



WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

June
1980

Paper
of
Labour
Movement
Fightback
for
Women's
Rights

5p

THE KIDS NEED THEIR DINNERS



"In my school" a Basingstoke teacher told us, "the take-up of dinners has dropped by 70% since they brought in cafeteria-style meals".

Instead of meat, two veg and sticky pud, Hampshire's new school meals policy — **soon to be followed all over the country** — serves up fast food snacks like burgers and chips.

"Lots of families just can't afford the new prices. And even with the kids that **have** got the 50p, most of them are going out to spend it at the chip shop, or on fags or Evo Stick. They used to queue up for seconds. Now they just don't want to know."

And out of 16 dinner staff at this school, four have already been disposed of through 'natural wastage'.

What's happening in Hampshire (see page 2 for detailed report by a NUPE shop steward there) signals the start of a wholesale Tory campaign to do away with services we have come to take for granted as part of our lives, as basic as feeding our kids.

It's all in the Education Bill, that allows local authorities to save money by not providing school meals, milk or transport, or by cutting back on standards so the services are next to useless.

Cafeteria dinners, snack meals, single-session school with no meals at all, threaten the jobs of up to 40,000 women — dinner staff who depend on the school-time hours and easy reach of these jobs.

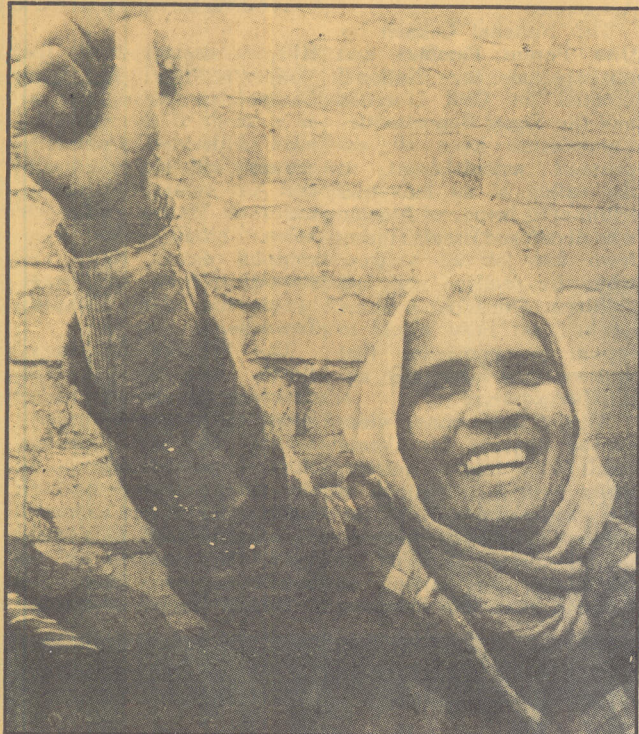
Half a million children who now get free meals will have to pay — if there's even a meal to pay for. All over the country, mothers of school-age children will face the choice of giving up their jobs or letting their children go hungry.

This is the Tory government's way of dealing with the dole queues: throw **women** out of work and no-one will count up how many are unemployed. It won't cost a penny in dole money, and the 'shake-out' will boost the profits of the rich and help to pay for bombs.

There's only one snag: **WOMEN WILL FIGHT BACK.**

...and the women need their jobs!

Chix women fight on



Chix women are still fighting to save the jobs of the part-timers.

LAST YEAR 96 workers at Chix chewing gum factory, Slough, members of the local Indian and Pakistani communities and mostly women, decided to put an end to appalling pay and conditions of work: 95p an hour, no hot water, inadequate canteen and toilet facilities, an unswept floor and racist abuse from the white supervisors.

When Dennis Rose and his management refused to recognise their branch of the General and Municipal Workers' Union last October, they came out on strike. Management retaliated by attempting to run the factory on scab labour. Would-be scabs from the Asian communities were turned away by the management in favour of whites and West Indians. Throughout the winter, pickets, who turned up daily

in all weathers to prevent scabs and lorries from entering the factory, were faced with a constant police presence.

Support from their families has been total. The GMWU obtained widespread blacking of deliveries, including the support of the International Foodworkers' Federation. Production dropped — recently it was running at only 50%.

Mass picketing grew, the largest picket drawing 300. Supporters came from as far as Liverpool. At the last mass picket on Wednesday 21st May, about 80 people turned up, not only locals such as Eton and Slough CLP, but also those who'd come from Bristol, Cardiff, Oxford, Reading, Sussex University and Watford. Workers from Walls, Southall came straight off the night shift.

Only about 6 scabs had got inside early and were working. Despite an "alley formation" of police designed to enable scabs to slip in without being detected, only 2 appeared and got in this way. The others stayed away, deterred by the sizeable pickets at each entrance.

This was a women's solidarity day. Members of women's groups and 'Women's Voice' and 'Women in Action' readers turned up in good numbers and quite a few copies of the Fightback Broadsheet were sold. The pickets were supported by women from Southall Black Sisters and Black Women United from Lewisham. Nevertheless, there were almost as many men as women — in support of strikers 80% of whom were women! Let's hope

future support for women's solidarity pickets will be better.

As the sister from Southall reminded us, this strike was as much against racism and sexism as for Union recognition and for better pay and conditions. Management and police have subjected the strikers to racial and sexual abuse; several pickets have been arrested.

That day, while some members of the striking Chix GMWU shop were getting a warm reception at the GMWU Annual Conference, Mohammed Anwar, the branch secretary and a Communist Party member, and the union officials were negotiating with Dennis Rose and ACAS. Later that day an agreement was signed between officials

continued inside

LABOUR WOMEN ARE PART OF OUR MOVEMENT

by RACHEL LEVER

THE platform at the recent Labour Party women's conference at Malvern had all the usual trappings: elevated above the conference, decked out with flowers and microphones, served coffee by uniformed waitresses.

But the women's organisation and its conference have neither power nor influence in the party. Conference resolutions have no standing at all in the party's policy-making machinery. They're just good advice.

In this spirit conference asserted the right of women to work, called for free school milk, low fuel prices, higher death grants, opposition to the Cold War and US missiles in Britain, the repeal of all existing anti-immigration legislation, and lots of other good things.

Resolution after resolution bit the dust of well-intentioned unanimity. Most party women steer clear of the women's sections and councils, not wanting to tangle with the weight of tradition they seem to embody, and anxious not to get stranded in a powerless backwater.

But the women's organisation could be transformed, and a transformed women's organisation could have a unique role to play in mobilising working class women in action.

Women's Fightback has been arguing for an outgoing, active, fighting women's organisation that involves itself in the struggles of women in the women's liberation movement, in the communities against cuts, on housing issues etc, and organises to support women's trade union struggles too.

Nervous

For women now in the party, it would be a way they could determine their own activity and organise on women's rights without having to constantly go through the cumbersome procedures (and argue it out with the men) to get anything done. And it could be a way of relating to and organising very large numbers of ordinary women who are nervous about the women's movement but want to fight the Tories.

In many unions, it takes quite a fight for the right to meet together as women. Labour's constitution does give this right, and it would be a pity if the grey perm image of the women's sections got in the way of taking the opportunity to change them into campaigning groups that can lead women in a fight — in or out of the party.

Even the grey perms can be deceptive. I sat down next to one at the free-booze reception at the conference, only to be met with a tirade of invective against the establishment. "We shouldn't have a Day of Action, we should be having a general strike. We should kick the bastards out. Who cares about death grants — what we should do is take over the banks..."

On its third day, the conference came alive with real discussion as it entered a debate on the realities of political life for party women. It may seem ironic that an inward-looking internal debate should arouse passions that were absent in the policy debate itself. But the women's conference does know that it exists in the outer margins of party policy-making, at a time when even the 'real' policy-making conference (the Annual (known in the women's organisation as the "Men's") conference has precious little to do with the policies actually

carried out by the PLP or a Labour government.

Many delegates had already expressed anger and disappointment at the fact that the Women's Advisory Committee's submission to the NEC inquiry into party organisation was not tabled for detailed amendment, debate and ratification at this conference. A small caucus of delegates supporting Fightback for Women's Rights organised around an emergency resolution deploring the inadequate arrangements for this debate; and in a matter of hours collected 63 signatures (in a conference of less than 300) for the censure.

The platform conceded defeat. It recommended acceptance of the censure, and allowed a debate on the whole document with section-by-section voting.

Rushed

The debate was confusing and rushed. References back of this or that section had to be motivated on purely verbal amendments, and in the event, most of the delegates understandably preferred the devil that was written down in front of them to the devil they were hearing for the first time and had no chance to check over.

But important issues were battled about in the time we had: positive discrimination, both as a principle and as a practice governing Parliamentary shortlists; the idea that resolutions from the women's conference should be sent on to the annual conference for debate; the possibility of electing the Women's Advisory committees in open conference; and the proposal that the five women's seats on the NEC should be elected by the women's conference.

It was clear that we could have had at least a day's useful debate and discussion on these issues. At a fringe meeting the night before, organised by LCC, CLPD, NOLS and Women's Fightback most people felt that a two hour discussion had only just begun to open up these questions.



They're sisters too

A conference for activists in the women's organisation is being planned for the Autumn by Women's Fightback and CLPD. It must set about organising a fight for the rights of party women and against the bureaucracy and complacency that all but dominated this year's conference.

Meanwhile, Women's Fightback can be a tool for those who want to go ahead and build Labour women's groups. Precisely because it's not a Labour Party paper or campaign (and this needs to be made clear to those who think that because Fightback also organises some women in the Labour Party, it must be 'a Labour Party campaign') it can help to break down the isolation of many Labour women from the wider movement for women's rights.

A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO WORK

WHAT ARE THEY DOING TO SCHOOL DINNERS?

SCHOOL MEALS have been singled out as Hampshire's main sacrificial victim to the altar of Thatcherism. Already the service has been severely cut through price rises — a meal now costs 50p, and a simplified meal has been introduced. These cuts have meant that over 1,500 school dinner ladies have been sacked and another 800 are threatened with the sack between now and July. These further sackings are because they've put price of a meal up so high that most ordinary families can't afford them.

These cuts don't even save the County Council that much money. As the school dinners' staff have said time and again: reduced demand (due to higher prices) means that the cost of producing the reduced number of meals would increase. Of course the Tories don't see this and simply say, well that means we'll have to make even more cuts.

Hampshire County Council — which has long been

iously been planning to do this for quite some time. Three years ago they introduced temporary contracts of employment. By doing that they were able to evade many of the provisions of the Employment Protection Act and their obligations under the Redundancy Payments Act. One of the problems in fighting this was the relatively low level of trade union membership among the staff.

Last year, there were almost 8,500 staff employed in the school meals service in Hampshire. And it has always been an almost exclusively female area of employment, because the women can get their kids off to school before going in to their work and then they finish work before the kids get back from school. By the end of July this year, the County Council, taking full advantage of the Government's decision to remove some of the statutory controls from school meals, will have succeeded in almost halving the staffing levels in the kitchens.

Another aspect of the Tory scale. This is designed to reduce the number of children's school meals. The effects of this in areas like Southampton have been dramatic. Before the new reduced, free school meals, there were 25% and 35% respectively in these areas. Now this has been reduced to about 12%. It's quite obvious that thousands of school children in Hampshire will be hungry as their parents can't afford to pay the full price. But the Tories don't think that even enough; there further increase in September this year.

NUPE, the Hampshire Joint Education Committee, has been fighting the campaign against the school meals' cuts. We launched a public meeting with over 200 people last autumn. We've organised a national petition

with the Child Poverty Action Group against the changes in the Education Service, and we had a lobby of the Hampshire County Council. What we need is unity between the dinner staff, teachers and children's parents to stop these cuts. The school dinners staff are realising more and more that the only way to protect their jobs and the service is not just to be a card-carrying member of the union, but to actively participate in cuts activities. They know what the effects implementing a Tory policy and cuts are and they know what its effect on women in particular is. They have already formed a County School Meals Committee and they are determined that the Council will not get away with their intention of sacking 800 more women in the autumn.

PAT COOPER
(NUPE Shop Steward,
Portsmouth)



THE SACKING of Ursula Hurley, a single parent, by bistro-owner Edward Mustoe, looks set to become one of the most important tests of the Sex Discrimination Act so far.

The National Council for One Parent Families and lawyers at the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Equal Opportunities Commission have all expressed astonishment at the ruling of an industrial tribunal in favour of Mustoe who dismissed Ursula Hurley from her job as waitress when he realised she had children. Since the tribunal he has not been afraid to repeat his conviction that mothers are inherently unreliable workers.

At the same time, widespread support for Ursula Hurley has grown quickly, along with a recognition of the consequences of the tribunal's ruling for all working mothers. Pickets at Mustoe's two bistros in Kentish Town and Primrose

Article contributed by the Mother's Right to Work Campaign

Hill — organised by the Mother's Right to Work Campaign which was formed as a result of the ruling — have included women's groups and local councillors. And among the regular users of Mustoe's Kentish Town bistro who have stopped eating there are several offices and other businesses along Kentish Town Road.

The MP for St Pancras North, Jack Stallard, who describes the case as a major issue, has written to Employment Secretary James Prior to seek his reaction to the ruling, although the Tory Government is not expected to commit itself to a view until the question of an appeal has been settled.

Ursula Hurley is encouraged

support she has received and the issue is being seen as one of principle. "I have letters from women whose husbands take the same attitude as Edward Mustoe", she says. "It is very clear of women with or hold a job are. It would be for all working mothers if it turns out that we do not have laws adequate to protect the millions of people who are sure that is why so many people see my such an important case."

The National Council for One Parent Families fears the tribunal's verdict will encourage

other employers who share Edward Mustoe's view to bar single parents from work.

"Two in three of the 340,000 single parents on Supplementary Benefit would like to work", says Paul Coueslant, One Parent Families' Information Officer. "We are not talking about mothers working for pin money as many people seem to think."

"These are parents who need to earn a living for themselves and their families like anyone else. At the very least we must ensure that employment and sex discrimination laws don't fall short of what is needed to enable women with children to work."



WHAT NEXT FOR NAC?

THE ANNUAL National Abortion Campaign Conference this year, held on 17th-18th May in Leeds, attracted over 200 women (and four men) from all over the country. It was obvious from the outset that the mood of the majority of women present was militant and determined. They were here to discuss and decide on issues vital not only to the future of NAC but to all women involved in the fight against oppression.

Corrie

The first session was taken up with a report on the year's activities in Campaign Against Corrie and NAC. The year for both had been dominated by the fight against the Corrie Bill, which had passed its second reading with such a large majority that its success seemed inevitable. The fact that nine months later it was dropped is a tribute to the power of public opinion and a mass campaign which actually had an effect on what went on in Parliament.

This was in no small measure

due to the tremendous work carried out by both NAC and CAC in turning what was a minority campaign into a mass campaign. This involved people from a wide spectrum of opinion, particularly in the 50,000-strong October 28th demonstration (the first time in their history that trade unions have demonstrated on a women's rights issue) and in a huge lobby of Parliament in early February.

The first set of resolutions covered positive legislation and amendments to NAC's aims and structure. It became clear in workshops that the main areas of contention would be the Leeds resolution concerning a woman's right to control her own sexuality and fertility, and the Leicester resolution which proposed extension into other areas of activity (e.g. housing, working conditions). This then developed into a single discussion concerning women's autonomy.

The Leicester resolution fell, but a resolution for work towards positive legislation, in conjunction with the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, was carried, in particular in drafting a Private Member's Bill to amend the NHS Reorganisation Act, and in building a campaign to make NHS abortion facilities mandatory, and working locally in the labour movement to commit the next Labour Government to legislate for a woman's right to choose.

Autonomy

In Sunday's session, opinions ranged from a demand to make the whole campaign, including local groups, women only, to a resolution asserting support for the Constitution as it stood (i.e. open to all who support NAC's aims). A compromise resolution drafted by women who had served on the Steering Committee, which stated that they wished to maintain an open membership structure, whilst at the same time recognising the right of women to self-organisation and stressing the fact that local groups must be allowed to make their own decision on such matters, was also moved. The issue of NAC and the labour movement was raised

in the following resolution:

"The Labour movement is central in the campaign for the defence and extension of abortion rights and it is important that NAC orientates outwards to mobilise the maximum number of people to achieve its aims. NAC should not therefore become a women only campaign. Workshops were then convened around these and other resolutions and followed by open debate on the contentious issues already mentioned. Several speakers suggested that the mood of conference indicated the need for a Women's Liberation Conference in the very near future. NAC, it was felt, should remain a one issue campaign and should not move into areas which were rightly the responsibility of the Women's Liberation Movement.

All the motions calling for complete women's autonomy were defeated but the constitution was amended by the conference resolution which allowed for the right of women to women only meetings and local groups.

The resolution on NAC and the centrality of the labour movement was defeated.

Our right

The Leeds resolution on Aims and Structure was carried in an amended form, adding the campaigning slogan, "Our Bodies, Our Lives, Our Right to Decide"; that NAC recognised that the campaign for a Women's Right to Choose is based on the principle of a woman's right to control her own sexuality and fertility, and that NAC recognises that many women who become pregnant do so as a result of unwanted intercourse and opposes all pressure on women to have intercourse unwillingly.

Further motions were also carried dealing with other areas such as women in Northern Ireland, International Solidarity, leaving the question of the future development of NAC work to be discussed at the next National Planning Meeting on June 14th/15th in London.

JOAN DEELEY
JUNE LOVELL
(Southampton NAC)

WOMEN in the NUT

by ANGELA BRITTAIN

SIXTY per cent of all teachers are women. Three quarters of the members of the National Union of Teachers are women. Yet the entire officialdom of the union, ranging from the general secretary through regional officials, district officers and others, is male dominated — with one exception: the 'Women's Official'.

Women, generally, feel very isolated at Local Association meetings, and need to band together with other women in order to take up issues in the union — after all, the NUT is important as the largest teachers' union and members are directly responsible for the development of educational policies.

The Women in the NUT group has been active in encouraging women to set up local women's sub-committees and caucuses. These groups then give women support and confidence to speak. They have also been active in helping to set up Equal Opportunity sub-committees in local associations. These are accountable to the associations and often

become involved in local projects aimed at combatting sexism in education.

Women in the NUT is also active at the national NUT conference. Last Easter more women than ever spoke there. The NUT Executive is still very sexist and the debate on the "women's motion" centred around abortion again (since the executive sees this issue as splitting the union) but Women in the NUT managed to collect 500 signatures from delegates stating that they would not leave the union if a position on "A woman's right to choose" was adopted by Conference.

Now women not only have the massive Tory cuts, driving women back into the home, but also the Education Bill and the reduction of maternity leave rights. Now it's more important than ever to organise in the face of these attacks.

Support our meeting: Sexism Cuts Deep - the Tory Attack on Education, at Camden and Westminster Teachers' Centre, Stanhope Street, NW1, on June 17th at 7pm. Speakers from Women in Education, Women in the NUT, and Ann Marie Wolpe.

A FESTIVAL FOR WOMEN'S DAY

by Elaine Ginsberg, Festival Planning group.

RECENTLY, Fightback has been represented at the meetings of an ad hoc planning group formed to organise a national women's festival.

The aim of the festival is to focus attention on present government policies attacking women, and to show the strength with which so many women are fighting back and the support which their struggle has won.

This government is certainly not the first (and presumably it won't be the last)

The planning group has now decided to put back the festival from the Autumn to Sunday March 8th 1981 - International Women's Day.

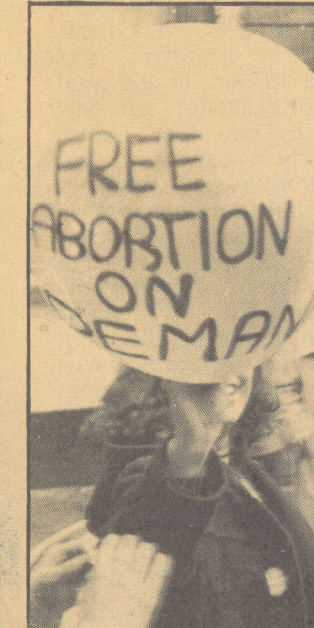
The entire event will be for women only, but the political approach will remain the same as in the original plan. In a letter to those who have been discussing it with us, the planning group say: "We do not wish to duplicate, undercut or compete with other Women's Day events" but "we think that March 8th will be the appropriate day to provide an opportunity to voice our objections to the threats we face from this Tory government".

To avoid duplication of work and involve a wide spectrum of groups in the project, a meeting has been called on Monday July 7th at 7pm for groups and individuals either fighting for similar aims or planning to organise for March 8th next year.

Meanwhile, the planning group is inviting sponsorships (£5 for individuals, £10 for local groups, £20 for trade union branches, £50 for national organisations) and organising a BENEFIT DISCO & CABARET on June 14th at the Hemingford Arms, Offord Road/Hemingford Road, NI (women only)

We are planning the day to start with a march to

A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO WORK



Would women-only strengthen NAC or weaken it?

WHO WE ARE

FIGHTBACK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS was launched at a conference on March 22nd 1980, attended by 500 women and supported by almost two dozen campaigns and organisations of the women's movement.

The emphasis of the conference is expressed in the policy resolution prepared for the June conference by the planning committee. The aim of the second conference is to make firm decisions about our aims and how to carry them out. The policy and direction of

this newspaper will also be under discussion — so that its readers and sellers can decide how it should be developed.

Who can come: representatives [women preferred] are invited from women's groups, trade union bodies and union & trades council women's caucuses and committees, Labour Parties and Labour women's sections, and from all women's rights and anti-cuts campaigns. Delegations can be any size, and individuals are welcome too.

CONFERENCE

JUNE 21st 11 to 5 DIGBETH HALL BIRMINGHAM

- ★ Future aims and policy
- ★ Reports and plans for action
- ★ Publishing a newspaper
- ★ How the campaign will be run

The Planning Committee will agree a draft structure and draft aims and policy which will be available, with credentials, if you send sae with your registration. These will be sent out by May 28th, together with other resolutions (which we must receive by May 24th).

Amendments to resolutions and to the draft statements must get to us by June 7th.

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME..... Phone No.....

Address:.....

What organisation (if any) are you representing?

Your main areas of activity/interest (eg women's group, trade union, Labour Party, NAC or other campaigns, etc.) Special responsibilities or positions?

REGISTRATION: £2 (£1 unwaged) in advance; or £2.50 on the door. Cheques payable to Fightback for Women's Rights.

There will be a pooled fare

CRECHE: please give names and ages of children who will/may* be using creche. (* Delete will or may)

Please return to 41 Ellington Street, London N7 as soon as possible

Our policy draft

The final date for amendments has been put back, as late resolutions are still coming in. Amendments to this policy statement [and to other resolutions, which will be sent out on receipt of large s.a.e.] will be accepted up to second post on June 19th.

1. We aim to build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks being mounted on women's rights, such as the right to control our fertility, the right to health and childcare facilities, the right to work, the right to live in this country with the partner of our choice, the right to maternity leave and job security for mothers, the right to wages, benefits and legal status independent of a man, the right to organise as trade unionists and as women.

These rights and others, many not yet won or consolidated, must be defended and extended in face of the onslaught against women by this government.

2. Such a mass campaign has to be part of a labour movement response to the Tory attacks. We aim to provide a focus for united action by women already organised in the labour movement and in campaigns and groups of the women's movement, and to involve women who do not yet relate to any of these movements.

3. We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for it to take our needs as a priority. We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women as women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.

We fight to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and for positive discrimination and changes in arrangements and practices to enable women to play a full part at all levels. We fight for the implementation of the TUC Charter for women in the unions. We fight against the labour movement reflecting in any way the oppressive ideas about a woman's role, which can undermine women's ability to fight back, and dangerously divide the movement.

We ally with all those fighting for rank and file control, democracy and accountability, against those who hold back and sell our fight. Never again a 'Labour' government that ignores party decisions, serves the bosses and bankers, and beats down workers' standards and struggles.

4. We aim to coordinate and assist those women in the Labour Party who are fighting for these aims.

5. We are for direct action, solidarity as women and as workers, and for maximum mobilisation for all actions against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us.

How to ORGANISE

Some ideas on how to get publicity and interest for the June 21st conference:

★ Contact the local paper
★ Display the leaflet in left or alternative shops, colleges, union notice boards at work, community centres, Labour Party rooms, etc.

★ Approach those who came to the last conference. Tell them what Fightback has been doing since.

★ Invite local labour movement bodies to send a delegate: Labour Parties and wards, women's sections, trades councils, union branches. Regional offices of

unions may distribute the conference leaflet to their branches if you go in and ask them to.

★ Invite local women's groups.

★ In the Midlands and North, stress that the conference is being held in Birmingham for their convenience. The pooled fare will not be high (and we can no doubt organise exemptions for those who are hard up) and will of course be lower if there's a very good attendance from the Midlands.

★ Organise transport.

Coaches and minibuses really reduce costs. Some areas are organising fund-raising events to bring costs down further, and you can approach a students' union to fund a bus or send a minibus.

★ At the conference: there'll be a creche, and food (not as good as the London conference, but we're negotiating for something cheap and decent). There are no scheduled workshops, but time and space for lunch-time get-togethers.

There will again be a room for bookstalls and displays.

WHAT FIGHTBACK HAS BEEN DOING

FIGHTBACK's first big effort after our launching conference on March 22 was organising for the May 14th TUC Day of Action.

We put out 30,000 leaflets 'Calling all Women' to join the Day of Action, and an Open Letter to trade unionists arguing that the personalised, sexist, anti-woman slogans used against Thatcher and the Tories on March 9th should not be repeated on the 14th.



The Open Letter got a good response in many trade union meetings, even ones with a big majority of men like the all-Birmingham T&G stewards' meeting to prepare for May 14th. Spare Rib, the Guardian, Labour Weekly, and Community Action magazine all gave publicity to the Open Letter.

Women were out in force on the 14th. Many were glad to take Fightback placards or badges, and in some areas there were special women's contingents — Manchester, Sheffield, Edinburgh.

In Basingstoke, a march and rally organised by GMWU and NUPE hospital workers had a Fightback speaker among others at the end, and there was also a Fightback speaker at the Trades Council meeting on the evening of the 14th. Northampton Trades Council's May 14th rally had a Fightback speaker, too.

In East London, the Tower Hamlets Labour Party women's section organised a stall at the Victoria Park Festival on May 14th, and sold £20 worth of Fightback and other literature.

The women's contingents on the 14th were mostly made up of women's movement activists, with women who see their main activity as being in the labour movement preferring to march with their trade unions. But Fightback has been organising and making contacts both in

the women's movement and the labour movement.

The letters coming in to the central Fightback address reflect the variety of activities discussed at our first conference. A women's group in Stroud, wanting advice on setting up a Women Against the Cuts campaign; women in the labour movement interested in our plans to organise inside the movement against sexism; trade union and Labour Party women activists wanting bundles of our broadsheet.

We got 6,000 copies printed of our first broadsheet, and distributed all but a few hundred. We have been out selling the broadsheet on May 14th, at the Labour Party women's conference in Malvern, at NUPE conference in Eastbourne (nearly 200 sold there), at CPSA conference in Southport, at NAC conference in Leeds, at Labour's special conference in Wembley — and we'll be at the Morning Star 'Beat the Blues' Festival on June 15th, too.



The more enterprising local Fightback activists have been in approaching labour movement organisations, the better the results. In Cardiff, NUPE branches took bulk orders of the mobilising leaflet for May 14th, and four Labour Party wards have had Fightback speakers: result, four sponsorships and probably two delegates to the June 21st conference. Basingstoke Fightback activists sent copies of the mobilising leaflet to Andover, and now have an invitation to speak to Andover CLP.

Other local initiatives include plans for a local Fightback newssheet in Manchester, fund-raising events organised by Labour Party and Fightback women in Leyton (the first one raised £30) and a Fightback day school for Yorkshire organised in Sheffield for June 8th.

TRANSPORT

Some areas already have transport fixed up to Birmingham for the conference on June 21st, others will soon be making arrangements.

Manchester: 8am from Aytoun St, Piccadilly. £3, children free. Contact: Anna, 226 8594.

Sheffield: 8am from Pond St. £2.50 unwaged, £3.50 waged. Contact: Ros, 686 773.

Leicester: 9.30am, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Contact: Sue, 549151.

London: 7.45am, Midland Rd [between Kings Cross and St Pancras]. Contact: Angela, 458 7411.

For all other areas: contact Sue or Marian, 021-471 1964.

MONEY

WE'RE running on borrowed money at the moment, and more and more of it as time goes on. We've had £30 from a fund-raising event in East London, £25 promised from a CoHSE branch, and several donations of £5 or £10 — but a single mailing costs us £60.

At the June 21 conference we'll have to organise long-term financing. Meanwhile, send whatever you can and ask your organisation to send us a donation as well. We have the possibility of launching a really strong and effective campaign and of helping women to organise together autonomously in the labour movement. But we need the means and resources to do it.

Contribution sheets are available.

12 issues: 1 th. £1.80; 2 th. £2.40; 3 a month, £3 bundle of 20 each month, £12; bundle of 50, £4. Bundle of 50 each month for six months, £15. From 41 Ellington St, London N7. Cheques payable to Fightback for Women's Rights.