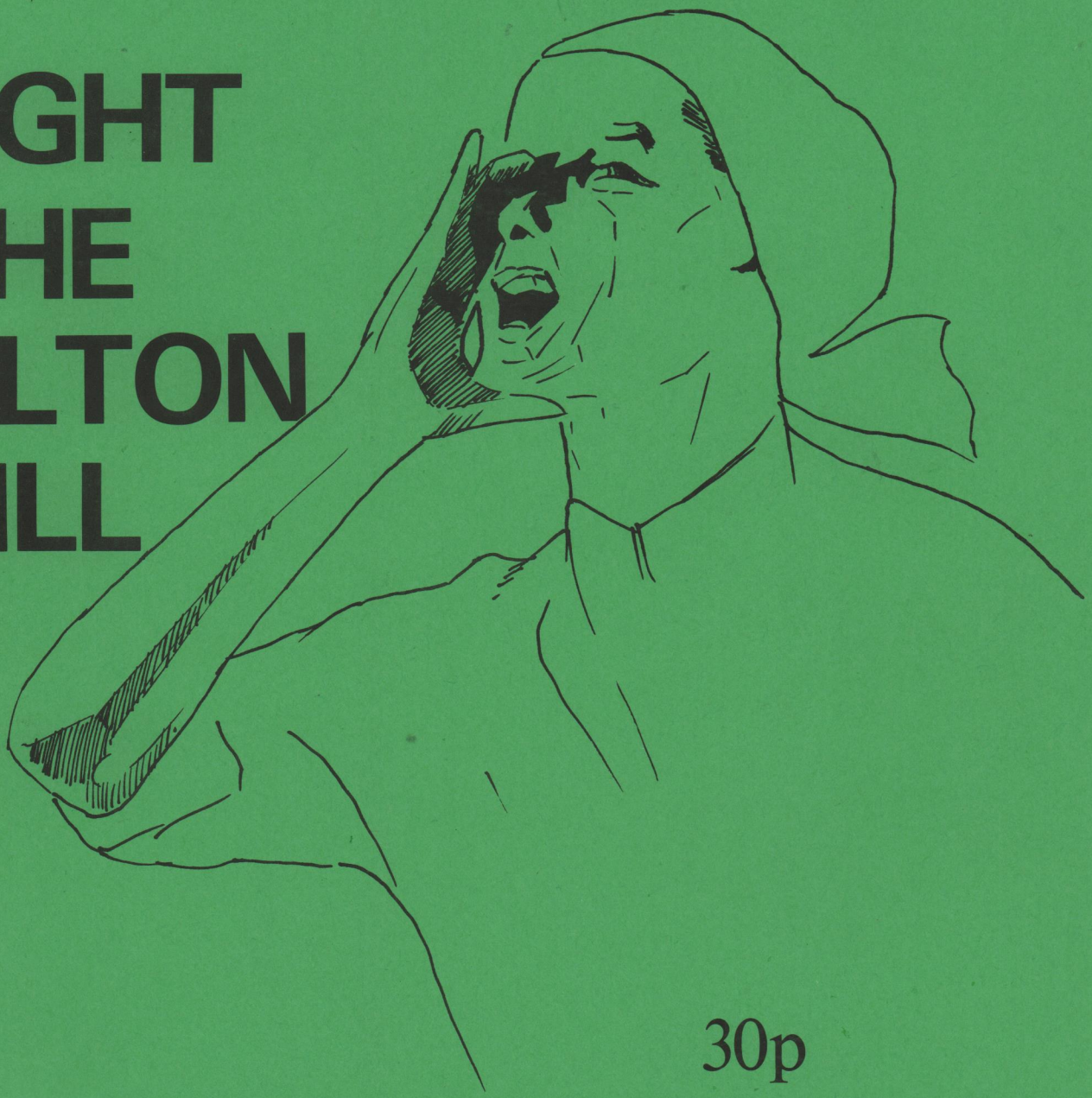
FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND

FIGHT THE ALTON BILL



30p
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a WORKERS POWER pamphlet

Free abortion on demand

Fight the Alton Bill

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The threat from Alton

David Alton's Bill aims to reduce the upper time limit for abortion from 28 to 18 weeks. Both it, and more "moderate" versions of the Bill, pose a serious threat to women's rights.

Last year over 5,000 women had abortions when they were 18 or more weeks pregnant. 2,700 of these were after 20 weeks. Many of these women were either those who had only just found out that the foetus had a serious abnormality, young women who denied to themselves and others that they could be pregnant, or older women who thought their missed periods were due to the menopause. Many were due to the gross inefficiency in the health service — 20% had consulted their doctors before they were 12 weeks pregnant and had to wait up to five months for the operation.

If Alton is successful, most of these women would have unwanted children now. Some would be maimed or worse, having sought abortions from illegal backstreet quacks, and some would have severely handicapped children to look after with little support from the social services. This Liberal MP, backed by his fellow Catholics in SPUC and Life, wants in practice to reduce the limit to 14 weeks as women would find it hard to get a doctor prepared to risk prosecution by performing a termination after that date.

The debates on the bill have already begun, well before its first reading on 27 October. The central issue of who decides what will happen to a woman's body, the state and medical profession or the woman herself, have been and will continue to be hidden behind a screen of pseudo-medical moralism about 'viability' and 'disability'.

The serious threat of this Bill to women's limited abortion rights will probably come in the form of amendments: few other than the staunch bigots of the anti-abortion lobby would support lowering the time limit as low as Alton proposes. Medical men generally recognise the reality of the need for later abortion in some cases. But they and their backers are likely to amend the Bill to a limit of 22 or 24 weeks. This would stand a much better chance of getting through, backed as it would be by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and by Thatcher herself. The proponents of this position say that since some foetuses delivered at 23 or 24 weeks can survive, then it is immoral to abort a foetus at this stage. Emotive arugments about aborted foetuses gasping for breath will be raised. Pictures will be shown of the 18 or 24 week foetus showing how much like a baby it is. But the distinction remains. It is not a baby. It is a part of the mother's body, totally dependent on her. Of course a 20 week foetus has the potential of becoming a human baby, but then so does every fertilised embryo in a woman's womb. A high proportion of these will never become babies because of spontaneous abortions or failure of implantation. Potential to become something does not equal the thing itself.

The real issue in this debate is who controls a woman's body. Who decides whether she will have a baby or not. Who decides whether she will have a healthy child or a child with a serious congenital abnormality.

Is the decision to lie with the church, state, medical profession, or with the person most affected, the woman herself? If we conclude as we must that only the woman concerned can make this choice then we must fight for abortion to be freely and readily available with no restrictions Free Abortion On Demand.

Hypocrites

Supporters of Alton's Bill claim to be concerned with the well-being of women. This is plain deceit. Although they are attempting to win a lower limit for abortions, their aim is to make all abortions illegal. Many SPUC and Life supporters also follow the Pope's teachings and oppose any contraception, any treatment for infertility — they basically wish to leave women with no choice. If you don't want to get pregnant but do — hard luck, if you do want to get pregnant and cannot — hard luck.

Late abortions are not something anyone would choose — they are more dangerous to the woman and very stressful. But have the supporters of this bill ever tried to improve facilities for quick, safe early abortions in order that it is easier for women to avoid late abortions? No. They are not interested in the health or rights of women, just in furthering their reactionary religious ideology, imposing its teachings on others by use of the law

There are some in this debate, including a powerful lobby in the Lords, who are prepared to see abortion up to 10 or 12 weeks made much easier to achieve. But in exchange for this, they want to see severe restrictions on late abortion This 'compromise' would also be dangerous for women. Of course we need easier, earlier free abortions, but even in countries where this applies some women still need late abortions. That

is why they then have to come to Britain, alongside women from countries like Ireland where abortion is illegal.

Both Alton and the 'liberal' lobby in the Lords want to stop women in Britain and from overseas exercising their right to choose. We must oppose all restrictions. In any case, a 'right' to early abortion without a massive expansion of NHS facilities would not be a right in practice for many women.

Supporters of Alton's Bill claim to be fighting for the rights and interests of the disabled. This is the grossest hypocricy and deception of them all. Those who are serious about fighting for a better life for people with disabilities have to campaign for the increased provision which could substantially improve their independence and comfort. Changing attitudes to people with disability goes hand in hand with that fight. That has nothing in common with **forcing** a woman to give birth to a child with a congenital abnormality. She then has to choose between devoting her own life to caring for that child in a society which lies the whole burden on the parents or abandoning her child to institutional life. The real barbarism does not lie in giving women the choice of aborting a foetus with a congenital abnormality, but lies in denying her any option.

A class issue

The labour movement must be mobilised to fight Alton's Bill, any other anti-abortion manoeuvres in the courts or parliament, and to campaign for free abortion on demand for every woman. This is not a 'moral' issue, it is a class issue. Women with money have always been able to get abortions from private doctors.

But if abortions are further restricted, it is working class women who will be most affected. Already the lack of facilities means that less than half of abortions are done on the NHS. Young working class women are particularly vulnerable. They lack the necessary finance, information and independence. The 1986 Education Act will mean inadequate sex education in schools. Even fewer young women will be aware of the best contraceptive methods for them, leading to higher numbers of unwanted pregnancies. The number of abortions of under 20-year-olds has risen from 6.8 per 1000 in 1969 to 20 per 1000 in 1984. One half of all abortions are to women under the age of 25. Alton's Bill, combined with poor sex education and closure of many family planning clinics will lead to many more teenagers with unwanted babies.

Due to Tory cuts in public spending more than 50 Family Planning Clinics have had to close already, with a further 100 threatened. These clinics are where many women seek advice on contraception, abortion and fertility problems when they find their local doctors obstructive or unqualified to help.

It is working class women who will be forced into unwanted pregnancies or to the back street abortionist. Deaths to women from abortions have fallen to a handful each year, a total of six between 1983-5. But 110 were officially listed for 1952-4. The whole of the working class, women and men, must be mobilised to ensure there is no return to those days.

There is another reason why abortion rights are a class issue. Restrictions on abortion are restrictions on women's independence. They mean that working class women are less able to control their lives, make decisions, struggle for a better future. Restrictions on abortion reinforce the ideas that say a women's prime role is bearing and rearing children, rather than fully participating in society and in paid work. This is not to say crudely that the state wants women to have more children and so stops them having abortion. Whether that is true varies over time, place and the women involved. But the very fact that restrictions exist denies women independence and control.

Both men and women in the working class are affected by this. If women cannot fully participate in trade unions, in workplace organisations, in politics, then the working class' ability to fight all the attacks being mounted against it is severely weakened.

Alton must be stopped, and working class women and the labour movement mobilised to fight for Free Abortion On Demand.

How to stop Alton

The Fight Alton's Bill Campaign (FAB) has been able to mobilise thousands of women in many towns and cities. The response has shown once again that the potential is there to build a really effective campaign for abortion rights. Many unions, the TUC, and the Labour Party still have policies for a Woman's Right to Choose and for Free Abortion on Demand. These bodies were mobilised in the successful Campaign Against Corrie (CAC) in 1979 in the last fight to defeat an anti-abortion Bill.

The leaders of FAB are looking to that as their model for this campaign. It is true that the Corrie Bill was defeated, and during the course of the campaign the sight of Len Murray leading 50-60,000 people on a TUC demonstration against Corrie must stick in many minds as the pinnacle of success for a women's issue being taken into the labour movement.

But there were serious weaknesses in the approach of CAC, weaknesses which could have severe consequences in today's changed circumstances.

At the time Workers Power argued that CAC was wrong to base itself purely on a defensive struggle (to defend the 1967 Act) rather than fight to extend women's rights for free abortion on demand and the facilities to make that a reality for all women. The TUC and many of the large unions had, and still have, policy in support of extending the abortion provision. Yet they were only asked to mobilise to stop the Bill. The net result has been that, whilst Corrie was defeated we have seen abortion provision further eroded without the union leaders raising so much as a whisper in opposition. They felt they had done their bit for women's rights, and now insist they will recruit more women by offering credit and shopping facilities with union membership rather than fighting to defend the interests of working class women members.

Apart from the Corrie campaign letting the TUC off the hook, it also depended for its success on the pressure of public opinion. Pro-abortion MPs filibustered the Bill in the committee stage — moving hundreds of amendments which didn't have time to be discussed. Eventually the government in refusing to grant the Bill more time allowed it to fall. Public opinion was clearly important, the government feeling it was not a central enough issue to risk uniting opponents from the camps of the unions, the women's movement and the medical profession. But relying on this method of fighting the Bill was always flawed. There was always the danger of it being carried if the government changed its mind.

The situation we face now is very different to 1979. 'Popular' opinion has moved after eight years of the Tories in power. Women have been repeatedly told that it is their primary duty to look after children, sick or elderly relatives because there is no state provision or because 'community care' is considered more suitable. Full time jobs for women which require more social provision for children and other dependents have been eroded and replaced with part-time 'flexible' working. Young women have seen their access to sex education and contraceptive provision restricted by both the government and under the influence of reactionaries like Victoria Gillick.

In addition there has been an intense propaganda campaign from the anti-abortion lobby to push the 'rights of the unborn child', attempting to enshrine some protection for all foetuses in law by bringing legal cases such as those by men trying to deny pregnant women the right to abort 'their' baby, and the Powell Bill last year which tried to outlaw research on human embryos. We are constantly told that foetuses can survive from very early on in pregnancy, and colour supplements on Sunday show us how wonderful these scientific advances are, generally ignoring the high rates of disability amongst the children born this way.

This time round we can no longer expect the support of the medical profession for defence of the 1967 Act. Erstwhile pro-abortionists are succumbing to the arguments for a reduction in the time limit.

Now more than ever we must turn to those directly affected to fight the Alton attack. Working class women, young women in particular, will be affected by the Bill. But what are we asking them to fight for? The current leaders of NAC argue, just as they did in 1979, that within FAB we can only fight Alton. They say that if we try to win support for extension of abortion rights we will reduce the support, narrowing the campaign. But who are they afraid of frightening off? The doctors, MPs, Liberals and other middle class would-be supporters.

In reply we are saying that the only real force that can decisively defeat Alton and any other attacks on women's rights is the working class,

the women and men whose families and lives will be most affected. If we are to mobilise these fighters to our side, to taking action through demonstrations, pickets, lobbies and strike action if necessary, we can't expect them to rush onto the streets in defence of a 'right' which largely applies only to middle class women! While NHS facilities are so severely restricted, many working class women do not in practice have access to abortion. We must build a working class campaign which fights for extended abortion and contraception facilities, freely available on demand for all women.

First, we must ensure that FAB groups orient to working class women, especially women trades unionists who can campaign to ensure their unions take an active role in fighting Alton. This means seeking out women's workplaces and women shop stewards as well as doing factory and estate leafletting.

Second, we must try and get union backing for pickets and demonstrations. This means more than simply getting resolutions passed, although that is important. It means campaigning to mobilise at rank and file level to keep pressure on the National Executives and the TUC.

Effective demonstrations and lobbies must be built for by workers taking strike action in order to attend them as the Bill progresses. If the Bill is being successful in Parliament the labour movement must be organised to take indefinite general strike action to prevent it being enacted - only this kind of determined show of our strength can stop them steadily eroding our rights.

Arguing and building for such action is not easy. We should start by building in the health service union for action against the closure of clinics and counselling services, and for increased provision. This can be linked to wider battles health workers face over pay, conditions and against cuts. Over the years health workers have shown that they are prepared to fight the cuts through strikes and occupations, only to be sold out by their leaders negotiating their jobs away. Other workers will support NHS struggles, such as the one day protest strikes by hospital workers and local industrial workers in Coventry over hospital closures.

We must not be frightened of taking the arguments for strike action on questions like abortion into the unions. The leaders will object that they are only there to fight for pay and conditions. But many of their members are women. An unwanted pregnancy can be the end of a woman's job so it most definitely is an issue for the unions

We in Workers Power will continue to support the fight against Alton's Bill, but we will also continue to argue that working class support should be won for a positive campaign for a woman's right to choose, and will take that argument and calls for action into unions and Labour Party branches.

If FAB is to succeed it must urgently re-orient itself away from appeals to progressive Tories and Liberals and towards working class women. We need a delegate conference to set up a democratic campaign and decide policy. By building such a campaign it will be possible to draw together working class women into the nucleus of a movement to really take the struggle for their rights forward.

The 1967 Act

Workers Power has consistently argued that defence of the 1967 Act is not enough, abortion rights must be fought for on the basis of Free Abortion on Demand, For a Woman's Right to Choose. The 1967 Act did not achieve this, nor was this the intention. Whilst the partial legalisation of abortion in itself was a step forward when set against the horrors of illegality, the 1967 Act was aimed to set the control and provision of abortion facilities in the hands of the state and the medical profession and expressly against a woman's right to control her own body. It was not even mandatory under the 1967 act to provide NHS facilities for abortion.

The terms of the 1967 Act mean that a woman can only have an abortion if two doctors agree that there are medical or social grounds. In practice, access to abortion has remained dependent on several factors - NHS provision in particular areas, the attitude of doctors, and, inevitably in areas where NHS provision is poor, the ability to pay. The charitable trusts that arose after the 1967 Act to provide abortion facilities on a temporary basis (PAS, BPAS, Marie Stopes etc) still provide the only hope of access to abortion for some women. For many women it costs £150 or more even for an early abortion. In the first three months of 1987, only 39% of all terminations were done on the NHS. The other 26,000 women had to seek out private doctors or charitable agencies and pay for their choice.

Historically abortion has always been present. Women have used many methods to control their own fertility which have included the termination of unwanted pregnancies. These methods, in the past, have varied in effectiveness, have had harmful effects on women and if discovered have been subject to punishment on the basis of religious morality. In this country abortion came under direct state control in 1803 when it became a criminal offence. Prior to 'quickening' (set at 12 weeks, the time when the 'soul' was assumed to enter the foetus) the punishment was transportation, whipping or imprisonment; after quickening, it was death.

The 1861 'Offences Against the Person Act ' removed the death penalty. Abortion became a misdemeanour punishable by life imprisonment, and a sentence of three years could be imposed on those supplying any instrument, poison or noxious substance to be used for the purposes of abortion. This Act has never been repealed and underlies the assumption that abortion is a criminal and immoral act. Subsequent legislation, including the 1967 Act, has made exceptions to this under certain circumstances, but only where the decision lies with doctors.

The 1929 'Infant Life Preservation Act' made the termination of pregnancy unlawful except where it was proved to be done in good faith (by a doctor) to preserve the life of the mother. This Act also set the limit of 28 weeks based on the viability of the foetus. A minority of doctors began to interpret the 1929 Act liberally, performing 'therapeutic' abortions where they felt 'in good faith' that the mental and physical health of the patient was at risk. However those involved could still be liable to prosecution. Doctors became more willing to perform therapeutic abortions after the war and by 1961 there were 2,300 therapeutic abortions taking place on the NHS and prior to the Abortion Act in 1967 this had increased to 9,700. Alongside this, 'discreetly legal' abortions were available for those who were able to pay in the private sector; others were condemned to the dangers of illegal backstreet abortion.

In the 1960s several attempts were made to reform the law, to rationalise and extend the provision of legal abortion. This was partly the result of pressure by the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) and by the medical profession who had to deal with the sometimes fatal results of backstreet abortions, and partly the result of a pragmatic approach by social reformers to legalise what was happening anyway. Lord Silkin's Bill in 1965 sought to give legislative backing to therapeutic abortion and to permit both medical and social factors in allowing abortions.

These pressures reflected the changing position of women. Contraception was more widely available, families were already getting smaller, and women were needed in the workforce. But the reformers in no way saw abortion as the woman's choice. As David Steel, who as a Liberal MP introduced the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill in 1966 stated "We want to stamp out the back street abortions but it is not the intention of the promoters of the Bill to leave a wide open door for abortion on demand"

In the parliamentary debate on the 1967 Act there was great concern that no loopholes were left that could be interpreted as abortion on demand. The problem was how to make abortion available to 'deserving ' women without allowing

women to 'degenerate into free for alls'(Jill Knight MP). The 'social clause' which was the subject of heated debate was seen as a means of maintaining a stable family structure minimising the number of inadequates, deprived or depraved. This decision can therefore imply that certain categories of women seeking abortion would be inadequate or undesirable mothers and the experience of black women who have been offered abortion only on condition that they are sterilised at the same time shows the racist interpretation that can be given to that clause.

The implementation of the 1967 Abortion Act was a considerable step forward. The fact that many women have been able to obtain safe, legal abortions was a gain and any attacks on this provision need to be fought. But its inadequacies mean we must push forward to win Free Abortion on Demand. Unfortunately, the abortion rights movement has squandered opportunities. After the defeat of the Corrie Bill, a conference did take place to discuss winning Positive Legislation - to campaign for extending abortion rights. Workers Power argued that an all out campaign for free Abortion on Demand should be waged in the Labour Movement, to commit the trade unions and Labour Party to fighting for abortion rights whether in and out of office. But the opportunity was missed.

Now we are told that the climate 'isn't right' to do more than defend the '67 Act. We argue that the best time to raise the need for Free Abortion On Demand is while we are defending our existing rights, while we are explaining the issues to thousands of women and men in trade unions, at work and through petitioning. We must not miss another opportunity.

In countries where abortion is illegal, the practice in no way disappears. In Brazil, abortion is only legal where the mother's life is at risk or the pregnancy is aresult of rape. Yet the number of abortions is now exceeding the number of live births according to a study made by the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops. They estimate that four million abortions are being done each year, 90% illegally. They say this leads to the death of 400,000 women.

The Left and Alton

We have argued that FAB's response to Alton has been inadequate. It must be said that some groups on the Left bear responsibility for these mistakes.

Socialist Outlook and *Socialist Action* are determined that the campaign should simply be a defensive one. Although recognising the limitations of the 1967 Act they believe the fight Alton's Bill (FAB) groups should only support the status quo. Anything beyond this, they argue, would threaten the broad support they hope for from all political parties — including the Liberals and Tories.

In the FAB steering committee and local groups Socialist Action and Outlook have argued for a campaign which concentrates all its attention on MPs, the press and 'personalities'. *Socialist Action* (20 Nov 87) calls on activists to write letters to MPs, write to the local press and collect signatures on petitions. No mention is made in the article of raising the issue and winning support amongst the working class with a view to winning action against Alton.

Of course lobbying and petitioning should be part of the campaign. But to centre on them more or less exclusively is dangerous in the extreme. It promotes the illusion that working class women can rely on parliament to defend their rights. Many attempts have been made to restrict the 1967 Abortion Act. None of these have been defeated by a parliamentary vote, only through lack of time or filibustering tactics of the pro-choice MPs. With Thatcher having now stated her support for a time limit of 24 weeks, such tactics may well prove useless.

These lobbying tactics also imply that abortion is an issue which affects all women equally. This has led supporters of *Socialist Action* and *Outlook* to defend an invitation to Harvey Proctor's racist successor, Tory MP Teresa Gorman to speak at a press conference organised by FAB. Racist Tories have nothing in common with working class women. Like Liberal women they are rabidly anti-working class. That the two British tendencies that align themselves politically with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) espouse an alliance with such boss-class women is a measure of their (and the USFI's) degeneration.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) also argue for a campaign which, though oriented to the working class, restricts itself to defence of the 1967 Act. Yet the Act is actually discriminatory against working class women! It does not ensure NHS provision, only allowing those who can afford private abortions much 'choice'. The Act gives doctors, not women, the right to choose, a power which has led to some women being told they don't need abortions, whilst others, especially black women, are encouraged to have abortions and sterilizations they do not want.

Whilst we must defend the '67 Act against attacks such as Alton's, which try to further restrict access to abortions, we in no way support the existing legislation. Unlike the SWP, we argue that the best way to win the support of working class women is to fight for their right to choose. To do this we must link the struggle against Alton with one to achieve qualitatively improved abortion and contraception facilities, improved sex education and better provision for those who choose to have children.

The other group taking its arguments into FAB is the Revolutionary Communist Party. Unlike the others, they refuse to even defend the 1967 Act. In keeping with their laughable maxim that nothing provided by the capitalist state is in the interests of the working class, they argue that the 1967 Act, like the NHS itself, is a means of imposing a form of social control on the working class! Quite why they then join in anti-cuts campaigns and indeed the FAB campaign itself is not at all clear. Such a position is absurd. Limited as it is, the 1967 Act at least allows some women to obtain abortion without fear of ending up in prison or even dead as a result of illegal abortions.

Workers Power argues that the campaign to defeat Alton must be based in the working class. We are for industrial action to defend the existing rights and to prevent hospital and clinic closures. We are for extension of abortion rights and facilities. Lobbies and demonstrations must be backed by the TUC and Labour Party, with large contingents of workers mobilised to attend. Only by these forms of struggle, not reliance on class enemies in the Liberal or Tory Parties, will we secure better rights for women.

Women's liberation and socialism

Restrictions on the ability of women to get adequate contraception and abortion services are just part of the restrictions imposed on women under capitalism.

Women are discriminated against in every aspect of their lives - from the types of job they do, and the pay they get to their involvement in political and public life. In the home women, lacking real economic independence, are forced to do the majority of household chores (whether they work or not) Many face abuse and even violence from their husbands.

In capitalist society, production is for profit. The minority who own and control society want to maximise those profits and maintain their own privileges. To do this they have to preserve the gross inequalities, exploitation and oppression which are the hallmarks of capitalism. Keeping women as second class citizens is part of this. Women bring up the next generation of workers and also work for low wages outside the home.

It is true that this inequality did not just start with capitalism - women have been oppressed since class society began. But it is not some 'inferiority' or naturally different role as the Press and the church would have us believe. The fact that women bear children is used to ' prove' that women are 'naturally' homemakers and any work outside the domestic sphere is an extra, a purely secondary role. This role for women is not natural at all. It was the creation of class society, with male dominated ruling classes, which restricted women's role.

It is possible to end women's oppression - but not while capitalist society survives. A socialist society, in which the working class majority was in control, and in which production was for need not for profit, could lay the material basis for ending women's oppression. It could not of course guarantee it without women being mobilised to fight their oppression, but a workers' state could ensure that social facilities, health and child care were massively expanded. It would break down the terrrible isolation of women in the home. It would raise women's status and independence so they were not subject to individual cruelty and sexual exploitation. It would seek to educate all in the principles of sexual equality, through schools, through the press and through cultural institutions.

The first workers' state, created by the October 1917 revolution in Russia, made a number of changes like this, but when Stalin triumphed, these gains were reversed. One of the reforms was to decriminalise abortion - a huge step forward from the horrors of illegal abortion in capitalist countries. However, with the levels of health care at that time, the Bolsheviks still saw abortion as a 'necessary evil'.

Medical advances today, and the relative safety of early abortion, mean that we need no longer regard abortion as an 'evil'. But of course it is better for women if they have a real choice, in all senses, and are not forced to have unnecessary abortions.

Free and easily available contraceptive advice, sex education and counselling are all essential. So too is an end to forced sterilisation and to the use of dangerous long term contraceptives such as Depo Provera. At present, black and poor women, in Britain and overseas, experience being forced to choose not to have a child through these methods.

A real choice for women means building a society in which the job of caring for children is one that is shared by the whole community. A society in which people with disabilities are guaranteed independence and comfort. A society in which all children are valued, and in which the scourges of poverty and racism are removed.

We in Workers Power believe it is possible to build such a society. But at present the existing ruling class seems to hold all the cards with their control of power, wealth, the media and so forth. In fact they are not invincible. It is the existing leadership of the working class and the dominant ideas about how to win change that mislead us into thinking the bosses cannot be beaten.

Those ideas and that leadership are reformist. They think that society can be changed bit by bit, by parliamentary change and so forth. But the ruling class will never willingly give up its power. The rich and powerful have too big a stake in capitalist society to let it be peacefully taken from them. When a democratically elected government in Chile tried to make real changes in the balance of wealth and power, the ruling class mobilised the armed forces against it. The working class pais for this 'parliamentary experiment' with thousands of klives and years of repression.

The working class, which actually works the factories, mines and offices, and creates the worlds wealth in this work, can destroy the ruling class's power if it is organised in new ways. Through democratic councils and its own armed defence the working class can carry out the revo-

lutionary overthrow of the capitalist state. To achieve this goal though we need a new type of party - a revolutionary party. Such a party will be fully committed to fighting all forms of oppression and discrimination. It will draw in black and women members of the working class and recognise the centrality of their struggles. We need working class women mobilised in a mass movement to ensure a fight for their real liberation. The revolutionary party will strive to build and lead such a movement to victory.

Socialism cannot be achieved in one country alone. The material and human resources in the world need to be combined and distributed to provide for all countries, all peoples. An international party of socialist revolution is needed, in order to draw together the struggles and defend any successful revolutions from international capitalist attack.

Building internationalism can, and must, be done on very basic issues, such as abortion, where we should link our campaign to those in other countries, such as Ireland, where women's rights are under attack. A first step is to ensure that Irish, French and any other women are not denied access to abortion in Britain.

Workers Power is committed to building a revolutionary party and a revolutionary international fighting for women's liberation and socialism. The fight for abortion rights is a necessary part of that struggle.

Stella Browne, then a Communist and fighter for abortion rights, wrote in the 1920s:

'Abortion must be the key to a new world for women not a bulwark for things as they are economically or biologically. Abortion should not be the perquisite of the legal wife only, nor merely a last remedy against illegitimacy. It should be available for any woman, without insolent inquisitions, nor ruinous financial charges, nor tangles of red tape. For our bodies are our own.'

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