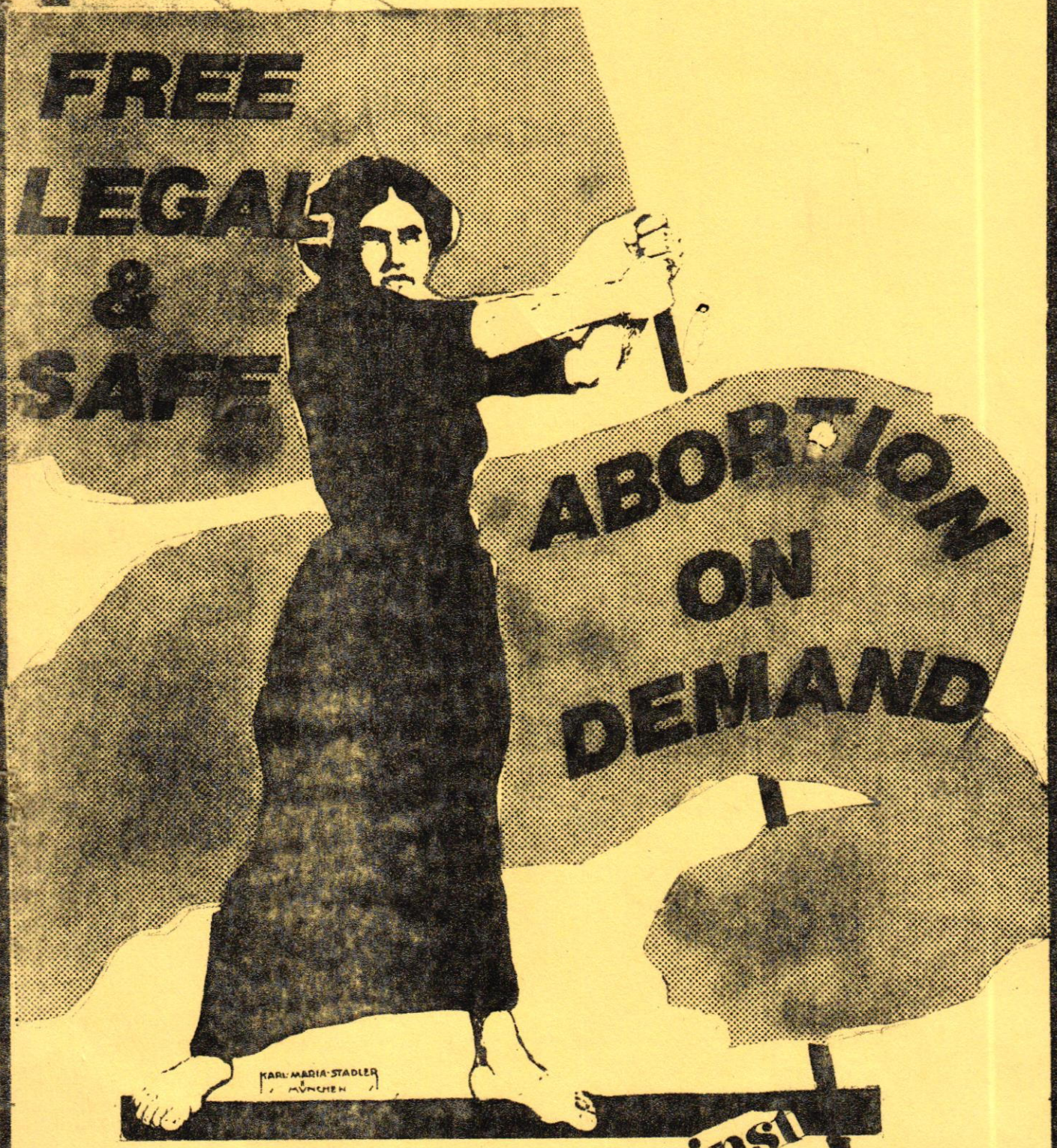
workers power

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Class Action against Corrie

DEFEND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Corrie anti-abortion bill is part of a series of attacks currently being launched on the rights and living standards of working class women:

* Cuts in the health and social services mean fewer jobs, but make more work to be done, unpaid, in the home looking after the sick and elderly.

* The abolition or reduction of school meals will squeeze the family budget and will also mean more work at home.

* Cutbacks in nursery and nursery school places will tie women to the home for longer.

While Employment Secretary James Prior has temporarily abandoned his direct attack on maternity leave provision, the Government and the employers have not abandoned their overall intention of weakening the ability of working class women to organise to defend jobs and improve wages.

Patrick Jenkins, Social Services Secretary, recently announced that "State help for working mothers should be restricted to particularly needy cases" because "the more people look to governments for their salvation, the more they ignore what they themselves can do." Translated, that means 'A Woman's place is in the home' doing, for free, the work the health and social services used to do.

Corrie's bill complements these other attacks. Whatever amendments may be made to the bill, <u>any</u> further restrictions on abortion reduces women's right to control their own lives and strengthens the idea that their first and 'natural' concern is with home and family.

We must reply by going onto the attack to defend and extend our rights, fight unemployment and inflation:

<u>For A Woman's Right to Work</u> - No to all 'Women Out First' solutions. Occupy firms declaring redundancies. For work sharing with no loss of pay. For nationalisation without compensation under workers control.

Fight All Cuts. For direct action including strikes and occupations. Oppose all rate and rent rises. Demand Labour Councils refuse to implement the cuts. Freeze council repayments to the banks and money lending houses. Nationalise these without compensation.

For Free and Full Nursery Provision, after school play facilities and free school meals.

For Free Abortion on Demand. For adequate day care abortion facilities and contraceptive and advice centres.
For Direct Action to Smash the Corrie Bill

For Equal Pay and a National Minimum Wage Now.
For wage rises to keep pace with the cost of living -1% wage rise for every 1% rise in prices.

BUILD A WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Who can lead the fightback? The Labour leaders now protesting against the cuts and posing as the friends of working women are the ones who paved the way for the current attacks. The 'left' leaders like Benn who are now criticising the last Labour Government, were complicit in its policies.

Commited to maintaining the capitalist system, Labour started the cuts, presided over a massive rise in unemployment and attacked living standards with the Social Contract. It tried to smash the public sector fight for decent wages last winter. The Labour Government's concessions on women's rights contained in the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Act were produced only as the result of intense pressure from women trade unionists and activists. In the absence of such pressure, over 50 Labour MPs felt able to vote for the second reading of the Corrie Bill, going <u>against</u> Labour Party policy. We say to those who still pin their hopes on Labour, we will join you in the fight to force these leaders to carry out policies in the interests of the working class - but remember their record!

Nor can the trade union leaders be trusted. The platform speakers at today's demonstration are fair weather friends. They refused to fight the Labour Government's attacks and now they want to keep a tight hold on the movement against the Tories.

We need a movement that can challenge these leaders, put them to the test and organise independently. And if the particular needs of working women are not to be forgotten, we need to build a <u>working class women's movement</u>. The present'women's movement' is totally inadequate for the tasks that now face us. It is not only fragmented and directionless - its political aims are 'feminist' politics which supposes that <u>all women</u> have the same interests - but the current attacks show clearly that those who have an interest in maintaining the present system, or who will be willing to compromise, cannot be the allies of working class women.

We must organise and campaign for basic democratic rights like Abortion on Demand and for reforms like nursery facilities. But we should be clear that capitalism can only grant these measures on a <u>temporary basis</u>. To end women's oppression, we have to go further; smash capitalism and build a socialist society. That is why we have to win women to the wider struggles of the working class and have to build a movement strong enough to challenge the control of the reformist leaders.

We can begin to build such a movement in the present period, organising around the fight for abortion rights, against the cuts and unemployment, and against inflation.

We will be faced with opposition, not only from government and employers, but from Trade Union leaders as well. That is why we must campaign to Open the Unions to Women Workers - to not only unionise women workers but bring them in to full participation in the unions. We demand the right to caucus, to fight for women's particular interests. We need positive discrimination for women to become shop stewards, and meetings in work time.

The struggles of women workers in the last decade - for equal pay, against low pay in the public sector, at Imperial Typewriters, Trico and Grunwick - show us that women can be the hardest and most determined fighters in the working class. That strength and determination must be organised and given coherence around the fight for the demands we have outlined.

FOR FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND!

Workers Power argues that the campaign to stop further restriction on women's right to abortion must not be separated from the campaign for full abortion rights with no legal or medical restructions. We have to point out the restrictive nature of the present law:

* Even under the present law, the choice does not lie with the woman. In areas where anti-abortionists -doctors or Area Health Authority members - dominate, NHS abortions are available only to a minority.
* Any time limit can force women to continue with pregnancy against their will. Time limits are not really about the 'rights of the foetus'but about denying the rights of women.
* The charities may fill gaps in the NHS, but women still have to pay. Access to NHS abortions should be straightforward, there should be adequate day care facilities for safe and early abortions.
* 'Conscience clauses' raise the moral objections of doctors and nurses above the democratic rights of women. We have to oppose them in any form.

Time after time, pro abortion activists have been forced onto the defensive: this time, we should seize the opportunity for building a movement for abortion on demand, based in the trade unions and workplaces. Such a movement must campaign for positive legislation, meaning both the mandatory provision of abortion facilities and legislation for abortion on demand.

The whole strategy of the Campaign Against Corrie instigated by the International Marxist Group (IMG), is for a purely defensive struggle. The ditching of the Abortion on Demand slogan and its replacement by 'Defend the 1967 Act' has disastrous implications. In areas like the West Midlands where only 10% of abortions are done on the NHS, defending the 1967 Act is a bad joke. Anywhere, a slogan short of Abortion on Demand gives powerful weapons to the anti-abortionists, suggesting that women don't have the right to decide. And, yet again, campaigning for Abortion on Demand is postponed.

The IMG has attempted to justify its policy by arguing that "the broadest possible forces" have to be drawn into the campaign. By this, they appear to mean certain sections of the medical profession and the trade union leaders. We certainly want to put pressure on the leaders to make them carry out the fight - but our aim is to build a movement independent of their bureaucratic control. Watering down slogans plays right into the hands of the trade union bureaucrats, who want to keep all campaigns against the Tories under their control.

Build a Trade Union Based Campaign

If we are to defeat Corrie and build a campaign for abortion on demand, we must not be held back by Murray and Co. We must follow up the demonstration by calling together delegates in each area from all trade union branches, shop stewards committees, Labour Party branches and women's groups who have supported the campaign. Such conferences must discuss how to carry on the battle against Corrie and the fight for abortion on demand. Many planned Day Care clinics are threatened by the cuts and campaigns are needed to get these open. And we have to build pressure in the Labour Party and trade unions to force Labour to carry out its conference policy of Free Abortion on Demand by introducing such legislation and abolishing the "free vote".

We also need a national trade union and Labour delegate conference on positive legislation. This was postponed until Spring 1980 at the last NAC Conference - and now NAC is suggesting it should be postponed until Autumn 1980. Postponing such a conference will let the Labour and trade union leaders off the hook. The trade union leaders will have been able to pretend they are fighters for women's rights - but they wont be challenged on the issue of forcing a real commitment to action from Labour.

NAC and CAC must not be allowed to hold back the development of the pro abortion movement in the working class. We must build for a conference to direct the campaign for positive legislation and connect the fight for abortion rights to other areas of working class struggle.

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