feminist work around masculinity, male violence and the problem of men.

Perhaps it is because their analysis of sex murder is located within a cultural studies perspective that these connections have not been made. It is this perspective which provides another central premise in their analysis. This is the location of the 'lust to kill' firmly within the dominant patriarchal cultures of western society since

the mid-late 19th century. Before this time, they argue, the category of sexual murder was not available, either in 'scientific' thinking as explanation for mass killing or in the popular vocabulary as motive for such killings. But in the mid-19th century significant changes occurred: the concept of 'sex murder' developed within science, psychology and particularly sexology; and popular ballads, broadsides and gothic novels introduced the phenomenon of the 'fiend' or 'sex beast'. The writings of de Sade appeared at around the same time and the concept of sadism entered scientific and popular vocabularies, so facilitating sadism and sex murder as cultural categories. 'One might say that it was the existence of a certain theoretical framework, a certain set of controlling discourses, that allowed the new category to come into being.' (p22). The emergence of a recognised category of sex killing provided both explanation at the 'scientific' level and also a self-conscious identity or role for individual killers. The authors argue that by the turn of the century a man could set out to be, or be seen as, a 'sex maniac', in a way that would have been impossible fifty years earlier.

Has sexual murder always existed?

This analysis is valuable. It demonstrates how patriarchal culture shapes definitions of masculinity and sexual violence. It also provides a response to critics of radical feminism who argue that patriarchy as an unchanging concept is theoretically inadequate, by showing how important changes took place within patriarchal culture in the mid-19th century. I do, however, have problems with the idea that sadism/sexual murder did not and could not exist prior to this period. They support this claim by arguing: 'We need to know not just what was done, but what it meant: the same act does not always have the same significance and to interpret the events of the past through the categories of the present is to make the error of historical anachronism.' (p21)

This argument has profound implications for feminists and particularly lesbian history. Presumably the authors would argue that whatever relationships women had with each other in the past, unless they called themselves lesbians, we can't either.

In respect of this discussion of patriarchal culture the authors are accepting the concepts and categories of the dominant

class of men as definitive. From the perspective of women, children and even the other men who were the targets of killers, the impact must have been much the same whether they were killed by men identifying as Greek Gods, werewolves or sex manics. Whatever the current cultural categories dominant at a specific period of history, violence was a form through which men were able to control women, and children. Whether it is the wolf or the sex maniac that Little Red Ridinghood and her sisters, are or were instructed to fear, the message for women remains the same — 'don't step out of line — stick to the traditional path, go into the wood at your peril'.

Ideas and/or reality

An analysis which operates primarily at the level of ideas and representations is in danger of overlooking the material reality of woman's experiences. For example feminists have been debating whether rape should be identified as a violent or as a sexual crime by men against women. This permits an analytical separation at the level of ideas of the *sexual violence* which constitutes the material reality of rape as we experience it.

Having said this, I don't want to minimise the importance of naming. Defining sexual murder as such is important for feminist theorising in that it locates the phenomenon within gender politics. Theoretically, it could be argued in an earlier period, that werewolves just happened to be men and they just happened to kill women, children or less powerful men. It might not be convincing, but it could facilitate a cover-up of men's abuse of their gendered power in a way which is more difficult when we speak of sexual violence or sexual murder. Even this is not impossible. Cameron and Frazer have shown how the 'experts' have managed to suppress the issue of gender in discussions of sexual violence.

Having established the origins of sadism, as a cultural category, in the mid-19th century, the authors go on to trace its development in populist literature like the 'True Detective' and other 'true' crime monthlies, the newspaper tabloids and in intellectual circles. The authors outline the significance of existentialism in contemporary libertarian philosophy including feminist libertarianism. In this context their

analysis and critique of existentialism is an important, if a difficult section of the book particularly for readers like me who are not well read in this area.

Violence as 'freedom'

For existentialists, the authors argue, freedom from social constraints or concrete reality is an important struggle — the struggle for transcendence. Existentialists, like Sartre and de Beauvoir, see the act of murder as one which transcends life itself. Thus the murderer is idealised as a man who has achieved transcendence. This theme echoes the idea of murderer as hero, celebrated in populist crime writing. When linked with the work of Genet, who sees murder as erotic as well as liberating, death and sex become linked in the existentialist project of seeking freedom on transcendence. In their critique, the authors point to the problems in this perspective. Firstly, they argue, murder does not liberate from social determinism because it is already socially scripted and secondly, while de Sade may argue that women may also kill and so find 'freedom', in fact: 'The existentialist idea of transcendence is above all the transcendence of the feminine' (p62). Thus even in existentialist logic the search for freedom becomes a search for 'the reflex of a commonplace, unreconstructed masculinity' (p63).

The authors demonstrate how this male and negative, existentialist notion of freedom has continued to be celebrated by modern libertarians including the so called 'pro pleasure' feminists and specifically and worryingly the lesbian sado-masochist (s/m) lobby.

It is this last connection that Cameron and Frazer bravely address in their concluding chapter which is a brilliantly devastating critique of pro pleasure lesbian s/m theory which concludes:

What turning persons into objects is all about, in our culture, is, in the final analysis, killing them. If women do attain this sort of subjectivity then perhaps it will not be many years before this book is hopelessly out of date. The female sex murderer will have emerged. She may have killed a male sex-object — although we would bet that she will have killed a woman, as we don't believe two thousand years of male subjectivity is . . . easy to undo . . . (p176) □

Notes:

1. J Hanmer and M Maynard (eds) 1986, *Women, Violence and Social Control*. Macmillan.
2. Liz Kelly 'The Continuum of Sexual Violence', in 1.

Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer 1987, *The Lust to Kill: A Feminist Investigation of Sexual Murder*, Polity Press.

THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT

We are continuing our series on the state of the Women's Liberation Movement. We would like to invite our readers to write short pieces on your personal views. Do you think the WLM has lost its sense of direction? Have you moved away from certain kinds of political work to others? Have your politics changed, and if so, how has this affected your personal life, sexuality and friendships. What are your priorities for the WLM now? Julie Bindel gives us her opinion.

Since lesbians have always been in the forefront of the Women's Liberation Movement, this article will concentrate on the state of lesbians within the WLM.

The personal is too political

Does anyone remember the old days? When the details of how we lived our lives — not just how we labelled ourselves — were important? The days when we thought about what we wore, how and where we lived, what we ate, what music we listened to, what we did in bed . . . etc.

So what's happening now? It seems that three types of women are "Taking Over" the WLM:

1. *Femocrats* (also known as Luppies, or Wages Due Feminists). A professional feminist only lives her politics between 9 and 5. When she comes home from her £15,000 a year job in local government she hangs up her politics along with her designer coat, relieved that she's done her bit for the movement for another day. Out of working hours she goes shopping for things for her new house, she plays squash, she becomes indistinguishable from any other executive . . . She certainly wouldn't be caught with a can of spraypaint — not even if it were only to touch up her new Porsche.

So what has femocracy done for the WLM? It's got rid of collectives and given us management committees. It's given us half the work ethic — we get paid to be a professional lesbian (to do things we happily used to do voluntarily) but we still retain the casual inefficient attitude of the volunteer. It's given us meetings and conferences entirely attended by women representing organisations — no interested volunteers any more (have they all been frightened off?). It's meant we've forgotten how to fund-raise: we just apply for grants — making sure to leave out the word "lesbian" on the

application. (A good way to promote lesbianism?). Now everyone's in a complete panic at the thought of the end of government funding. What has funding ever done for us except force us into the mainstream? This is the least of our worries about Clause 28.



2. *The fugitives*. Wouldn't it be nice if we could all escape from nasty realities such as male supremacy? Lots of women are trying to do just that by believing that living in the country with their lovers, having babies, being vegan and wearing wombyn-made shoes, is as revolutionary an act *in itself* as burning down sex shops. In fact they pour scorn on city types who arrive for a visit wearing the wrong type of footwear.

We can understand the attractions of the countryside for city women who may be burnt out, but the smug self-righteousness of some fugitives is a little out of place at this crucial time. We need to fight the backlash, not hide from it. The struggle needs to

go on in rural areas as well as in the cities — the fact is that male supremacy goes on everywhere.

3. "Fuck politics, let's go to the disco". Having fun seems to have taken priority over having a demo. Whereas 500 women will turn up to a trendy disco, if there's a picket of the latest woman-hating film, how many turn up? Five women and a dog (and the dog has more commitment than they do).

The general retreat from politics has left us with some of us believing that only identity politics matter. (IP being politics starting from what we are — Black, Jewish, Irish, Working class, Women with disabilities, etc). It is important to realise that being oppressed in some ways does not cancel out our ability to oppress women in others. IP usually fails to take account of our privileges as well as our oppressions. We cannot use our own identity as a cop-out. We must struggle against our apathy or refusal to accept that we need to work on our own oppressive behaviour. Eg a white woman might say "Don't call me racist, I'm working-class" as if this meant she would automatically be excluded from blame. What happens in this example is a knee-jerk reaction amongst the middle-class women who guiltily shut up and stop challenging (if they ever started). Afraid to bring discredit upon themselves they take their burden of guilt off to their . . . Therapist.

I never knew I had a problem with my mother until I went into Therapy. (Authentic quote.)

In the old days, as we all know, no-one talked about what one white middle-class woman has referred to as "race, class and booms-a-daisy". Bringing race, class, disability etc, onto the agenda is one way in which the WLM has improved over the years. However, in a lot of ways and for a lot of reasons, the support network that we did have has disintegrated. The individual solution is now the order of the day. Whereas previously your Consciousness Raising (CR) group or even your housemates were closely involved in your problems (if not your relationships — remember non-monogamy?) nowadays the automatic response to a problem is a trip to the Therapist, who will put the stamp of validity on your feelings.

We are not generalising about anyone in trauma who might need help and doesn't get it from friends — just a particular type

of therapy consumer. This type is the middle-class able-bodied WASP who feels left out, shut up and in need of reassurance that the Therapist, for £15 an hour, is only too willing to give ("Yes, I hear your anger. Stay with that feeling.")

Another example of the Individual Solution Routine is the trend towards Assertiveness Training (AT). The biggest consumer of this confidence-building is the white and otherwise privileged woman, who is the last person to need it. Many women in this position actually use it to turn on other women less privileged than themselves. Eg:

A T Exercise: An exhausted lesbian mother asks you to look after her children. Do you say:

- a) Yes of course
- b) Maybe tomorrow, I'll look in my filofax, or
- c) No, I don't want to do that. I don't feel good about doing that. I want to read my book. You are guilt-tripping me.

The answer of course depends on what stage of A T you have reached.

The personal is not professional

What's happened to praise? It's been replaced by the eternal negative criticism. A newsletter that had a policy of "no personal



attacks" would now (if one existed) have to say "Personal attacks only" as that's all they'd get. Women used to be able to write things for other feminists to read, without the approval of 15 editors first (or everyone slagging off one line on page 12 without saying that they agreed with the rest of it). Or we used to be able to do a cabaret sketch that wasn't totally slick and professional, and not get booted off the stage or ignored. These days it may be okay to perform racist,

THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT

THE STATE OF THE MOVEMENT

anti-lesbian etc material so long as it's validated by an Arts Council grant.

Newsletters have to be bound, glossy and full of photographs before anyone will buy them. The products of the ancient duplicator are scoffed at, no matter how exciting the contents may be. (It just wouldn't go with the pine coffee table.)

This is a reflection of the fact that experimentation, discussion and argument have no place in our movement any more. A small and almost insignificant side effect is that there's no communication either. Lack of newsletters due to apathy and the fear of failure to achieve professional excellence, means that no-one knows what the fuck is going on any more. We're reduced to reading gay men's papers to find out when the next demo is — the ad of course is sandwiched between pictures of men's bums.

— Don't tell me — Reclaim the Night, Hackney, 1983?!



The het parade

Lesbians are more obsessed with our appearance than ever before. In the old days yes, we did spend hours in front of the mirror checking that the tear in our dungarees was just right, and hardly anyone would be caught dead in a flared lurex catsuit. Now that the downward mobility trend of the late '70s/early '80s has gone upward, a furtive trip to Top Shop might discover more of your lesbian friends than an anti-porn demo. It seems that clothes, not politics, maketh the lesbian (particularly the one

who maketh lots of money). Dykespotting is getting harder and harder the more that dykes get into het fashions. Nobody even wears badges any more. This is part of the general trend towards the assimilation of lesbians. Why do increasing numbers of us want to *pass*?

Feminism: Going, Going . . .

Feminism is being auctioned off. The word no longer means anything, now that S/M dykes, Labour MPs and anyone who feels like it are defining themselves as feminists. "Feminism" can mean anything from writing "lesbian erotica" to supporting the miners. This is why it's important to specify the type of feminism we identify with — "radical" or "revolutionary" should mean just that, so that we know who our allies are. Otherwise a Tory MP who believes in "equal pay" could be equivalent to Andrea Dworkin.

We don't pretend to have all the answers, nor are we excluding ourselves from the criticisms above. However, we do feel that it's about time that somebody spoke out about these things, and maybe got the whole debate rolling again — or even a new debate? Some of us who have tried to raise these issues are tired of being accused of "thought-policing" by liberals — the ones who've been sitting on the fence for so long they've got splinters. We have searched our wardrobes for blue uniforms and found none.

What we feel we need to get the movement going again (as opposed to going away) are: more discussion, debate, and consciousness-raising; less guilt more action, and *honesty*. How about it, sisters?

Some questions:

1. Why is separatism unfashionable?
2. Has coupledom replaced politics?
3. How much has three terms of Thatcherism got to do with all this?
4. Why is "right-on" now a term of abuse?
5. Why are so many feminists in Therapy?
6. Why are there so few collectives?
7. Why have we stopped writing for each other?
8. What happened to consciousness-raising? □

Thanks to Val Dykestein for help and ideas.

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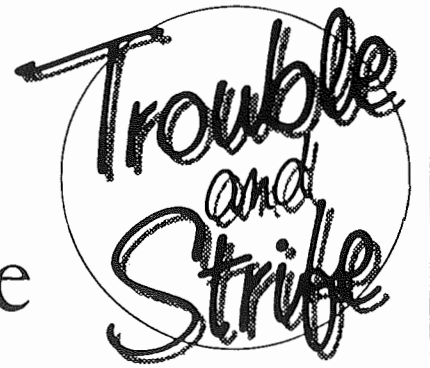


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Letters	2
Clause 29: radical feminist perspectives <i>Lynn Alderson and Harriet Wistrich</i>	3
Lesbian Outlaws: past attempts to legislate against lesbians <i>Annabel Farraday</i>	9
That's Entertainment? Jack the Ripper and the celebration of sexual violence <i>Debbie Cameron</i>	17
As I Am: <i>Tina Jenkins</i> talks to <i>Margot Farnham</i> about fat liberation	20
International Struggles Against Pornography: <i>Susanne Kappeler</i>	27
Who's Holding the Bottle? The politics of breast- feeding <i>Dena Attar</i>	33
Abortion and Disability: issues raised by the Alton Bill <i>Judy Hunt</i>	37
Controlling with Kindness: the 'softly-softly' approach to rape <i>Sara Scott and Alison Dickens</i>	40
Sexual Murder: <i>Jill Radford</i> reviews <i>Lust to Kill</i>	47
The State of the Movement: reflections by <i>Julie Bindel</i>	50

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