

WOMAN'S LOT

Political Purdah and the Labour Party

by
Anselm Eldergill



with a preface by
Judy Sadler
(Secretary, Labour Women's Action Committee)

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TO THE MEMBERS

of the Institute of Workers' Control



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Preface

Judy Sadler

Secretary, Labour Women's Action Committee

Men are increasingly taking an interest in the issue of women's equality. This pamphlet is an example of that interest. The decline in the traditional support for the Labour Party is making some men realise the importance of mobilising the women's vote behind Labour. Taking up "women's issues" is seen as a way of bringing Labour back into Government.

The Labour Women's Action Committee (WAC) has for a number of years been organising women in the Labour Party to increase women's strength in the Party. The miserable number of 10 women Labour MPs out of 209 is witness to the deplorable position of women in the Party at the moment. WAC has been working for constitutional changes to the Labour Party to ensure that there are mechanisms to enable women to have a say in Labour Party policy formation and to have representation in positions of power in the Party. So far, we have had overwhelming support from women (trade unionists and delegates from the women's organisation of the Labour Party) for these demands at the National Labour Women's Conference. At Labour's Annual Conference however, dominated by men from the trade unions and constituency Labour Parties, all our demands have been tossed aside.

We do welcome the support of men for our aims. As such, we are pleased that this pamphlet has been produced and welcome some of the detailed analysis presented by Anselm Eldergill. We hope that men will read the pamphlet and go on to support the struggle of so many women in the labour movement for political equality with men.

There is a sense, however, in which this pamphlet could only have been written by a man. And in this sense, though we welcome the pamphlet, we would distance ourselves from the precise arguments used within it. As women, we are part of the movement for women's political equality because we perceive equality as being ours *of right*. We are half the population and our relatively miniscule input into the political processes of this country is a disgrace; our minority position

within the Labour Party is more than a disgrace given the Party's supposed commitment to eliminating inequalities. Though women may have to accept men's support because they (men) want to increase the Labour Party's success by attracting women's votes, we — as women — are interested in the Labour Party because we believe it can help women. That is, we are interested in having a Labour Government because it would benefit women, particularly the poorest, weakest women; we are not interested in women because they can benefit the Labour Party.

Anselm Eldergill writes: "It may be that too many women are content to ask for liberty, rather than demand change and unseat those who oppose them". The support that Labour and Trade Union women have given to the aims of the Labour Women's Action Committee shows that women *are demanding* change, even if those demands are not being heard. Here again, Anselm's statement and others like it could only have been written by a man and we would distance ourselves from Anselm's rather critical view of women as not organising seriously enough. First, we would not accept any man's right to criticise women's organisation until they have made more efforts to put their own house in order in relation to their general attitudes to women (i.e. Anselm should put his energies into changing the attitudes of his fellow men rather than women). Secondly, it is perhaps only a woman who can really understand the intense difficulties that women face in taking on political roles. The pressures on political women are enormous.

For women, the old slogan "the personal is political" remains as true today as it ever was. Whilst many of us are prepared to organise "to unseat those who oppose" us, the ability to organise effectively is often severely limited by problems of looking after our children, finding baby-sitters, running a home, doing a paid job, and doing politics. Unlike many political men, most women do not have a house-keeper/cook/childminder/emotional support at home to look after them and enable them to go off in confidence to do political activities.

I have said we welcome the support of men. It is perhaps in the sphere of the "personal", "the home", that we need the support of men more than anywhere. More men, committed to women's equality, are now staying at home to look after their children whilst their partners take on positions of political responsibility. They are learning to give the practical and emotional support to their women partners to enable them to go out and be effective in the political arena. It has long been accepted that women do this for men (the wife behind the MP, for example), but it is not generally accepted that many women may need men to do this for them.

Women are therefore looking for a two-fold support from men: both

political support in the form of voting for women's demands and personal in the form of taking on domestic responsibilities. However, many Labour women have gone beyond the phase of asking for men's support. We have learnt that many men will not willingly give up their power — no matter what the justice of the case of women's equality. We are now demanding a position of strength in the Labour movement and will organise together to obtain that position. If we only win on the basis that the Labour Party needs women's votes and trade unions need women members, so be it. The aim is to win women's equality, not to be too fussy about the process on the way to achieving it. In this sense, many women have achieved the political "maturity" that Anselm Eldergill talks about. I hope, however, that women's knowledge of the personal demands and needs behind political involvement will bring a different style and changed political perspectives to the Labour movement. In particular, I hope it brings an emphasis to a more caring philosophy, with protection of the weak and a greater commitment to the eradication of gross economic and political inequality of sections of our community.

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Anselm Eldergill

Woman's Lot

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I

"Man is born free and everywhere women are in chains".

So might Jean-Jacques Rousseau have redefined his dictum had he witnessed the proceedings of recent Labour Party Annual Conferences.

What is surprising to the modern onlooker perhaps is not that the Labour Party has lost some of this sense of social injustice but rather this — that its trade union section seems determined to lose the next General Election rather than recognise the claims of the one group of people who could propel them back into government.

The 1983 General Election made clear the price of Labour's success in reducing inequality and poverty since the war. In drawing people out of the blue-collar section of society into the middle classes, Labour has made a bed for the opposition to lie on and it is not the state which is beginning to wither away but the Labour Party.

Not only did Labour's share of the partly skilled and unskilled workers' vote fall to 44 per cent in 1983 — a fact which can be reversed — but, far more seriously, this 44 per cent is part of a rapidly shrinking whole — a fact which cannot be reversed.

These workers now represent only 22 per cent of the Labour force compared with 39 per cent after the war. At the polls in 1951, they and their families made up 90 per cent of the votes needed to win that election. Today, Labour must find half its votes elsewhere.

If one analyses the way voters polled in 1983 by class, this upward social movement has taken almost one and a half million voters (5 per cent of the poll) out of the Labour camp and into the Tory camp since 1951.¹ Additionally, the number of persons within each class voting Labour is falling, with the Alliance making clear gains.

These are people who still vote by class but whose class interest has changed and who will not be back. It is clear that as an electoral currency the exchange value of class has for Labour been seriously

devalued.

The trend is most worrying in the south. Outside of London, Labour now has just three of the 176 seats south of a line from Bristol to the Wash. It has lost 62 per cent of its seats in southern England in the last nine years. Class appeals to these voters are destructive — four-fifths of southern voters come from professional or intermediate occupations or are skilled workers. All predominantly Conservative groups.

However, women make up almost 70 per cent of non-manual skilled workers, who as a group constitute one-eighth of the workforce. In 1983, the Tories polled 55 per cent of the three-way vote in the group with Labour getting only 21 per cent. Women are also well represented in the intermediate occupations — as teachers, medical staff, etc. Over a third of this section, which represents a quarter of all workers, are women, although less than a fifth of class members voted Labour in 1983.

If Labour can give these women a gender interest for voting socialist, to balance the negative class interest, then the Party may gain enough southern seats to return to power.

Clearly women have a gender interest in socialism since their political subservience is rooted in their social and economic position — they hold little wealth independently, form three-quarters of the low paid and receive wages two-thirds those of men, are over-represented in the lower occupational groups and under-represented in the higher, and are discriminated against within the state income and benefits system.

In short, it is a prerequisite to women's emancipation that the economic and social system (hours of work, job-sharing, housework, workplace facilities, etc) undergoes as fundamental a revolution as that the Attlee Government imposed on the burden of class inequality.

This is something the Alliance could never do because where socialism's fundamental principle is equality their's is liberal individualism, and they would not sanction the directives and mandates the state would need to impose.

In essence, the Alliance represents *The Guardian*-Gary Hart axis of British politics. The further in the future and the more improbable politically a certain measure, the more the SDP supports it. Such proposals have the great virtue for timid souls of seeming radical while carrying no threat of uncomfortable change. Correspondingly, the SDP shys away from the world of the here-and-now — abolition of private education and medicine, redistribution of wealth, local resistance to rate-capping, nuclear disarmament. All these proposals involve radical social and economic reorganisation and upheaval. Yet when did those with power ever give it up without some

unpleasantness?

Thus, along with *The Guardian* and Gary Hart, the SDP gives the impression of radicalism but is in fact deeply conservative: almost all real change is rejected. They believe in new ideas rather than new actions. It is the ideal party for those whom socialist education has given both a better standard of living and a sense of guilty privilege.²

Nevertheless, if socialism should be attractive to women, it is a fact that at present no party offers women *qua* women any better a future than the others and consequently at present women's voting by class almost exactly corresponds with that of men.

None of us would wish to deny the enormous contribution socialists have made to our lives this century — with our every movement we touch upon something we enjoy only because of their struggle. Yet, almost a century onwards from the election of the first Labour MP, one half the population still has only a tiny foothold in the economic and political system. Labour has not merely failed to adjust this balance but generally not been much concerned about it since, after all, it only mirrored the position of women in the Party at large. Currently, only 8 per cent of trade union Conference delegates are women and only 5 per cent of MPs.

II

The neglect goes back a long way. As far back as 1882, the TUC adopted a resolution on the equal payment of women workers, who today get wages only two-thirds those of men. The Labour Party's *Report on the Candidatures of Working Women for Parliament* and the TUC's *Organisation for Women*, printed in 1930, both served up the now common blend of union autonomy and an asexual constitution as an excuse for inaction. It is a traditional dish still much partaken of by socialists at Conference tables.

If Labour is to make gender an issue, and use it to complement the class orientation of its vote, then to be credible and successful will mean substantial reform within the Party. Physician, cure thyself.

Conference will have to realise that there is no greater moral (or indeed electoral) issue facing the Party in the 1980s than this — how does a Party founded on the principle of equality guarantee that right to one half the human race, both within and without itself? And, if the Party cannot reform itself, can its claim to be the party of justice and equality and not solely male working class interests be seen as more than a sham?

Such a task shames those who have left the Party in the belief socialism has gone too far. Such a task confronts and challenges those socialists who say and, worse, feel that there are no more great

battles to be won since the achievements of the Attlee administration. Too often have we been led by old loyalists who live in and seek to recreate their finest hour, and in doing so forget that in a changed world you can only emulate those great achievements and not copy them.

The irony is that Attlee himself would never have condoned this slavish obsession with the old world. Those who contend that we will rise again if only we do better in the future those things we have done in the past lack his astuteness —

“You have a great past and a great tradition. Do not let the achievements of the past ever blunt your sense of urgency or cause you to think that the battle has been won and that you can afford to hold the ground already captured. Not to advance is to retreat. We are happy warriors. Let our trumpets give out no uncertain note”.³

To those in the union movement who are not moved by the ideal of equality, the message is this: Labour will only exercise power in this country, will only be able to protect union finances and repeal the Employment Acts, will only be able to stem the increasing poverty of its members, if it regains government. And post-war demographic changes mean that this is only possible if Labour begins to represent and reflect in its offices *all* people who suffer economic and political servitude and not just the shrinking number of working men.

Respond to this fact, survive. Fail to respond and the unions will go under with the end of socialism as an electoral force. Women’s rights, once a political option, is now a political necessity.

While this may be unpalatable to some union leaders, they should consider the alternative — an exclusively northern-based Labour Party which could only form a government in conjunction with the opposition party in the south, the Alliance.

What is the Labour party offering women unionists? When surveying our post-war electoral decline it is not enough if like a good Martini we are only shaken but not stirred.

It would seem to be in the unions’ interests to promote intra-party reform but can they be persuaded? It is hardly likely that they will listen to a woman or to the women’s sections since the whole of their actions reveal a lack of respect for women. And, in any case, women have long been speaking, it is the listening which is absent. The person with the greatest access to party power structures is the leader. But, if a just person is one who embraces the ideal of equality and extends to others those rights s/he claims for her/himself, is Neil Kinnock a just person? Or is he just a Welsh boyo moved only by the plight of working men?

And, if change cannot be mobilised from above by an appeal to the

new common interest, can it be engineered from below? Stated differently, what power could feminists wield within the Party in furtherance of their own cause? Since 90 per cent of all Conference votes are cast by unions affiliated to the Party, the crucial question is as to how many delegations women control or could control with proper organisation. Is progress even possible within the current system?

At the 1983 Annual Conference, women comprised one-sixth of the delegates as compared with one-tenth thirty years ago. Regional variations are significant, and women for instance constitute 41 per cent of all constituency delegates from Greater London but only one eighth of those from Wales and one sixth from Lancashire. While women's representation within the constituency delegations has doubled to 27 per cent against a stable membership of just over 40 per cent, women's representation on the union delegations has only risen from 16 persons (2.6 per cent) to 49 persons (8.1 per cent) during a period when women have gone from being 16 per cent of all unionists to 31 per cent. In consequence, the number of women delegates could have been expected to rise to 31 out of 602 even without any change in gender attitudes.

Furthermore, women face an automatic disadvantage at the workplace in that only 40 per cent of the workforce are women and of those people only 40 per cent will join a union as compared with 64 per cent of male employees. The end result of this is that only 26 per cent of members of affiliated unions are women.

The overall picture seems to be that women have made good ground in many constituencies in the past thirty years but that the unions have been heavily resistant to change — and they control 90 per cent of Conference votes.

Appendix Table 2 shows how many Conference union delegations women could control if they used their membership to full advantage. Under the block-vote system, they could gain control of 23 per cent of all union votes which compares with an affiliated membership of 1,628,300 women (26 per cent of Labour unionists). At present, women have control of just one delegation, casting 55,000 votes (0.9 per cent).

It should be noted that the unions within which women form a majority send only 103 of the 279 delegates their membership entitles them to send to Conference. While a full complement of delegates does not allow the delegation to cast more votes, it would give the women-majority unions one-third of all union delegates at Conference (until other unions did likewise). Such delegates can address Conference, lobby other delegates, and help organise fringe meetings and protests.

This shortfall also means that in most cases unions could constitutionally create extra 'reserved' women's places within their delegations (to reflect the membership balance of the sexes) without decreasing the number of men who presently attend Conference. For example, the General & Municipal Workers Union currently sends 86 delegates, of whom 26 delegates should in fairness be women instead of the current six, and the union is entitled to send another 59 delegates. If the union added 28 reserved women's places to the 86 delegates now sent, then women would have 34 of the 114 places (their current percentage) and there could still be 80 male delegates.

Perhaps the most depressing fact that the table reveals is that within the unions where women form a majority of members women comprise only one-third of the number of delegates their membership fairly entitles them to, and that share is no higher than in the unions where men are in a clear majority.

The organisation of women within unions such as COHSE, NUPE and USDAW is, on the face of it, inadequate — their great majority of members, which should give them access to financial resources, ability to set the times of meetings and call for ballots, has statistically come to count for nothing.

Where Electoral Reform Society ballots operate to debar talk of direct intimidation, the results are not improved. While these figures seem to reflect the common domestic pressures against participation which many women face whatever their union, nonetheless it does appear that single women are no more active politically than married women (see below).

To this extent, one is talking of a political socialisation process by which those with power attempt to suppress the rights of those who form out-groups by inculcating in them passive sentiments. The trick is to tolerate and even make a virtue of passivity while at the same time using control of the state apparatus to punish dissidence. At times, civic virtue becomes no more than another term for self-abuse.

III

The socialisation process starts early on.⁴ Studies indicate that at the age of four women are already aware that the principal masculine role is wage-earning and the principal feminine role is housekeeping — "In every voice, in every ban, /The mind-forg'd manacles I hear", wrote Blake.

Children will encounter sexism in their reading material and marked curriculum differentiation in secondary education. The basis of the ideology being presented to them is one glorifying the masculine characteristics and degrading the feminine. It is a process

of mental debasement of one half the human race.

The domestic sphere is characterised by women's economic dependence on the man so that "within the family he is the bourgeoisie and the wife represents the proletariat" (Engels). This hierarchy is repeated in the workplace with men occupying positions of authority and responsibility, which allow them considerable control over the women under them. In a society where money is the measure of one's worth and the value of one's labour, low wages or no wages undermines a person's self-esteem and self-respect as well as sapping free will.

Socialists, in concentrating their analysis on the ownership of the means of production and the dictatorship of one economic class by another, have neglected the domestic dictatorship of one class by another — as William Thompson said in his *Appeal on Behalf of Women*, "Home is the eternal prison house of the wife".

Given this constant erosion of women's confidence and self-esteem, it is not surprising that in a survey by Jane Stageman of trade union women (see *Appendix Table 3*), 39 per cent of non-activists said that feeling more confident was an important factor to increased participation, and 35 per cent thought it would help to know women could be as competent as men in union affairs. 50 per cent wanted to know more about how the union worked and 20 per cent asked for some kind of educational training.

In that survey, the highest response given was to the need to have meetings in worktime (mentioned by 57 per cent) and 33 per cent mentioned the need for meetings to be held at more convenient places. These changes were particularly important to manual workers.

Ms Stageman also found that the six surveyed branches all held either their monthly *or* their annual union membership meetings in evening hours when women are expected (in most families) to carry out household duties. In all but one branch, the evening meetings were held away from the workplace.⁵

These figures are supported by a NALGO survey in 1975 which found that 92 per cent of all branch meetings were held outside working hours.

Since there are only 80-90 workplace nurseries in the whole of Britain and since, according to Oakley's 1974 survey, the average housewife does a 77 hour week, it is not surprising that only 10 per cent of the women surveyed had children under 10 years old and that two-thirds of the activists were aged over 40, when their main responsibility for child care had been relinquished. "Clearly, legislating for equality is useless unless the facilities and support services necessary to achieve that equality are available".⁶

If anything, the situation is worsening, due to the increase in one-parent families (now one in four in many Inner London boroughs) and the closures of nurseries and geriatric wards under the Tories, since the increased responsibilities for the young and old inevitably fall on the women in the family.

Many unions operate rules which discriminate against women with children — in USDAW, a 50 per cent attendance is needed in any one year to be able to stand for office and many unions have qualifications as to length of continuous membership in elections for their officials.

Should a woman break through the educational, social and domestic pressures to stay at home and instead get a job, she will face additional burdens at "work".

Since women are held responsible for families, the work they look for tends to be that which demands no time for training, is part-time, and situated close to home. The result is a low-paid job with few future training or promotional prospects (an Office of Populations, Censuses and Surveys report indicates that women part-timers are eligible for promotion in only about 20 per cent of firms and have training opportunities in only 25 per cent).

Accordingly, only one in twenty women manual workers is skilled and women constitute 80 per cent of part-timers and three-quarters of low-paid full-time workers (2.3 million women in 1982).

For the same reason, women are to be found in only 25 per cent of occupations and over half of all women workers are located in three service industries: Distributive trades (shops, warehouses, etc), Intermediate occupations (typists, nurses, teachers), and Miscellaneous services (catering, laundries, etc). The sexual division of labour means that the interests of men and women are generally different in most union branches, so that at best the male-dominated union is impervious and at worst hostile to problems which at present especially affect women workers.

For example, while low wages for women undermine men's ability to protect their own wages, some unions respond to this simply by keeping women out or by limiting them to certain areas of work. In a recent survey by the Equal Opportunities Commission, fifteen unions were found to have single-sex branches.

And a London School of Economics' study on the implementation of the Equal Pay Act found that for most union negotiators equal pay was "a minor issue, peripheral to their central concern and worries". These negotiators have sought the shorter working week solely on the issue of easing unemployment rather than also in terms of easing the responsibility of housework and childcare.

The sexual division of labour is only one of several factors arising from women's occupational role which lead to difficulties and tension

between them and their workplace union.

The Donovan Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations reported in 1968 that many of the occupations with a low strike rate (catering, footwear, distributive trades, services) had a female dominated workforce and a weak record of trade unionism. The high-strike industries (coalmining, shipbuilding, motor industry, docks) had male-dominated workforces. But is the phrase 'female-dominated workforce and a weak record of trade unionism' really a distillation of a sexual trait?

Women work in smaller and more scattered workplaces so that unionisation is difficult — many women in cornershops will never be approached by USDAW nor cleaners in a small private firm by NUPE. And, if they should join, isolation and the concomitant organisational problems (eg as to the paying of subs) may mean that their membership lapses.

The high-strike, high-unionisation industries are not just male-dominated but also distinguishable as strategic industries where a strike can do great productive damage and is therefore a very effective weapon. Women possess a poor position in relation to the control of the country's productive forces and a strike in a 'caring' or 'serving' occupation may often succeed only in hurting those they care for (including their children). Lack of skills also reduces a woman's bargaining position *vis-à-vis* her employer as does being a part-time employee.

Moreover, a survey in 1978 found that half of the companies examined operated a "last in, first out" principle when making redundancies, which makes women more vulnerable since, because of family commitments, they will change their jobs more often. In Jane Stageman's report, 23 per cent of women mentioned 'management making life difficult for active union employees' as a factor in their non-participation.

Undoubtedly, the socialisation process and the division of labour are important as factors relating to low unionisation but as the TUC stated in its evidence to the Donovan Commission,

"When men are well organised in a particular plant, generally women are too. The fact that the proportion of women in employment who do belong to a trade union is about half that of men is mainly to be accounted for by differences in their industrial and occupational distribution".

The recent dispute won by the women machinists at Ford provides a good illustration of such organised female workforces.

Should a woman, having gained employment outside the home, join a union, she will face yet more pressures on her to adopt a servile non-participative role. On the one hand, she needs the union's strength to

improve her conditions of work yet, on the other hand, the union is controlled by men.

When, in the 1970s, NUPE asked its branch secretaries why women's occupations were underrepresented on their committees, the (mainly male) secretaries replied: 30 per cent women's apathy or lack of union mindedness, 24 per cent absence of shop stewards, 14 per cent women's reluctance to become stewards, 9 per cent travel problems. When Jane Stageman asked her NUPE branch non-activists the same question, 52 per cent said 'lack of interest in union affairs' and 62 per cent 'not confident women can be as competent in union affairs as men' but, additionally, 67 per cent mentioned 'having meetings in worktime', 57 per cent 'creating opportunities for women to discuss among themselves topics of interest to them', 52 per cent 'making union matters easier to understand', and 48 per cent 'having fewer home responsibilities'.

In that survey, 45 per cent of the reasons for non-activity related to pressures emanating from the situation within the trade union, 42 per cent related to pressures arising from personal and domestic circumstances, and the remaining 13 per cent of responses cited job-related pressures. Over half the respondents said it would help to both make union matters easier to understand and to make more information available about how the union worked.

The meetings of union branches are, of course, dominated by an overwhelmingly masculine atmosphere and at times descend to the level of ridicule and invective. "The whole organisation and culture of our society is geared to making and keeping women submissive and subservient (and) the trade union movement both helps to do this and is deeply damaged by it".⁷

IV

In only comprising 26 per cent of all affiliated trade unionists, women cannot hope in the near future to constitute a majority of Party members, yet this does not mean that resistance is hopeless. The women-majority unions control almost 10 per cent of the votes in the leadership and deputy-leadership contests. In most cases, this will exceed the winning majority and is a powerful bargaining tool. The women-majority unions can also ensure an increase in women Parliamentary candidates through sponsorship and increased representation on the NEC.

Most important of all, Clause V of the Party Constitution states that no proposal shall be included in the Party Programme unless adopted at Conference by two-thirds of those present on a card vote.

Since the women-majority unions control over 20 per cent of all

Conference votes then, with some constituency support and anything but absolute unanimity from the other unions, they could exact a severe toll of measures put forward by the more sexist unions. (In fact, women-majority unions could constitutionally affiliate another 245,000 members, which would give them 23 per cent of the Conference vote.)

Any sort of Conference filibuster or veto demands, of course, that women first gain control of those union delegations within which their members form a majority and that they maximise their representation generally.

An encouraging sign in this context is the success the Women's Action Committee (WAC) has had in mobilising constituency support for women's organisational rights since being set up by, and on the initiative of, women from the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy in 1980. From 1974 until 1981, the constituency parties (CLPs) forwarded to Conference a total of only six resolutions on women's organisation, producing a single composite (in 1981, which was remitted). In the last three years there have been 72 resolutions and 11 composites.⁸ A thirty-two fold increase.

In 1982, over half the resolutions followed one basic pattern and 17 of the 21 fitted into one of three patterns (ie there were odd amendments taken at the General Committee stage). This demonstrates a high level of organisational coherency, statistically only surpassed by that of CND, and refutes crude suggestions that women's under-representation on constituency committees reflects an inability to organise properly.

The resolutions comprised WAC's five main demands:

1. The right of the National Conference of Labour Women (NCLW) to send five resolutions to Annual Conference;
2. The right of the NCLW to elect its own executive committee;
3. The right of the NCLW to elect the five women's division places on the NEC;
4. That there be a minimum of one woman on each local government and Parliamentary short-list;
5. That the NEC set up a rules conference to constitutionally entrench and rationalise women's position within the Party.

The organisational maturity of WAC is also reflected in the number of composites⁹ which have emerged from the pre-Conference Conference Arrangements Committee meetings and the 'horse-trading' which always goes on at them.

Appendix Table 4 lists the subjects which received the greatest number of Conference resolutions for the years 1982 and 1983 and the number of composites culled from them. Women's organisation has enjoyed as many composites as any other subject and its supporters

have clearly marshalled their forces well. There seems to be no bias within the Arrangements Committee against putting women's issues before Conference, but the trend since the days of Gaitskell whereby the TGWU, GMBATU, NUM, NUR and AUEW always vote together to fill the five union seats has continued. In consequence, the women-majority unions could not hope for representation on this important committee in the near future.

When the subject-matter of the resolutions in these two years is concentrated into broad areas of concern, women's organisation and women's rights are seen to be the fourth greatest topic of concern to affiliated groups in 1982 (being the main organisational concern) and the seventh ranked topic in 1983 — since when, the number of resolutions on women's organisations at the 1984 Conference has risen to 31. Neil Kinnock ignores these omens at his peril when he makes glib comments on television about WAC's Ann Pettifor not being in any sense representative of constituency opinion.

The importance of all this electorally relates to Labour's decline in popularity in the south. Below the Bristol-Wash line, one in seven constituencies has sent in a resolution supporting the WAC programme in the last three years (and others have sent in resolutions on improving women's rights outside the Party).¹⁰

In 1984, none of the 100 UK constituencies with the highest concentrations of manual workers put forward a resolution on women's organisation. Only 29 per cent came from the 325 constituencies with the largest concentrations of manual workers, as compared with 71 per cent for the other half of the CLPs. These proportions are identical where the division is based on the number of persons in manufacturing industries. Finally, 75 per cent of resolutions come from the 325 constituencies with the highest number of professionally qualified persons.

Two conclusions appear obvious. Firstly, there are still huge islands of discrimination within the blue-collar heartlands and these areas have been slow to take up the women's cause, compared with the more white-collar and southern-based constituencies. Secondly, it is exactly in the latter type of constituency that Labour's support has fallen away most seriously, where it now faces a strong Alliance challenge, and needs an extra dimension on top of the class appeal if it is to become credible again.

These white-collar constituencies are also concerned with the position of black people within the Party — 42 per cent of the CLPs forwarding resolutions on black sections in 1984 sent in resolutions on women's organisation in either 1982 or 1983. There is a general drive towards an extension of the CLP power base beyond middle-class white men (although admittedly there are relatively few working class

people on southern General Committees).

What is apparent from WAC's success in the last three years is not only that power — the ability to exert pressure in furtherance of a given course of action — depends on good organisation but that additionally this organisation can only follow when socialist women are prepared to give their sex rights the same weight as they have always loyally given their class rights. As working people, they have a right to their share in the wealth, income and power they help produce, and as women the right to half the total sum.

And yet the agenda for the National Conference of Labour Women in the 1970s reveal that women gave their position little more debate than did full Conference. For these years, the agenda never contained more than three resolutions from Women's Sections or Councils on the subject of women's organisation in the Party, and, even today, the resolutions put forward exclusively represent statements of rights (eg the right of the NCLW to elect the women's NEC division) rather than a programme of sanctions and measures based on withdrawal of support from the leadership if such rights are not observed.

Marcuse was right, I think, in his essay on 'Repressive Tolerance' to see the socialisation process as one by which the social in-groups, holding the institutions of command and control ('government' in its broadest sense), manipulate those in the out-groups by inculcating in them passive and subordinate sentiments.

This manipulation is essential to the consolidation of in-group power since, on an objective plane, the out-groups often possess the numerical strength to assert their rights and bring to an end their exploitation at any time — the in-group control can thus only derive from the subjective level and is based on creating the illusion that the political order reflects a natural order and that the role of workers and women and other out-groups is *by nature* one of service. A classical example of this line is found in Aristotle's treatment of the issue of slavery.

To render a person submissive is not difficult if you have control over them from an early age. One remembers Loyola's view on Jesuit education, "Give me the boy and by the age of seven I will give you the man." Passive and subordinate sentiments have always existed in out-groups — for given that all living beings naturally desire their freedom what people being free both objectively and subjectively to choose between liberty and servitude would choose servitude?

To say that all persons in out-groups consciously resist their control is to misunderstand the nature of that control since it asserts that such persons have a free-will which has been taken from them. The manacles are mind forg'd and, to slightly misquote Marx, the work of socialists is to expose this gap between the real and the artificial and

It may be that too many women are content to ask for liberty, rather than demand change and unseat those who oppose them. Several years ago, Polly Toynbee wrote a *Guardian* article which carried the banner headline, "Male trade unionists weep crocodile tears because few women want to take part in trade union affairs. Let *them* establish women's quotas in their top offices and see how many women come forward to claim them". Though the state of affairs was regretted, it was a case of troubling deaf heaven with bootless cries: in short, the age-old appeal to men's goodwill. "Introduce quotas and we will fill them, if not . . ." well what? As Walter Mondale might say, "Where's the beef?"¹²

The concepts of 'oppression' and 'goodwill' are clearly antithetical. If there exists goodwill, there will not exist oppression. The corollary of this is that a successful campaign will be based not only upon good organisation of limited resources but also on the withdrawal of support from current power-holders who refuse to accept reform.

Trade unions like any other public body rely for their survival on timely reform. If the level of membership support drops below a certain level, if the executive committee members face deselection, if the public rows become dangerously embarrassing, they will change their tack to account for the change in the winds.

Indeed, it is the threat of withdrawal of support which underpins the trade union movement and which protects workers in the defence of their industrial and political rights. A point which Ernie Roberts makes well in his book *Workers' Control*:

"In the last analysis, satisfactory agreements . . . are reached not as a result of clever negotiation by union officials, but by workers' strength. Negotiations would have a small hope of success if the workers indicated in advance that they were not prepared to take strike action in the event of failure to agree".

To baldly state women's equality to be your political destination without giving any consideration to the mechanics of getting there is similar to possessing a map but having no transport. *The Freewoman* journal recognised this when in 1912 it made a vigorous denunciation of the way in which some trade union women are concerned only with moral protestations and with the shadows of power. Many of these criticisms are still valid seventy years later —

"Let us have done with mere statement and counter-statement as to our 'equality', our 'intellectuality', and what not, and let us get to the fundamental conditions which will enable us to do work — which is the proof, and the only proof, of our powers . . . Let us shift our objective from the mere shadow of power to its reality.

"Mr Lansbury recently, in the pages of *The Freewoman*, suggested that

to make it unbearable.

What one can say is that a living being, insofar as the socialisation process is imperfect, has free political will and exercises this in favour of liberty and, insofar as it has been successfully socialised, is subordinate and passive. In recognising this, the moral blame certainly only attaches to the jailor, though one must appreciate also that, however understandable and justified inaction is, change only comes through action.

V

Since 1982, the action has certainly been frantic and of the 608 resolutions forwarded to Women's Conference over three years, 163 (27 per cent) have been on organisational rights. The number of Women's Sections and Councils sending in resolutions on all subjects has almost tripled.

As a consequence, the role of the NCLW has changed and with increased exercise of power has come increased support for the WAC programme at full Conference. Over the past two years, support for the right of the NCLW to put five resolutions onto the agenda has risen from 8 per cent to 32 per cent and for the right of Women's Conference to elect its NEC division from 16 per cent to 25 per cent.

Of course, only limited progress can be made without a parallel movement within the unions, and in recent years only one resolution on women's organisation has been forwarded by a trade union to either of the two national Conferences. What is significant and hopeful though is the way that feminists have worked on constituency General Committees to increase substantially the support for the WAC programme. They have turned their backs on the old social democratic notion that change must come through persuading men to liberate them and have albeit tentatively placed their destiny in their own hands. Similarly must trade union women and working class women cherish their liberty or else remain Prisoners of Chillon,

“At last men came to set me free;
I ask'd not why, and rec'd not where;
It was at length the same to me,
Fetter'd or fetterless to be,
I learn'd to love despair.
And thus when they appear'd at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage — and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home”.¹¹

the women's forces joined those of Labour. Well and good, but join them where? At the base, perhaps, joining with the workers, creating and uniting with the forces of trade unionism; but could anyone ask a young movement to ally itself with so hapless and hopeless a body as the Labour Parliamentarians? We think not. The women's ranks have shown themselves far too liable to the same kind of diseases as the Parliamentary Labour Party: the detestable theory of 'leader'-ism . . . the vain imagining that the masses do not count, that they are to be led docilely up the Parliamentary stairs in fact . . . the organisation of women is a matter which should have preceded, or have proceeded *pari passu* with, the demand for the vote".

Ours cannot be a palisade socialism where unionised men lock in the privileges they have won access to and strive to exclude from the polity those still beyond the pale who do not share their good fortune. It is not the task of male unionists to fortify the palisade once inside but like Greeks to open the gates for others to enter. To use our power to forge chains for others is to betray all those socialists who throughout this century have toiled for our liberty. For, like Burke's state, the Labour Party is a partnership and "as the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those dead, and those who are yet to be born".

And why is it that men cannot welcome women's rights to equality? For men too are Prisoners of Chillon, whose gentleness and liberty of feeling and passion is stifled in the cot, and whose brittleness too often seeks the ultimate release through war. Not until men win this liberty and women their liberty of thought and action will either be fit to govern. The world would be a safer place if all of us were released from the parts we would rather not play.

Yet few socialist men have sought their liberty in this equality. And therein lies a joke, for Rousseau was no different in this respect and we cannot know that today he would lament the status of women in the Party.

VI

No doubt the tactics preached above offend many socialists since our creed is one of co-operation. But each political system reflects in its mechanics the interests of the current power-holders and will only yield to certain recognised types of pressure. Those who would reform a system cannot choose the means, only their ends.

It is no good hoping that Conference will one day vote for change unless you first prepare the way and change its composition — as Machiavelli said, God helps only moral tyros, not political tyros.

With the unions, this requires branch organisation to ensure

increased women's representation at union conference in the case of UCW, AUEW-TASS and POEU. As concerns NUPE, EETPU, UCATT, NUR, ASTMS, POEU, TGWU, AUEW-Engineering, GMBATU and COHSE, this means getting women onto the regional and thence national executive committees. And, where direct election plays a part in the choice of Labour Party delegates, this necessitates carefully organising regional slates of candidates.

In all instances, the key (though often despised) meeting will be the union branch AGM in the new year. This is where the under-representation starts. An USDAW survey of its Cardiff branches in 1983 showed that, while women formed a majority of members in three-quarters of branches, in only one-quarter did they form a majority of branch committee members, and they were a minority of all office-holders at branch level. One-third of branches only sent women to the AGM as delegates. Clearly, control of the branches means eventual control of the composition of the various conferences and committees nationwide.

The first task, therefore, is for feminists to form a caucus at branch level, to put forward a slate of candidates for the AGM, and — where the mathematics ensure the return of a minority of women — to bring about, by controlled voting, the defeat of the most sexist men.

Women will face a special disadvantage within COHSE and the three largest affiliated unions (TGWU, AUEW-Engineering, GMBATU). The delegates of these unions cast 48 per cent of all union votes at the Labour Party's Conference and they are elected not by the branches directly or by the union conference but by the executive and regional committees. Examination of the 1983 delegates lists shows that where a delegation is chosen by committee then, on average, a delegation of 100 persons will contain 22 less women than proportionately it should do — as compared with 12 less persons for other methods.

It is also the case that where the members do not directly elect the union executive committee then this also acts to under-represent women — men's position becomes doubly entrenched. Thus, where the union EC is elected by a branch ballot or show of hands, the committee will contain one-third the number of women their membership fairly entitles them to but this share drops to one-seventh if the EC is not elected directly: see *Appendix Table 5*.¹³ There is no evidence that women do worse in votes taken by show of hands as compared with ballots or postal ballots.

The overall position is that within the fifteen largest affiliated unions women have only two-fifths the number of executive councillors they should have. *Appendix Table 6* gives data for 64 European unions from five countries and it can be seen that, in

general, the British situation is sub-normal.

The Table is interesting in that it confirms and quantifies the problems women face within unions where they make up a distinct minority of members. In three-quarters of affiliated unions women make up less than 40 per cent of total members, yet it is not until this mark has been reached that women make an impression on the executive committees. There are no doubt various reasons for this lag — the timing and conduct of meetings and the behaviour at them are majority-male forms; male union leaders only adopt women onto their slates when they begin to constitute a significant voting bloc; voting tends to divide along gender as well as ideological lines.

It is regrettable in retrospect that there are no longer any all women unions, such as the Kvindeligt Arbejder Forbund in Denmark, which has 100,000 members, or the Finnish Union of Qualified Health Workers, with 50,000. In Finland, one of the two union congresses (the TVK) is also heavily directed towards women, who make up 81 per cent of its affiliated members. Such organisations provide good focus points and resource centres for women's issues and could fulfil a similar role to WAC for the unions. All that can be hoped for in Britain is that one of the women-majority unions will take the political and financial lead which is now necessary.

The same tactics apply to constituency offices as to union offices, and to the reselection of MPs and choice of Conference delegates. The choice of constituency General Committee delegates at each ward AGM in the new year effectively decides how much pressure women can exert over the following twelve months. The cost of such organisation is minimal as most of the work is done by foot.

Where women form sizeable minorities in any Labour affiliate, one of the prerequisites for supporting current power-holders must be support for what has unfortunately been called 'positive discrimination' at both local and national level — though there is in fact nothing discriminatory about such policies at all.¹⁴

Many women oppose the idea of any quota system — even one operative for only ten years aimed at ensuring a vanguard for women — on the grounds that they think it patronising and want to 'make it' on their own merits. It is not patronising if it is a right won through bargaining, nor does merit currently have much to do with a successful political career.

One thing women need not fear in the foreseeable future is a political career not based on merit — any quota system will still leave intact many bars against women and will fail to compensate adequately for current discrimination, which is institutionalised. Quotas can do no more than lighten discrimination and shift the burden suffered a little toward centre.

What is obvious from any Conference analysis is that the free market competition that exists for Party offices has operated against political and economic minorities — which is precisely the Labour Party's case against the Tory free market in the outside world.

Unfortunately, the Party has a strong conservative strain and this is true even of the Women's Section — witness the member who says she is a socialist person first and a woman second and who refuses to assert her own rights 'in the interests of the movement'. What may be a private virtue becomes a public vice as obviously she is not a person — she has the rights not of a person but of a woman.

Perhaps this and other criticisms above sound harsh and insensitive. As socialists, the qualities we value in our brothers and sisters are their tenderness, kindness and sensitivity, their compassion and receptiveness to the difficulties other people face. And if all of us do not always know what we want or are not resolute in trying to get it then we are not necessarily the poorer for it. It is our uncertainties and doubts and mistakes which make us human and which sharpen and deepen our feelings for each other.

Yet in our political activities we must be harder on ourselves and our comrades than we would be in our personal lives — as hard as our opponents, for if we are not we will not win and if we do not win, then those who are compassionate and tender but lack political power will continue to be abused. We may need to feign lack of sympathy or understanding, place a premium on efficiency, even do and say things which distress us — not because the end justifies the means but to prevent some people from continuing to be used as the means for other people's ends. It is the thorn which protects the rose.

In any campaign for their socialist rights women will face great difficulties. While working men have achieved much which we can all respect and enjoy yet, additionally, the political system still favours those who put others down in public, compete rather than co-operate, and indulge in baboon-like displays of machismo.

Success is important, not only to women in enabling them to fulfil their full human potential outside the home, but to all of us because it offers a chance to humanise society,

“Because of their discontinuous work lives and because they are expected to relate primarily to people and only secondarily to work, women are not ‘geared like a cog’ quite so successfully as male workers on the whole . . . Women are in fact deeply alienated from many of the uses to which technology is put. They say ‘who wants to go to the moon — what about more houses or a cure for cancer?’ They have tremendous radical potential which is almost untapped, and which would become of great importance if and when we really start to challenge, not only the ownership, but the *purpose of production*” (author's italics).¹⁵

The task is a realistic one. Women will support women if they are nominated for office. Of those women nominated for seats on the General & Municipal Workers' Union's 1982 Congress, 62 per cent were successful as compared with 42 per cent of men. Moreover, recent research published in *Parliamentary Affairs* shows that women Parliamentary candidates do no less well electorally than men.

In 1913, George Lansbury published a treatise on Parliament in response to the anxieties and humiliations suffered by the new group of working class MPs in a House of Commons whose rules and traditions were not theirs. In the end, the Labour male leadership won its battle, even though, like all victors, they adopted those rules and conventions they found conducive to themselves: they failed to create a system which would enable more women to participate.

But win they did against all the odds —

“*Women of the world unite. You have a world to win and nothing to lose but your chains*”.

Footnotes

1. See *Appendix Table 1*. I realise that, because of the paucity of the 1950s census and psephological data, these figures are somewhat crude but believe they are useful as a guide to the size of the problem Labour faces.
2. It seems to be one of the ironies of politics that socialism produces so many capitalists and capitalism so many socialists.
3. Address by Clement Attlee to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 25 May 1946.
4. The following section on the problems faced by women in the domestic and employment spheres is by now widely recognised and the section draws on, and in places is a precis of, research to be found in the following works, to which the reader is referred: Jane Stageman, *Women in Trade Unions* (University of Hull Adult Education Department, Industrial Studies Unit) 1980; Lindsay Mackie and Polly Pattullo, *Women at Work* (Tavistock Publications Ltd) 1977; Jenny Beale, *Getting it Together/Women as Trade Unionists* (Pluto Press) 1982; COHSE Research Bulletin No.12, *Women Workers* (COHSE) 1983; Labour Party Study Group Opposition Green Paper, *Discrimination Against Women* (Labour Party) 1972; Audrey Wise, *Women and the Struggle for Workers' Control* (Spokesman Pamphlet No.33) 1973; *Women Sexism & Socialism* (Labour Party) 1980; *Women in the Eighties* (CIS Report) 1981.
5. However, when two of the six branches surveyed did change the times of meetings to lunchtimes, attendance did not improve. While Ms Stageman's research and political analysis is generally superb, there are inevitably problems with one or two of the results given the scale of the undertaking: more activists (62 per cent) had children than non-activists (50 per cent) and single women were no more active than married women. Only 4.9 per cent of respondents said that the provision of childcare facilities would make it easier to come to meetings. And, without results for men working at the branches, it is not possible to actually calculate the net disadvantage for women of each of the problems for which questions were asked, eg how many men would cite holding meetings away from the workplace and out of worktime as a bar to their participation?

6. *Women, Sexism and Socialism* (Labour Party) 1980.
7. Audrey Wise, *Women and the Struggle for Workers' Control* (Spokesman Pamphlet No.33) 1973.
8. Comprising 21 resolutions and four composites in 1982, 20 and three in 1983, and 31 and four in 1984.
9. Because of the large number of resolutions forwarded to Conference, the Arrangements Committee (CAC) holds meetings to reduce them to a manageable number. Amalgamated resolutions drawn together from more than one source for presentation to Conference are called 'composites'.
10. The 57 Constituency Labour Parties which have sent in resolutions on women's organisation since 1982 represent exactly one-third from London, one-third from CLPs outside London but south of the Wash-Bristol line, and one-third north of that line and in Wales.
11. From Byron's apposite poem *The Prisoner of Chillon* which begins "Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind!/Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art" and ends "My very chains and I grew friends,/So much a long communion tends/To make us what we are:- even I/Regain'd my freedom with a sigh".
12. I am, of course, in favour of quotas together with other positive compensation measures; the point is that the word "us" was not used nor was any programme of sanctions laid down.
13. For corroboration, see *Appendix Table B*, which shows that when choosing Annual Conference delegates is left solely in the hands of regional and executive committees women have only 22 per cent of the number of delegates their membership proportionately entitles them to; this compares with 47 per cent where the union conference or direct election also plays a role.
14. The phrase 'positive compensation' is to be preferred since only when you overcompensate someone do you discriminate in their favour.
15. Audrey Wise, *Women and the Struggle for Workers' Control* (Spokesman Pamphlet No.33) 1973.

Explanation of abbreviations and acronyms used in the tables

AAW	Agricultural and Allied Workers, National Trade Group — TGWU.
APEX	Association of Professional Executive Computer and Clerical Staff.
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen.
ASTMS	Association of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staffs.
AUEW	Divided into four quasi-autonomous sections — (1) Construction workers (2) Engineering workers (3) Foundry workers (4) Technical and supervisory staff (TASS).
Bakers	Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union.
Ceramics	Ceramic and Allied Trade Union.
COHSE	Confederation of Health Service Employees.
Dyers	Dyers Bleachers and Textile Workers National Trade Group — TGWU.
EETPU	Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union.
FBU	Fire Brigades Union.
FTAT	Furniture Timber and Allied Trades Union.
GMBATU	General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union.
Insurance	National Union of Insurance Workers (Prudential Section).
ISTC	Iron and Steel Trades Federation.
Met Mech	National Society of Metal Mechanics.
NACODS	National Association of Colliery Overmen Deputies and Shotfirers.
NFLAT	National Union of Footwear Leather and Allied Trades.

NGA	National Graphical Association.
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers.
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees.
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen.
NUS	National Union of Seamen.
NUTGW	National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers.
POEU	Post Office Engineering Union.
Sheet Mtl	National Union of Sheetmetal Workers Copper Smiths Heating and Domestic Engineers.
SOGAT 82	Society of Graphical and Allied Trades.
Textiles	Amalgamated Textile Workers Union.
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union.
TSSA	Transport Salaried Staffs Association.
UCATT	Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians.
UCW	National Union of Communication Workers.
USDAW	Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers.

Tables A to D are tables of general relevance to the essay.

Tables 1 to 6 are referred to specifically in the text.

Appendix

Appendix Table A
Women's Representation at the Labour Party's 1983 Annual Conference: Union Delegations

Union	Size of delegation	Maximum size allowed	Male Delegates		Women Delegates		Votes cast by union	Men's % share	Women's % share
			Actual number	% of members	Actual number	% of members			
TGWU	51	250	49	44	02	07	1,250,000	1,067,500	182,500
AUEW-Eng	35	170	34	28	01	07	850,000	731,000	119,000
GMBATU	86	145	80	60	06	26	725,000	509,700	215,300
NUPE	19	120	11	06	08	13	600,000	200,000	400,000
USDAW	29	81	24	11	05	18	405,000	157,600	247,400
NUM	48	48	48	48	00	00	237,000	237,000	—
UCW	12	39	12	10	00	02	192,000	153,600	38,400
UCATT	27	36	27	27	00	00	180,000	178,900	1,100
EETPU	28	36	27	25	01	03	180,000	163,400	16,600
NUR	25	32	25	24	00	01	160,000	151,200	8,800
COHSE	18	30	15	04	03	14	150,000	32,400	117,600
ASTMS	27	27	23	22	04	05	132,000	107,600	24,400
AUEW-TASS	16	21	13	14	03	02	101,000	90,400	10,600
POEU	15	19	15	14	00	01	95,000	91,800	3,200
APEX	08	14	06	04	02	04	89,000	40,100	48,900
ISTC	14	17	14	13	00	01	85,000	81,300	3,700
SOGAT '82	16	16	13	11	03	05	76,000	52,200	23,800
AAW	13	15	11	11	02	02	75,000	64,000	11,000
NUTGW	06	11	03	01	03	05	55,000	5,300	49,700
TSSA	10	10	09	07	01	03	54,000	40,400	13,600
Sheet Metal	10	10	10	10	00	00	50,000	50,000	—

FTAT	06	10	05	05	01	01	48,000	42,800	5,200
NFLAT	06	09	06	03	00	03	45,000	22,500	22,500
AUEW-Fdy	06	09	06	06	00	00	41,000	39,700	1,300
Dyers	06	08	05	05	01	01	36,000	30,700	5,300
Bakers	08	08	06	04	02	04	36,000	18,000	18,000
NGA	05	07	05	05	00	00	31,000	29,600	1,400
Ceramics	06	06	05	03	01	03	30,000	15,000	15,000
ASLEF	05	05	05	05	00	00	25,000	25,000	—
NUS	06	06	06	06	00	00	25,000	24,100	900
NACODS	04	04	04	04	00	00	19,000	19,000	—
Textiles	04	04	04	02	00	02	18,000	9,700	8,300
FBU	04	04	04	04	00	00	16,000	15,900	100
Met. Mech	04	04	04	03	00	01	16,000	13,600	2,400
AUEW-Cn	03	03	03	03	00	00	15,000	15,000	—
Insurance	02	02	02	02	00	00	10,000	8,500	1,500
Others (11)	14	14	14	10	00	04	37,000	26,200	10,800
TOTALS	602	1,251	553	464	49	138	6,189,000	4,560,700	1,628,300
Percent	(48.1% of maximum)	—	(91.9%)	(77.1%)	(8.1%)	(22.9%)	(100%)	(73.7%)	(26.3%)

KEY
Size of union delegation is a matter for each union to decide while the *maximum size* constitutionally allowed is set down by Clause VII of the Party Constitution and is currently one delegate per 5,000 members or part thereof. *Per cent of members* denotes the number of women there would have been in the delegation had its composition accurately mirrored the number of women union members. *Women's % share* is a calculation of women's share of the union vote if it were not cast on a block-vote basis. All union membership data are as of December 1982 and come from either TUC data or the unions themselves.

Appendix Table B
Methods of Election of Union Delegates to the 1983 Labour Party Annual Conference

Union	Number of Votes/ affiliated members	No. of Conf. Dels.		No. of Women Dels.		% of union members who are women
		Actual	Maximum allowed by Constitution	Actual	If proport. to number of women members	
<i>(1) Delegates elected in part by direct election and in part by executive and regional committees</i>						
NUPE	600,000	19	120	08	13	66.7%
USDAW	405,000	29	81	05	18	61.1%
EEPTU	180,000	28	36	01	03	9.2%
UCATT	180,000	27	36	00	00	0.6%
NUR	160,000	25	32	00	01	5.5%
ASTMS	132,000	27	27	04	05	18.5%
Totals	1,657,000	126	251	13	22	46.7%
<i>(2) Delegates elected by union conference</i>						
UCW	192,000	12	39	00	02	20.0%
AUEW-TASS	101,000	16	21	03	02	10.5%
Totals	293,000	28	60	03	04	19.8%
<i>(3) Delegates elected in part by union conference and in part by executive committee</i>						
POEU	95,000	15	19	00	01	3.4%
Totals (1-3)	2,045,000	198	511	21	45	44.1%
<i>(4) Delegates elected by executive and regional committees</i>						
TGWU	1,250,000	51	250	02	07	14.6%
AUEW-Eng	850,000	35	170	01	07	20.0%
GMBATU	725,000	86	145	06	26	29.7%
COHSE	150,000	18	30	03	14	78.4%
Totals (4)	2,975,000	190	595	12	54	30.3%

Sources: Union rule books, Labour Party Annual Report. Number of Conference delegates allowed is defined by Clause VII of the Party Constitution and is currently one delegate per 5,000 members or part thereof.

Appendix Table C
Women's Representation at the 1953 and 1983 Labour Party Annual Conferences

<i>Affiliated bodies</i>	<i>No. and % of Conference votes controlled (1983)</i>	<i>No. of women delegates (%)</i>		<i>No. of men delegates (%)</i>	
		1953	1983	1953	1983
Trade union delegations	6,189,000 (89.9%)	16 (02.6%)	49 (08.1%)	591 (97.4%)	553 (91.9%)
Constituency delegations	626,000 (09.1%)	93 (14.5%)	171 (27.4%)	533 (85.5%)	453 (72.6%)
Socialist, Co-op and other organisations	66,000 (01.0%)	00 (00.0%)	04 (22.2%)	10 (00.0%)	14 (77.8%)
Federation of Labour Parties	n/a	07 (23.3%)	n/a	23 (76.7%)	n/a
Totals	6,881,000 (100.0%)	116 (09.2%)	224 (18.0%)	1,147 (90.8%)	1,020 (82.0%)

Source: Labour Party Reports for respective years.

Appendix Table D
Number of Resolutions on Women's Organisation in the Labour Party Forwarded to 1970-84 National Conferences of Labour Women

Affiliates. Column (i) denotes how many resolutions were sent in by the branches to Conference and Column (ii) how many were on the subject of women's organisation.

Year	Trade unions		Socialist societies & Co-op		Labour Women's (Advisory) Committee		Constituency parties		Women's Sections/Councils		ALL GROUPS	
	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)
1984	14	00	03	00	00	00	14	01	167	59	198	60
1983	17	01	06	00	00	00	23	03	167	52	213	56
1982	13	00	05	00	00	00	18	04	161	43	197	47
1981	13	00	04	00	00	00	13	03	115	10	145	13
1980	09	00	05	00	01	00	07	01	61	06	83	07
1979	09	00	01	00	01	00	07	00	59	01	77	01
1978	10	00	02	00	01	00	06	00	60	00	79	00
1977	10	00	03	00	01	00	07	(02)	60	00	81	(02)
1976	11	00	03	00	00	00	02	00	72	01	88	01
1975	05	00	04	00	00	00	04	00	85	00	98	00
1974	10	00	04	00	00	00	03	00	81	03	98	03
1973	09	00	03	00	00	00	05	00	70	01	87	01
1972	08	00	02	00	00	00	01	00	88	00	99	00
1971	05	00	02	00	00	00	03	00	100	02	110	02
1970	08	00	02	00	01	00	01	00	47	01	59	01
Totals	151	01	49	00	05	00	114	14	1393	179	1712	194

Source: NCLW resolutions book.

Appendix Table 1
Social Class, the Occupied Labour Force and Voting 1951 and 1983

<i>Social Class</i>	<i>% of Labour force in class 1951</i>	<i>% of Labour force in class 1981</i>	<i>Labour's estimated actual vote from each class in 1983 — Gallup Poll</i>	<i>Labour's estimated 1983 General Election vote had it been held on the basis of 1951 class ratios</i>
I and II Professional and intermedate occupations	18%	31%	3.7%	2.2%
III Skilled manual and non-manual workers	43%	47%	14.8%	13.6%
IV and V Partly skilled and unskilled manual workers	39%	22%	9.7%	17.2%
TOTALS	100%	100%	33.0%	28.2%
				(real actual vote of 28.9%. Error of .7%)

KEY

The number of persons within each class voting Labour has been based on the Gallup Poll results published in *The Guardian* on 16 June 1983. The table does not account for Labour's loss of popularity within each class but measures as far as is possible the effect of upward social mobility — of people changing class. When the slight undervaluing of Labour's 1983 vote is accounted for, the figures suggest a 1983 General Election result, had it been held on 1951 class ratios, of: Conservatives 39.5%, Labour 33.9%, Alliance 26.6%.

Sources: Census data for 1981 and revised census data for 1951 (from A.H. Halsey: *British Social Trends*).

Appendix Table 2
Number of Labour Party Annual Conference Votes Cast by those Unions within which Women form a Majority of Members

Union	Number of delegates sent by union to 1983 Conference	Number of women delegates	Number as reflection of number of women members ¹	Maximum number of delegates union allowed to send ²	Votes cast by union (Number of affiliated members)
<i>(A) Unions where women form half or more than half the members</i>					
NUPE	19	08	13	120	600,000
USDAW	29	05	18	81	405,000
COHSE	18	03	14	30	150,000
APEX	08	02	04	14	89,000
NUTGW	06	03	05	11	55,000
NFLAT	06	01	03	09	45,000
Bakers	08	02	04	08	36,000
Ceramics	06	01	03	06	30,000
Others (2)	03	00	02	03	11,000
Totals (A)	103	24	66	282	1,421,000
<i>(B) Unions where men form more than half the members</i>					
Totals (B)	499	25	72	969	4,768,000
Totals for all Conference	602	49	138	1251	6,189,000

KEY

(1) represents the number of women delegates there would have been had the delegation mirrored the number of women members; (2) is based on Clause VII of the Party Constitution which allows unions to send one delegate per 5,000 affiliated members or part thereof.

Source: Labour Party Annual Report, TUC membership figures as at December 1982.

Appendix Table 3

Factors which Non-Activist Respondents in Five Union Branches Thought Relevant to their Increased Participation

<i>Personal-related Factors</i>	<i>% citing factor</i>	<i>Job-related Factors</i>	<i>% citing factor</i>	<i>Union-related Factors</i>	<i>% citing factor</i>
Having a greater interest in union affairs	49.5	Nothing could make it easier	33.0	Meetings held in work-time	57.3
Fewer home responsibilities	48.6	No difficulties in getting adequate time off for union activities	29.1	Make Union matters easier to understand	55.3
Feeling more confident	39.0	Management not making life more difficult for active unionists	23.3	Make more information available about how union works	50.5
Knowing women can be as competent as men in trade union affairs	35.2	Union activity not affecting promotion opportunities	16.5	Creating opportunities so women could get together and discuss matters of interest to them	41.8
Going to meetings with someone I know	32.4	Fellow workers not making life difficult for active unionists	16.5	Meetings held in more convenient places	33.0
Male union members giving me a chance to air my views	23.8	Not working part-time	8.7	Running education courses	21.4
Giving up other activities	14.3	Changing to another shift	3.9	Organise more social events	13.6
Husband agreeing to my being active in the union	10.5	Other factors	5.8	Meetings held at a different time	10.7
Nothing could make it easier	9.5			Provide child-care facilities so I could come to meetings	4.9
Other factors	3.8			Other factors	2.9

Of the 210 women trade unionists surveyed, 108 (51.4%) returned questionnaires.

Source: Summary of the findings of a survey carried out by Jane Stageman. For a full account, see her book *Women in Trade Unions* (University of Hull Adult Education Department, Industrial Studies Unit, Paper No.6), May 1980. Price £1.00 plus p&p.

Appendix Table 4
Subject Matter Forwarded to and Debated at the 1982 and 1983 Labour Party Annual Conferences

<i>Subject matter/ Area of concern</i>	<i>1982 Conference</i>		<i>1983 Conference</i>	
	<i>No. of affiliates forwarding a resolution on topic</i>	<i>Number of composites</i>	<i>No. of affiliates forwarding a resolution on topic</i>	<i>Number of composites</i>
Defence and disarmament	67	03	42	04
National Health Service & Health	58	03	33	02
Industrial structure of UK, distribution of wealth, income and power	52	08	27	04
Women's organisation in Party and their rights outside the Party	33	06	24	03
Party unity, the register, Militant	30	05	24	04
Social security and the welfare state	29	03	17	02
Economic and industrial strategy and unemployment	26	04	22	03
Housing	23	03	10	02
Local Government	21	03	34	03
Conditions of employment	21	01	18	02
Foreign relations	21	03	16	02
Education	17	02	06	—
Employment legislation	16	02	05	01
Transport	13	01	12	02
Youth training scheme and voluntary labour	12	02	12	02
Labour Party and the media, own paper	07	01	35	02
1983 Election defeat and organisation	na	na	60	05
One member, one vote	—	—	21	03
Environment	03	—	18	02
Northern Ireland	09	02	13	03
Electoral reform	03	—	10	01

Sources: Resolutions and Composite books for 1982 and 1983.

Appendix Table 5
Women's Representation on the Executive Committees of the Fifteen Largest Affiliated Trade Unions

<i>Trade Union</i>	<i>Who elects union executive committee and by what method</i>	<i>Number of persons on executive committee</i>	<i>Number of women</i>	<i>Number there would be if committee reflected members in union</i>
GMBATU ⁴	Regional Committee (plus officers)	31	01	09 (11%)
COHSE ¹	Regional Council	25	03	20 (15%)
AUEW-TASS ³	Union conference	17	01	02 (50%)
AUEW-Engineers ¹	Postal ballot of members	07	00	01 (00%)
EEPTU ¹	Postal ballot of members	15	00	01 (00%)
ASTMS ⁴	Branch show of hands	22	02	05 (40%)
APEX ⁴	Branch show of hands	15	04	08 (50%)
UCATT ¹	Branch show of hands	07	00	00 (na)
NUM ¹	Branch ballot	19	00	00 (na)
TGWU ²	Branch ballot (plus Regional Committee)	39	01	06 (17%)
USDAW ²	Block branch vote, show of hands	17	01	09 (11%)
NUR ¹	Block branch vote, ballot	26	01	01 (100%)
NUPE ²	Block branch vote, ballot	26	10*	17 (59%)
POEU ¹	Block branch vote, ballot	23	00	01 (00%)
UCW ¹	Block branch vote (plus officers)	35	05	07 (71%)

KEY

The satellite numbers above the union names refer to the date on which the union's executive committee was surveyed: (1) October 1984, (2) December 1983, (3) October 1983, (4) September 1983. All union membership figures are as at December 1982. The percentage in brackets to the right of the last column means that e.g. in GMBATU the executive comprises only 11% of the number of women it would contain if the committee accurately mirrored the number of women union members. The asterisk for NUPE denotes that the figure given includes five reserved women's places.

Sources: Unions themselves where (1). Others come from Equal Opportunities Commission data.

Appendix Table 6
Representation of Women on the Executive Committees of Sixty-four European Trade Unions

Per cent of the trade union's members who are women	Number of unions surveyed within the category	Per cent of Executive Committee members who are women												
		0-10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	41-50%	51-60%	61-70%	71-80%	81-90%	91-100%			
0-20%	22	16 ¹	06 ²	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
21-40%	14	10 ³	03	—	01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
41-60%	07	—	03	01 ⁴	02	—	01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
61-80%	13	01 ⁵	03 ⁶	01	04 ⁷	04	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
81-99%	08	—	—	—	—	02	01	02	—	—	—	01	02	—

KEY

Where a number is underlined, this represents the median average response (the central 'score' along a range of 'scores'). Satellite numbers denote that a British union falls within that given category, (1) representing NUM, POEU, UCATT, NUR, EEPTU, TGWU, AUEW-Engineering, ASTMS; (2) UCW, AUEW-TASS; (3) GMBATU; (4) APEX; (5) USDAW; (6) COHSE; (7) NUPE. Obviously, therefore, if a British union falls to the left of the median score its performance is less satisfactory than the European average, to the right better than average.

Example

Women comprised 21-40% of all union members in 14 of the unions surveyed, but in 10 of the unions less than 10% of the Executive Committee's members were women. Those 10 included GMBATU.

Sources: The survey represents 15 British unions, 15 Finnish, 12 Swedish, 12 Swiss and 10 Irish. British figures are as for Appendix Table 4. Continental and Irish statistics are drawn from 'Women's Representation in Trade Unions' published by the European Trade Union Institute.

None of us would wish to deny the enormous contribution socialists have made to our lives this century — with our every movement we touch upon something we enjoy only because of their struggle. Yet, almost a century onwards from the election of the first Labour MP, one half the population still have only a tiny foothold in the economic and political system. Labour has not merely failed to adjust this balance but generally not been much concerned about it since, after all, it only mirrored the position of women in the Party at large. Currently, only 8 per cent of trade union Conference delegates are women and only 5 per cent of MPs.

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Cover illustration: Membership card of a women's trade union in Scotland, 1833.

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