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An analysis of the Ideology of Woman's Domestic Role
and its Social Effects in Modern Britain

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Abstract

This thesis applies the concepts of historical and dialectical materialism to an analysis of the position of women in contemporary Britain.

A critique of feminist and marxist-feminist theories leads to a theorisation of ideology elaborating its role in the maintenance and reproduction of state power. Ideology exists in the form of material practices within ideological state apparatuses, by this means the social division of labour, through which the hegemony of the ruling class is maintained, is reproduced.

A concrete analysis of the forms of existence of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home reveals the effects that specific ideological practices have on the socio-sexual division of labour, and the class nature of this ideology.

The socio-sexual division of labour within the work force is explained through an examination of ideological practices at different levels of the social formation.

Social Security law and protective legislation are based on and elaborate the ideological social relations defining the places assigned to women, these are reproduced by legal practices.

Government policy towards women workers reproduces the sexual division of labour within the family and within the work force while aiming to increase the number of married women in the work force through the expansion of part-time workers.

Trade Union practices, past and present, reproduce ideological divisions within their own ranks and within the work force.

Through these practices married women have become part of the relative surplus population and are maintained as a low paid, poorly organised sector of the work force.

The struggle for equal pay and a local campaign for a day nursery, placed in the context of government policies on pre-school provision, reveal that the class struggle of the proletariat is weakened by the ideological social relations of a woman's place.

Introduction

In recent years the debate over the position of women in society has taken many different forms. The development of the Women's Liberation Movement in the late sixties has forced many academic disciplines, not least Sociology, to recognise that women as a specific social group suffer certain discrimination and oppression. Politically women's issues have been pushed to the fore through the demands of the women's movement, and later, the trade union movement, political parties etc. The Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act have been passed, massive demonstrations have taken place demanding a woman's right to control her own body, campaigns for equal pay, nursery facilities, an end to legal discrimination, refuges for battered wives, to mention but a few, have all forced the women's issue into the limelight and given it an urgency which it hadn't had since the suffragette movement in the first decade and a half of this century.

From the women's movement itself different theoretical tendencies have emerged each offering an analysis and explanation of women's oppression. These range from the radical feminists, who see men as the oppressors of women and conduct their struggle accordingly, through various forms of non-socialist feminism, to so-called Marxist-Feminists and Marxists who wish to situate the struggle for women's liberation within the class struggle.

What follows is an attempt to apply the concepts of historical and dialectical materialism to an analysis of the position of women in contemporary Britain.

It is important for an analysis that claims to be Marxist

and at the same time to be a development from within the women's liberation movement to demarcate itself theoretically from the other major tendencies within the movement. Thus before attempting to analyse the position of women within Britain I wish to explicate the basic theoretical framework within which I am conducting my analysis, and to clarify the differences that exist between Marxism and, on the one hand, theoretical feminism, and on the other hand, Marxism-Feminism. Having completed this task it will then be possible to elaborate a theory of ideology based on the Marxist theory of the state and taking as its starting point the main theses put forward by Lenin in *State and Revolution*. (Lenin. 1964. Pp.383-492). Ideology, in such a framework, is not seen in terms of ideas alone. The ideological instance of a social formation is as real and material as the economic instance and the politico-legal instance, and ideologies exist in the form of material practices. These practices have certain effects on the class struggle, and thus ideologies, maintained and reproduced through practices, are class ideologies which perform functions vital to the reproduction of class rule. In a bourgeois social formation ideologies and ideological practices serve to maintain the hegemony of the bourgeoisie by reproducing the bourgeois social division of labour. The sexual division of labour is analysed as a form of the bourgeois social division of labour and thus the ideology of a woman's place being in the home constitutes a bourgeois ideology.

Taking these concepts I shall then analyse the concrete forms of existence of the ideology of a woman's place within the British social formation, examining not only its effects on women but also its effects on the class struggle of the proletariat.

An analysis conducted in this way will reveal the class nature of the ideology and will allow certain important political conclusions to be drawn.

The form of the sexual division of labour within the work force will be described and an explanation for this will be sought in ideological practices at various levels of the social formation. Laws, such as the Social Security laws and protective legislation, will be examined to show the place that women are expected to occupy and the social duties that they are expected to fulfil. I shall demonstrate that both sets of legal practices are based on and express the ideology that a woman's place is in the home, and they ensure that women continue to fulfil certain 'prime' duties within the home.

I shall go on to examine government policy towards women workers since the second world war which is also governed by the ideology that a woman's place is in the home. The practices, flowing from this have contributed significantly to the concentration of women in certain sectors of the labour force; it will also be made clear that women constitute an important source of reserve labour for capital.

I shall then go on to examine trade union policies and practices. Historically these have contributed towards the concentration of women in certain "women's" employment and have constituted women as a reserve labour force. In present day Britain the continuing ideological divisions within the trade union movement between men and women ensure that women do not participate fully in the movement and that therefore trade union struggles are weakened. Conversely women's struggles, such as that for equal pay which I shall also examine, are weakened because the

material existence of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home ensures that male trade unionists do not attach great importance to "women's" issues and are even against supporting them on occasions. The effects of the ideology of a woman's place on the struggles waged by women will thus be assessed through an examination of the struggle for equal pay and a struggle on a local housing estate for a day nursery. In both these examples the divisive effects of this ideology on working class struggles are clearly underlined.

Throughout the analysis I will be attempting to uncover the class basis of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home.

Chapter I

Marxism - its application to the present problem

The position of women within the British social formation can only be understood by means of an elaboration of theoretical concepts adequate to an analysis of the concrete situation in which women find themselves. In order to do this it is necessary to clear the ground, metaphorically speaking, and situate my analysis within a rigorous theoretical framework. The framework is historical and dialectical materialism, and due to the burgeoning of multifarious theories which masquerade under this title, I shall go back to first principles in order to clarify the concepts that will be used in the subsequent analysis. This is particularly important in an analysis of women's oppression due to the confusion of two opposing theoretical positions in the term Marxism-Feminism. Feminism analyses women's oppression in terms of a division existing within all societies between male and female. All existing societies, it is argued, have a basic patriarchal structure which permeates every level of society. Thus the basic contradiction, according to feminists, is that between men and women in society. Class differences may be superimposed in an inexplicable way on the basic patriarchal structure. Marxism, on the other hand, holds that the basic contradiction within a social formation is a class contradiction, and as will be argued below, patriarchal ideologies are one form of class ideology. Thus a class analysis of patriarchy can be undertaken within Marxism. But feminism, because it takes as its starting point a sexual contradiction rather than a class contradiction, can never understand

and analyse the oppression of women and the existence of patriarchy as a fundamental element of class society. Rather patriarchal ideology is something which, according to Marxist-feminists, is grafted on to class society but originates elsewhere. This elsewhere ranges from the biological differences between men and women to their differently structured psyches. In any case, such a theorisation of patriarchy leaves unanswered the question of why the ruling class maintains this ideology and why, so far, should the only social formations where it has in any real sense been challenged be those where the proletariat has seized power; an analysis situated firmly within historical materialism can begin to answer these questions. First, however, it is necessary to re-state the basic principles of historical materialism.

I shall begin by examining the concept of the economic and its relation to the other instances in a social formation and then look more closely at precisely what constitutes the economic, or mode of production. It is necessary to examine these two basic components of historical materialism because on the one hand it is often thought that Marxism is some form of economic determinism, and, on the other, Marxists themselves are often guilty of an economic reductionism. The Marxist-feminists examined below are guilty of this error. It is important to clarify the concept mode of production because it also is subject to multifarious interpretations which often diverge considerably from a rigorous definition which conforms to the requirements of historical materialism. It is again important for the Marxist-feminist arguments where it appears as a nodal point of their theses. The object of this chapter is therefore to clarify certain concepts

within historical materialism which are central both to Marxism and to the development of a rigorous analysis of the position of women in society.

Within historical materialism society, or a social formation, is conceptualised as constituted by a 'base' and corresponding 'superstructure'. Marx gives a clear description of this in the following passage:

'In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond(1) definite forms of social consciousness.' (Marx. 1971. P.20).

Thus within historical materialism the economy is the base, it occupies a privileged place and has specific effects on the social formation within which it exists. These effects are seen as a relation between the economic base or infrastructure of a social formation and the political, legal and social superstructure which 'arises' from this economic base. Thus the base in some way determines, and I use this term with many reservations and provisos, the superstructure. A one to one correspondence between the economic base and the superstructure has been read into this formulation,

1 In Reading Capital Balibar discusses Marx's use of the term 'correspond' to denote the relationship between the economic base and the political, legal and ideological superstructure. It is 'merely a practical registration...which disengages the level of the economic structure which Marx is now undertaking to study, in its relative autonomy.' (Althusser, Balibar. 1972 P.206). The notion of 'relative autonomy' can be applied to all the levels in a social formation, it is not only applicable to the economic base. It enables us to think the economy as a level or instance which is an alienable part of the social formation but at the same time has laws of motion which are specific to it. Marx has undertaken such an analysis of the economic instance in Capital, the theories of the other instances remain in a less developed state.

however the relation of the economic base to the superstructure is not one of transitive causality, it is a much more complex relationship as Engels points out:

'..According to the materialist conception of history the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life...if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase' (Marx, Engels, 1973. III P.487)

Thus Engels qualifies the relation of the economic to the social formation within which it exists by saying that it is 'ultimately' determining. Clearly it is not the case that historical materialism is guilty of a simple economic determinism which would endow the 'economic' with the power of directly determining the nature of the social formation in which it exists. If this were the case then every social formation where capitalist production relations were dominant would exhibit the same super-structural forms. Clearly this is not the case, we only have to compare Fascist Germany with bourgeois democratic countries such as Britain. In both cases capitalist production relations are dominant, the basic structure of the 'economic' is the same, but the social formations are not. Marx elaborates on the nature of the relation of the economic to the other instances in a social formation:

'The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the means of production to the direct producers - a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity - which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure,

and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state. This does not prevent the same economic basis - the same from the standpoint of its main conditions - due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances.' (Marx, 1971, III: p.791)

Thus determination by the economy does not imply that all social formations in which a particular mode of production is dominant will be identical, on the contrary the social formation itself is determined by concrete historical conditions of which the economic instance is part.

Clearly the 'base-superstructure' metaphor is useful to indicate a relation in which primacy is accorded to the economic. However, equally clearly, it is not a model that can be 'matched' with 'reality'. The theoretical constructs of base-superstructure, and of the 'levels' of a social formation enable us to analyse a given social totality, they do not exist as such. An analysis of the relations of production dominant within a given social formation reveals the basis of that social formation, but these production relations do not exist in a region of pure economy.² It is not possible to go to the empirically 'real' and 'see' them, they have to be discovered by means of a theoretical analysis. For instance the capitalist mode of production in Britain does not exist in a pure state in what is called the economy, a factory

2 '...the economic dialectic is never active in the pure state; in History, these instances, the superstructure etc. - are never seen to step respectfully aside when their work is done or when the Time comes, as his pure phenomena, to scatter before His Majesty the Economy as he strides along the royal road of the Dialectic. From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the 'last instance' never comes.' (Althusser, 1970, p.113)

does not consist only of economic relations. (Althusser Balibar, 1972, pp.177-8) Within each social form the different levels - economic, political and ideological - come together and the concrete form that this combination takes is determined by the class struggle. Thus the economic does not exist apart from the other regions of a social formation. It can be said that the superstructure constitutes the conditions of existence of the economic base (Althusser, 1970. P.205) and the effects of the regions of a social formation on the economic, and vice-versa, are mediated through the class struggle.

Certain passages in Capital point to the fact that instances other than the economic are necessary for the extraction of surplus-labour, i.e., the superstructure constitutes the conditions of existence of the economic base. In his section on labour rent under the feudal mode of production Marx writes:

'It is furthermore evident that in all forms in which the direct labourer remains the 'possessor' of the means of production and labour conditions necessary for the production of his own means of subsistence, the property relationship must simultaneously appear as a direct relation of lordship and servitude, so that the direct producer is not free; a lack of freedom which may be reduced from serfdom with enforced labour to a mere tributary relationship.' (Marx, 1971, III: p.790)

Thus it is necessary to the economy that the ideological relation of dominion and servitude exists in order for surplus-labour to be extracted. For example, when surplus-labour is extracted in the form of labour rent and the direct producer possesses the means of production, the landlord or an overseer has to supervise the labour process when the direct producer is producing surplus-labour for the lord. Thus force and the relation of dominion and servitude enter directly into the economic and constitute one of its conditions of existence. Or, to put it another way, the

economic does not exist in a pure state in a given social formation but is articulated with other levels in concrete forms. However this articulation cannot be understood without first analysing the relations of production and then progressing to a concrete analysis of a specific social formation. Marx writes further:

'Under such conditions the surplus labour for the nominal owner of the land can only be extracted from the direct producers by other than economic pressure, whatever the form assumed may be.' (Marx, 1971, III: p.790)

Thus the relations of determination and domination operative within a social formation are constituted by (a) the dominant mode of production, which can be said to provide the limit conditions, and (b) the historical conjuncture or class struggle. For instance, in a period of socialist revolution it is clearly the political which will have profound repercussions at the level of the economic, changing its very structure.

Marx indicates the different determinations of the economy in the following statement:

'I seize this opportunity of shortly answering an objection taken by a German paper in America to my work 'Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie, 1859'. In the estimation of that paper, my view that each special mode of production and the social relations corresponding to it, in short, that the economic structure of society is the real basis on which the juridical and political superstructure is raised, and to which definite social forms of thought correspond, that the mode of production determines the character of the social, political and intellectual life generally, all this is very true for our own times, in which material interests preponderate but not for the middle ages, in which Catholicism, nor for Athens and Rome, where politics reigned supreme. In the first place it strikes one as an odd thing for anyone to suppose that these well worn phrases about the middle ages and the ancient world are unknown to anyone else. This much, however, is clear, that the middle ages could not live on Catholicism, nor the ancient world on politics. On the contrary it is the mode in which they gained a livelihood that explains why here politics, and there Catholicism, played the chief part.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.82n.)

Here Marx both distances himself from the notion of a vulgar economic determinism and at the same time emphasises the determinant role played by the economy even in social formations where other instances play the dominant role; again the complexity of the determination becomes clear. It is, in a phrase used by Balibar, the economic that determines which instance is going to occupy the 'determinant' or dominant place. Thus, even though the other instances of a social formation constitute the conditions of existence of the economic the latter must be analysed in its relative autonomy and not confused with the other instances.

The complexity of the notion of 'determination in the last instance by the economic' is emphasised in the following extract from Balibar's self-criticism:

'...it is essential to understand that it is not the mode of production (and its development) that 'reproduces' the social formation and in some sense 'engenders' its history, but quite the contrary, the history of the social formation that reproduces the mode of production on which it rests and explains its development and transformations.' (Balibar, 1973. P.70)

The meaning of this statement can be understood if we return to Marx. The importance of the effects of the other levels of a social formation at the level of the economic is indicated in his section on Primitive Accumulation in Capital Volume I. In this section he looks at certain strategic events in the separation of the direct producer from the means of production, that is in the constitution of capitalist social relations of production. It is clear that certain conditions must have pertained at the economic level for these processes to result in the development of the capitalist mode of production in Britain, but the importance of the legal-political and ideological instances in this

transformation is brought out again and again. He writes:

'The process of forcible expropriation of the people received in the 16th century a new and frightful impulse from the Reformation, and from the consequent colossal spoliation of the church property. The Catholic church was, at the time of the Reformation, feudal proprietor of a great part of the English land.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.721)

The landlords also appropriated the common lands for their own use, often sheep farming which was very lucrative at the time:

'Have the agricultural population received a farthing of compensation for the 3,511,770 acres of common land which between 1801 and 1831 were stolen from them by parliamentary devices presented to the landlords by the landlords.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.728)

Here we see the political instance having effects at the level of the economic and producing the necessary conditions for the development of the capitalist mode of production. Marx also writes:

'The spoliation of the church's property, the fraudulent alienation of the state domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of reckless terrorism, were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation. They conquered the field for capitalistic agriculture, made the soil part and parcel of capital, and created for the town industries the necessary supply of a 'free' and outlawed proletariat.' (Marx, 1970, I: pp.732-3)

Thus in the transition from the feudal mode of production to the capitalist mode of production the legal-political instance played a crucial role. The measures that Marx speaks of indicate the vital part that was played by law and politics in the separation of the labourer from the land, i.e., the constitution of capitalist social relations. Thus class struggle at the levels of political, ideological and economic were instrumental in transforming the economic instance. Here it is necessary to introduce a new concept, reproduction, which is crucial for the subsequent analysis. The effects of class struggles at the level of the economic are mediated through their effects on the reproduction

of the mode of production. For instance, the expropriation of the means of production from the direct producers prevented the reproduction of the feudal mode of production, because this mode of production was based on the direct producer owning his means of production. Land was the condition of production, and the production and reproduction of the mode of production took place through the direct producer producing his own means of subsistence, reproduction (seeds to sow next year's crop) and surplus produce for the landlord. The separation of the direct producer from the means of production prevented the reproduction of this mode of production.

Conversely it has been assumed that a transformation of the economy will automatically lead to a corresponding change in the superstructure of a social formation, thus in the transition from capitalism to socialism the socialisation of the means of production is enough to ensure socialism. This position fails to recognise the relative autonomy of the instances and ignores the specific effectivities of ideology and ideological state apparatuses, it again falls prey to an economic reductionism which sees the social formation as the phenomenon produced by the economic which is the essence. However class struggles at levels other than the economic have determinate effects on the economic. For instance, in China after the communes were formed and private ownership of the means of production abolished, a conflict developed as to how socialism was to be built and maintained. A certain faction within and without the Chinese Communist Party advocated that all that was necessary for the building of socialism was the development of a technically advanced and efficient economy, the ideological apparatuses such as the school and the

family would automatically produce people fit to work in and build this socialist economy. However it was argued counter to this that these ideological apparatuses must themselves be transformed because they were not empty forms which would take their content from the economy but were apparatuses of class domination, and if left as they were they would be producing and reproducing bourgeois divisions of labour. This conflict came to a head in the Cultural Revolution³ and one of the apparatuses that was subsequently transformed was the educational apparatus.

Education in pre-revolutionary China had been the prerogative of the privileged few, it proceeded by way of very specialised and long academic courses which were completely separate from production. This specialisation and professionalisation produced a very marked division between manual and mental labour, contempt for manual labour, and meant that a certain stratum of the population was totally divorced from production. This divorce of manual and mental labour and a corresponding contempt for manual labour is a bourgeois (and feudal) division of labour and produces bourgeois ideological relations. Thus an ideological apparatus does have a certain effectivity apart from the economy, i.e. it has a relative autonomy, and it has specific effects on the mode of production in a given social formation.

Thus far I have dealt with the concept of the economic, the primacy of the relations of production and the complexities of the notion of 'determination in the last instance by the economic'. I shall now examine the economic to elaborate what is meant by the concept mode of production within historical materialism.

3 See Daubier's 'A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution' for a detailed analysis of the two positions and the outcome of the conflict.

The Concept mode of production

A mode of production can be defined as the combination of specific relations of production and forces of production in which the relations of production are dominant. However this specification is at a very general level and needs some elaboration.

In the 1857 Introduction Marx puts forward the notion that all modes of production have certain general categories while emphasising strongly the fact that no such thing as production in general exists.

'All periods of production...have certain features in common: they have certain common categories...The most modern period and the most ancient period will have /certain/ categories in common. Production without them is inconceivable. But although the most highly developed languages have laws and categories in common with the most primitive languages, it is precisely their divergence from these general and common features which constitutes their development.' (Marx, 1971. P.190)

In Capital Marx elaborates on these general categories in his section on the labour process which consists of:

'1, the personal activity of man, i.e., work itself, 2, the subject of that work, and 3, its instruments' (Marx, 1970, I: p.178)

The labour process in general is thus constituted by labour-power utilising the means of production in order to produce a product, a use-value. Marx is careful to point out that the elements are defined by their place in the labour process. For instance, coal can be the product of a certain labour process, hewing coal out of rock, and in a subsequent labour process such as steel making it becomes part of the means of production. He writes:

'Though a use-value, in the form of a product, issues from the labour process, yet other use-values, products of previous labour, enter into it as means of production. The same

use-value is both the product of a previous process, and a means of production in a later process. Products are therefore not only results, but also essential conditions of labour,' (Marx, 1970, I: p.181).

The labour process so defined is common to every mode of production where it exists under determinate social relations of production: its specific form can be designated as the 'technical relations of production.'⁴

In many of the passages where Marx is discussing the labour process he refers to it in terms of a relation between 'man' and 'Nature'. It is important to emphasise the fact that within historical materialism man is not conceived of as the subject of history, man as such does not exist, he is always subsumed under determinate social relations. Marx points out that the individualisation of persons is a product of certain social relations:

'Man is a zoon politikon in the most literal sense: he is not only a social animal, but an animal that can be individualised only within society.' (Marx, 1971. P.189).

Thus in his analysis of the capitalist mode of production he is not interested in people as individuals but as supports of the structure of production, as agents occupying certain places in the

4 Balibar distinguishes two types of connection operative within a mode of production; a property relation and a real appropriation relation. (Althusser, Balibar, 1972, pp.212-6). The real appropriation relation is 'What Marx designates by various terms such as the real material appropriation of the means of production by the producer in the labour process..., or simply as the appropriation of nature by man' (Althusser, Balibar, 1972, p.213). In the capitalist mode of production 'capital is the owner of all the means of production and of labour, and therefore it is the owner of the entire product.' (Althusser, Balibar, 1972, p.213); this constitutes the property relation. When discussing the 'productive forces' Balibar argues that they 'are not really things' but are 'a connection of a certain type within the mode of production, ... they, too, are a relation of production' (Althusser, Balibar, 1972, p.235) precisely the relation he has designated as the real appropriation relation; this relation constitutes the technical relations of production.

social relations of production.

'...here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-interests. My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he raises himself above them.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.10)

As well as men always existing under determinate social conditions Balibar considers that Nature in essence does not enter into historical materialism. He writes:

'...although Marx writes that 'labour is, in the first place, an action which takes place between man and nature,... In it man has the role of a natural power with respect to nature,' it would perhaps be equally correct to say that nature has the role of a social element...' (Althusser, Balibar, 1972. P.247)

Thus the place that 'nature' occupies in a determinate labour process is determined by the social relations of production. Althusser is at great lengths to eliminate any notion of an anthropology of man (or woman!) underlying historical materialism. He writes:

'... the social relations of production are on no account reducible to mere relations between men, to relations which only involve men, and therefore to variations in a universal matrix, to intersubjectivity ... For Marx, the social relations of production do not bring man alone onto the stage, but the agents of the production process, in specific 'combinations'.' (Althusser, Balibar. 1972. P.174)

Under the capitalist mode of production the capitalist has to buy the elements of the labour process, labour-power and means of production, and set them to work under his supervision. Marx writes:

'The labour-process, turned into the process by which the capitalist consumes labour-power, exhibits two characteristic phenomena. First, the labourer works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labour belongs... Secondly, the product is the property of the capitalist, and not that of the labourer, its immediate producer.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.184)

Thus it is clear that in the capitalist production process the relation of the owner of the means of production to the direct producer has two aspects: 1) The capitalist himself enters into the labour process as a necessary technical condition of its existence, 2) the capitalist appropriates the surplus labour, in the form of surplus-value, of the direct producer by virtue of his purchase and ownership (economic and legal) of the elements of the labour process.

It is important to point out that the social relations of production, and not the technical level achieved by the labour process, are what determine the mode of production. Thus in Capital Marx examines the different forms of the labour process under capitalist relations of production and traces the changes brought about by those relations of production. The capitalist has to buy the elements of the labour-process on the market as he finds them, it is only later that the labour-process itself is transformed by the relations of production.

'The general character of the labour-process is evidently not changed by the fact, that, the labourer works for the capitalist instead of for himself; moreover, the particular methods and operations employed in bootmaking and spinning are not immediately changed by the capitalist. He must begin by taking the labour-power as he finds it in the market, and consequently be satisfied with labour of such a kind as would be found in the period immediately preceding the rise of capitalists.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.184)

We see here that the capitalist mode of production is not defined by its technical relations of production, the fact that the technical relations of production are feudal in the case Marx is speaking about does not mean that the mode of production is feudal. On the contrary, because of the domination of capitalist social relations of production the mode of production is capitalist. However the subsumption of labour under capital does produce

changes in the labour process, Marx examines these in his sections on cooperation and manufacturing. He writes:

'... manufacture, in its strict meaning, is hardly to be distinguished, in its earliest stages, from the handicraft trades of the guilds, otherwise than by the greater number of workmen simultaneously employed by one and the same individual capital. The workshop of the mediaeval master handicraftsman is simply enlarged.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.322)

The changes brought about by the capitalist relations of production mean that the control of the capitalist becomes a necessary part of the technical relations of production:

'... at first, the subjection of labour to capital was only a formal result of the fact that the labourer, instead of working for himself, works for and consequently under the capitalist. By the cooperation of numerous wage-labourers, the sway of capital develops into a requisite for carrying on the labour process itself, into a real requisite of production. That a capitalist should be in command on the field of production, is now as indispensable as that a general should command on the field of battle.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.330)

It should also be clear from these quotations that for Marx what defines a mode of production is the social relations of production not the level that the technical process has attained; technology does not define a mode of production. However, Marx does see certain technical conditions of the labour process as being characteristic of a particular mode of production. For instance, in his section on machinery and modern industry he elaborates the technical conditions of the labour process which are specific to the capitalist mode of production. In the transformation of the labour process from being based on manufacturing to being based on machinery and modern industry the formal subsumption of the labourer under capital is replaced by a real subsumption. This means that whereas under manufacturing the labourer was in command of the tools and the structure of the labour process depended

on the subjective factor, labour-power, with machinery and modern industry the machine-tool becomes dominant and the labourer is an appendage of the machine.⁵

The change from formal to real subsumption of the labourer under capitalist relations of production is marked by the introduction of machinery which forms the technical base of the capitalist mode of production. This is clear in the following passages:

'Here, then, we see in Manufacture the immediate technical foundation of Modern Industry. Manufacture produced the machinery, by means of which Modern Industry abolished the handicraft and manufacturing systems in those spheres of production that it first seized upon. The factory system was therefore raised, in the natural course of things, on an inadequate foundation. When the system attained to a certain degree of development it had to root up this ready-made foundation, which in the meantime had been elaborated on the old lines, and to build up for itself a basis that should correspond to its methods of production.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.382)

He continues:

'Modern Industry had therefore itself to take in hand the machine, its characteristic instrument of production, and to construct machines by machines. It was not till it did this, that it built up for itself a fitting technical foundation, and stood on its own feet.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.384)

From this we see that the mode of production is constituted by a unity of forces and relations of production with the latter being primary. Thus it is the relations of production which define the mode of extraction of surplus labour and the distribution of the means of production. Thus under feudalism the direct producer owns his means of production and the landlord

5 'In Manufacture, the organisation of the social labour-process is purely subjective; it is a combination of detail labourers; in its machinery system, Modern Industry has a productive organism that is purely objective, in which the labourer becomes a mere appendage to an already existing material condition of production.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.386)

owns the land, the condition of production. Surplus-labour is extracted as ground rent which takes the form of labour-rent, rent in kind or money rent. (Marx, 1971, III: pp.792-7) Under capitalism the direct producer is separated from the means of production which are owned by the capitalist, the latter extracts surplus-value from the wage-labourer in the forms of profit, interest and rent. Marx writes:

'The essential difference between the various economic forms of society, between, for instance, a society based on slave-labour, and one based on wage-labour, lies only in the mode in which this surplus-labour is in each case extracted from the actual producer, the labourer.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.217) (My emphasis)

Thus a characterisation of the dominant mode of production in a social formation is an essential pre-requisite for an understanding of the other regions of a social formation which can only be analysed in their relation to, and dependence upon, the economic.

At the beginning of this section I indicated that historical materialism does not see history as a process with a subject.

Althusser sums this up:

'...the structure of the relations of production determines the places and functions occupied and adopted by the agents of production, who are never anything more than the occupants of these places, in so far as they are the 'supports' of these functions. The true 'subjects' (in the sense of the constitutive subjects of the process) are therefore not these occupants or functionaries, are not, despite all appearances, the 'obviousness' of the 'given' of naive anthropology, 'concrete individuals', 'real men' - but the definition and distribution of these places and functions. The true 'subjects' are these definers and distributors: the relations of production (and political and ideological social relations). But since these are 'relations' they cannot be thought within the category subject.' (Althusser, Balibar, 1972. P.180)

It is clear that historical materialism does not see history as a process with a subject as does humanism, the subject being 'man', and feminism, the subject being 'woman'.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Feminism ✓

Before proceeding to an assessment of Marxism-feminism it is important to point out the main features of theoretical feminism; such an examination reveals the impossibility of uniting the opposing theoretical frameworks of Marxism and Feminism.

Juliet Mitchell is perhaps the most rigorous exponent of theoretical feminism in Britain and so I shall examine the implications of feminism through an assessment of the main theses she puts forward in 'Psychoanalysis and Feminism'.

For feminism the social system of male dominance/female oppression is denoted by the term patriarchy. All women's oppression stems from a patriarchal social structure which values males higher than females and is ordered accordingly. Thus the principal target of any feminist struggle is patriarchy as such against which all women can unite. Thus the division of society into males and females is the basic contradiction which a feminist struggle must seek to overcome. For many feminists the family has been taken as the origin of women's oppression and the starting point of a theoretical explanation of this oppression. Thus the family represents the cause of women's oppression and the core of patriarchal relations. However, this concentration on the family condemns the theory to remain a prisoner of the ideology which asserts that a woman's place is in the home, the home is looked to to provide the answers to the questions that are asked about women's position in society.

Mitchell also accepts that women's oppression arises from their position in the home and bases her analysis on what happens to women within the family in order to reproduce their specific oppression. Her enormously lengthy work on Freud serves to convince her that Freud, in his analysis of the structure of the unconscious, was in fact analysing the structure of ideology which is patriarchal. Thus for Mitchell all ideology is patriarchal and this patriarchal structure is internalised within each individual through their socialisation within the family.

'The patriarchal law speaks to and through each person in his (sic) unconscious; the reproduction of the ideology of human society is thus assured in the acquisition of the law by each individual. The unconscious that Freud analysed could thus be described as the domain of the reproduction of culture or ideology.' (Mitchell, 1974. P.43)

Thus the reproduction of ideology takes place through subjects who then live according to 'the law' because of the structure of their unconscious. This analysis falls into a subjectivist problematic as does Althusser (see App.2) in his analysis of ideology, and does not permit a theorisation of ideology in terms of material practices through which ideological social relations are reproduced. On the contrary it makes the reproduction of ideology centre on the individual subject and his/her internalisation of the patriarchal law.

For Mitchell patriarchy and patriarchal ideology are not linked to class exploitation. She says that reproduction is the sphere of women 'in patriarchal culture.' And she continues:

'To put the matter in a most generalising fashion: men enter into the class-dominated structure of society while women (as women, whatever their actual work in production) remain defined by the kinship patterns of organisation... Differences of class, historical epoch, specific social situations alter the expression of femininity; but in relation to the law of the father women's position across the board is a comparable one.' (Mitchell, 1974. P.406)

The first assumption that is made is that kinship structures are in some way outside and independent of the class structure of the social formation in which they exist, this question is dealt with below. What is clearly theorised here is a basis for unity between all women, regardless of any other difference, such as class etc., - sex is the prime defining category and unites all women as women. This material basis for female unity in the struggle against patriarchy and for women's liberation provides no basis for an alliance with men. There is no need for any man to join the purely female struggle against patriarchy - except perhaps from some altruistic motive which has no basis in the material realities of a patriarchal social structure. Mitchell can make this absolute separation because she theorises ideology as totally autonomous from other regions in a social formation. She spells this out in no uncertain terms:

'To put the matter schematically, in analysing contemporary Western society we are (as elsewhere) dealing with two autonomous areas: the economic mode of capitalism and the ideological mode of patriarchy.' (Mitchell, 1974. P.412)

Thus the capitalist economic system exists alongside the patriarchal ideological system but the two are theorised as being completely separate. Here in Mitchell the origins of patriarchy, whatever they may be, are seen as determining its present form and placing limits on the way it will be overthrown. Because the origins of capitalism are not the same as those of patriarchy the two systems cannot be overthrown by the same social forces. The social groups/classes struggling for their overthrow are separate.

'The same capitalist conditions of labour (the mass of people working together) create the conditions of change in both spheres, but because of their completely different origins, the change will come about in different ways. It is the working class as a class that has the products of its social labour privately appropriated by the capitalist class; it

is women who stand at the heart of the contradiction of patriarchy under capitalism.' (Mitchell, 1974. P.412)

Flowing from this separation is also the conclusion that historical materialism is adequate to an analysis of the class structure and contradictions of a social formation, but feminism and psychoanalysis are the theories which must be used to analyse ideology. Clearly there is no room within this scheme for an analysis of ideologies in class terms. Thus, if ideologies are not class ideologies then no class has any interest in transforming them. No matter how the class struggle develops there is no necessary link between the dominant class in a social formation and the existence of patriarchal ideology. Thus the political implications of the feminist theory are that the proletarian movement and the women's movement have nothing in common, there is no common interest linking them. The overthrow of patriarchy or its continued existence will not affect the class struggle, and the overthrow of capitalism or its continued existence has no bearing whatsoever on the struggle against patriarchy. Mitchell makes this explicit:

'The overthrow of the capitalist economy and the political challenge that effects this, do not in themselves mean a transformation of patriarchal ideology. This is the implication of the fact that the ideological sphere has a certain autonomy. It seems to follow that women within revolutionary feminism can be the spearhead of general ideological change as the working class is the agent of the overthrow of the specifically capitalist mode of production.' (Mitchell, 1974. P.414)

One of the assumptions that Mitchell seems to be making here is that all ideology has a patriarchal structure. This position flows from her acceptance of Freud's analysis of the structure of the unconscious as being an analysis of the structure of all human

culture (ideology) which is patriarchal per se.¹ I do not wish to enter into a discussion of psychoanalysis here as the purpose of these brief comments is to point out the theoretical and political consequences of feminism. But I would suggest that all ideology is not patriarchal in structure and that Mitchell's thesis is not adequately demonstrated; ideology will be examined in greater detail below. From the argument presented by Mitchell the conclusion flows that the way in which patriarchal ideology is to be changed is not through a transformation in social practices but through a transformation of the structure of the unconscious. Thus again the social problem is seen in terms not of social processes and practices but in terms of the individual, and the change will come about through changing the structure of each individual unconscious. Once again we are taken back to the origin, from the time of birth the law of patriarchy is structuring the child's unconscious, so a change has to begin from that moment. Mitchell seems to me to have got herself into a double bind. If she accepts Freud's analysis of the structure of the unconscious and understands that structure as a patriarchal structure, and if men and women have internalised this structure and the structure itself reproduces patriarchy - then where is the room for contradiction and change? It seems to me that she has postulated a

1 Althusser actually throws out a provocative statement in connection with his essay Freud and Lacan (Althusser, 1971. pp.177-178) which provides a tantalising foretaste of the possibility - necessity - of linking historical materialism with Freud's theory of the unconscious. He says that familial ideology plays a crucial role 'in initiating the functioning of the instance that Freud called the unconscious..no theory of psychoanalysis can be produced without basing it on historical materialism (on which the theory of the formations of familial ideology depends, in the last instance.)' (Althusser, 1971. pp.177-8) Clearly for Mitchell there is no tie up between psychoanalysis and historical materialism - for her the two are theorised as autonomous and she draws from this theoretical position the concomitant political conclusions.

a self-perpetuating system.

Mitchell's thesis that ideology is reproduced through the unconscious implies that the individual subject is responsible for this reproduction. If we examine an alternative approach it becomes clear that there is another way of theorising this, viz: that the existence of patriarchal ideology (or other ideologies, but patriarchal ideology in relation to the oppression of women), structures the unconscious, but this ideology is not reproduced through the unconscious, it is reproduced through material practices. These material practices conform to the patriarchal order and also structure certain levels of the unconscious. This is pointed out by Monique Plaza in a discussion of Freudian psychoanalysis (See Appendix 1) and the political implications of this type of approach are different from those reached by following Mitchell's theory. Patriarchy, as a form of ideology, does not have to be changed at the level of the individual unconscious but on the level of material social practices which in turn will affect the structure of the unconscious. It is in this sense that Mao's statement, used by Mitchell as a justification for her feminist position, must be understood. The way to changing attitudes is through transforming material practices and this is precisely what the Chinese were attempting:

"Of course it was necessary to give /women/ legal equality to begin with! But from there on everything remains to be done. The thought, culture and customs which brought China to where we found her must disappear, and the thought, customs and culture of proletarian China, which does not yet exist, must appear. The Chinese woman doesn't yet exist either, among the masses: but she is beginning to want to exist. And then to liberate women is not to manufacture washing machines.'" (Mitchell, 1974. P.416)

The Chinese reached this position on the oppression of women and how to change it not through basing themselves on theoretical

feminism but on Marxism. Had they based themselves on feminism, as we have seen from Mitchell, the struggle for women's liberation and the struggle for socialism would have been conducted autonomously with the women's movement leading one and the Chinese Communist Party the other. As it is the struggles have been seen as integrally linked because patriarchy is seen as a class ideology which it is in the interests of the proletariat (this term includes women) to overthrow.

This brief examination of Mitchell has provided a means of exposing the real theoretical basis of feminism - that women of all classes are united because the fundamental division that must be overcome within society is the division between the sexes. That this is not peculiar to Mitchell is demonstrated if we look at Kate Millett. She is another feminist who has attempted to theorise women's oppression and she clearly expresses this position.

'... a disinterested examination of our system of sexual relationship must point out that the situation between the sexes now, and throughout history, is a case of that phenomenon Max Weber defined as herrschaft, a relationship of dominance and subordination. What goes largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged (yet is institutionalised nonetheless) in our social order, is the birthright policy whereby males rule females. Through this system a most ingenious form of "interior colonisation" has been achieved. It is one which tends moreover to be sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring...' (Millett, 1971. P. 25)

For Millett the division between the sexes is more basic than class divisions and class divisions act so as to mask the more fundamental sexual division.

'One of the chief effects of class within patriarchy is to set one woman against another...' (Millett, 1971. P.38)

And later:

'Perhaps...it is possible to argue that women tend to transcend the usual class stratifications in patriarchy, for whatever the class of her birth and education, the female

has fewer permanent class associations than does the male'
(Millett 1971. P.38)

And she actually defines women as:

'... a dependency class who live on surplus.' (Millett,
1971. P.38)

This position accepts the definition of 'woman' that is part of patriarchal ideology treating women as a social group which does not enter into the class structure of society. Even Mitchell does not totally accept this definition of women recognising that it is itself patriarchal.

Clearly for feminists the male-female division is the basic division of social formations where women are oppressed and for those who wish to reconcile Marxism and feminism this theoretical position produces insurmountable problems.

Chapter 3

Marxism-feminism and domestic labour

'Marxism-feminism' is a term that has emerged in the past few years to denote a theoretical tendency that attempts to analyse women's oppression using, or re-working, the concepts developed within historical materialism. As we have seen from our examination of the implications of theoretical feminism these two theoretical terms denote mutually contradictory theoretical systems. For feminism the male-female division is basic to society and separate from any class division, for historical materialism class divisions and class struggle are the basic contradictions within society, and ideologies are forms of this basic class antagonism. Also for feminism woman is seen as the subject of history - hence attempts to write herstory concentrating on the role of women rather than men on whom history concentrates. This exercise has an important ideological function in so far as it shows the importance of women in spheres of social and political life other than the family. However the development of a theory of women's oppression requires a rigorous analysis rather than a description of the phenomenon.

For historical materialism there is no subject of history, social formations and modes of production are analysed in terms of classes, relations of production, forces of production etc. People act as supports to the places defined by the social relations of production. For Marxist-feminists an attempt is made to inscribe women's oppression into the mode of production as a component part of the economic instance in a social formation. This attempt to fuse the theories of Marxism and feminism arises from

class exploitation and that the struggle for socialism should incorporate the struggle for women's liberation. This premise is indeed correct, but the way it has been theorised hitherto has resulted in a misuse and misunderstanding of Marx's concepts and the confusion/conflation of theoretical feminism with historical materialism. This has implied that the notion of history without a subject fundamental to historical materialism has been changed to become history with a subject, woman. This subject occupies a certain nodal point in the mode of production according to these theories. But by such a radical introduction the concept of mode of production as developed by Marx becomes totally unrecognisable. I am going to argue that it is indeed necessary to theorise women's oppression in class terms, but to do this it is not necessary to integrate women's oppression into the very structure of the mode of production. This reduction of women's oppression to a function of the economic instance is in effect a form of economic reductionism. In order for women's oppression to be 'real' it has to be theorised in economic terms. I will argue that this position actually denies the relative autonomy of the ideological instance and ignores the 'specific revolutionary practice' of ideological class struggle. (Balibar, 1973. P.58) Also, to inscribe women's oppression within the capitalist mode of production implies that with the revolutionary transformation of this mode of production and the supercession of capitalist relations of production by communist relations of production the position of women will be automatically changed since the mode of production which was directly determining its existence will have been destroyed. Thus the only struggle necessary for the liberation of women is the struggle to overthrow the capitalist

system in purely economic terms which makes redundant and diversionary the struggles waged by the Women's Liberation Movement.

The two examples of this attempt to integrate a theory of women's oppression within Marxism are the analyses put forward by Secombe (Secombe, 1974 & 1975) and Gardiner (Gardiner, 1973 & 1974) concerning domestic labour and housework.

I shall examine Wally Secombe's article Housework under Capitalism first and then go on to Jean Gardiner's articles on the same question.¹ The approach guiding my examination will be an attempt to uncover the thesis or theses which govern the articles and to look at the arguments put forward in support of these theses. I shall also be engaged in an assessment of the concepts employed in so far as they are purportedly those elaborated by Marx within historical materialism and, more specifically, within Capital.

Secombe begins by registering the lack of any systematic analysis of women's oppression having emerged so far from the Women's Liberation Movement - but then he immediately equates such an analysis with an analysis of housework and housewives.

(Secombe, 1974. P.3) Thus, from the very beginning of his article he has made the assumption that the root of women's oppression lies in the fact that all women are housewives, that this is actually their primary role in capitalist social formations, and that it is from this starting point that an analysis of women's specific oppression must begin. He is, in effect, accepting the

1 These two authors have been chosen because at the time of writing they were the most important attempts to seriously theorise the relation of women's oppression to capitalism from a Marxist perspective that had emerged on the British left.

ideology of a woman's place being in the home and, as most feminist authors do, taking the family as the root of women's oppression. From this starting point he tries to theorise the position of women in the family in economic terms in order to explain it as a function of the capitalist mode of production. This is the only way, given the absence of an adequate concept of ideology, in which he can theoretically link the position of women under capitalism to the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. For him this is a necessary exercise to 'justify' and attach importance to the women's movement in the eyes of so-called Marxists who fall into the trap of economic reductionism.

Secombe, having assumed that women's oppression is a function of her prime role as housewife,² bases his arguments on an analysis of domestic labour informing us that

'although Marx did not explicitly elaborate an analysis of domestic labour, there is nothing in his work, so far as I am aware, that prevents one from doing so. Indeed, in Capital Marx laid out a framework within which domestic labour clearly fits.' (Secombe, 1974. P.5).

Thus the problem of the oppression of women has been reduced to the existence of domestic labour and what it is imperative for Secombe to do is to analyse this phenomenon.

That domestic labour can only be theoretically significant for Secombe if it seen in economic terms becomes clear when he says that:

'The denial of domestic labour's economic function (the reproduction of labour-power) has had detrimental repercussions on other elements of a Marxist analysis. For

2 I am not necessarily disagreeing with the assumption that a woman's place within the bourgeois family is important, but with the way that Secombe moves to an analysis of domestic labour and sees this as the concept that will permit a theorisation of women's oppression.

instance, the nuclear family unit has never been adequately situated by Marxists within the capitalist social formation and it has often been assessed, quite inadequately, as an entirely superstructural phenomenon... Little wonder that left organisations have historically developed few strategic perspectives that frontally address the social relations of the bourgeois family. (3) (Secombe, 1974. P.5)

The implications of this are clear. For Secombe the economic relations of a social formation are the ones that have a significance for determining political practice. The fact that an institution such as the bourgeois family has been analysed as a 'superstructural phenomenon' renders it unimportant for the left. Thus to bring the question before these 'left organisations' it is necessary to theorise the oppression of women in economic terms so that they are forced to recognise it as a problem as important as, say, the trade union struggle. I would argue that this is in fact pandering to the economism of much of the left and that to analyse the family as a 'superstructural phenomenon' is most definitely not to deny it any political significance, the reverse is the case as will be argued below. Thus Secombe, because he wants to make the struggle for women's liberation 'respectable' in terms of the Marxist left is led to theorise the object of its struggle in purely economic terms.

Secombe's basic thesis is that the structure of the capitalist mode of production is such that the capitalist labour process is divided into two units, the 'domestic' unit and the 'industrial' unit. The effect of this structure is that women

3 In arguing against this thesis, that the 'economic' function of domestic labour is the production of labour-power, I do not wish to deny the importance of the bourgeois family along with other' I.S.A's (see below) in the production and reproduction of labour-power. However, I would like to distinguish between labour-power and the value of labour-power, which Secombe does not adequately do, and also register here that in the formation of the commodity labour-power the ideological instance of a social formation is crucial. This process cannot be understood in purely economic terms.

are occupied in 'private' housework in the 'domestic' unit and men are occupied 'publicly' in industrial production. In the 'domestic' unit women produce labour-power and in the 'industrial' unit men produce all the other commodities, thus housework is given the economic function of the production of labour-power. The capitalist mode of production is seen as directly causing this sexual division of labour and it is a necessary form for its continued existence.

Here we can see that for Secombe the capitalist mode of production not only defines relations and places which agents or subjects occupy, but also defines their sex. Thus there are definite sexed subjects, woman or man, whose occupation of places either within the domestic unit or the industrial unit is determined by the structure of the mode of production. He argues further that the structure of the capitalist mode of production not only determines the places in terms of function, but along with each economic place goes a "'consciousness" and "character" structure.

'Because gender difference correlates with work locale and consciousness, character differences appear as biological destiny to male and female workers alike.'
(Secombe, 1974, p.6).

A necessary consequence of such an argument is that the population of a society in which the capitalist mode of production is dominant is split along male/female lines. The males are in industrial production with a corresponding consciousness and character, the females are in the domestic unit with a correspondingly different consciousness and character. In this way he has managed to transform the concept of the capitalist mode of production as developed by Marx into a structure which has as its necessary conditions of existence two basic antagonisms within social formations in which

it is dominant, one is a split between males and females and the other (which he does not mention as such but which is implied in his use of Marx's concepts) the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. However, we have a problem here. Because he has confined women to the domestic unit and only men enter into the industrial unit are we to assume that men alone constitute both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and that women, in some strange way, are separated from this basic class antagonism? Clearly he does not recognise this as a difficulty because he later goes on to integrate women's domestic labour into the creation of surplus-value arguing that they suffer from exploitation at the hands of the capitalist class by virtue of their position within the domestic unit as producers of labour-power; in order to maintain this position he departs radically from the concepts of mode of production and surplus-value as developed by Marx in Capital. Secombe is clearly trying to merge the feminist and Marxist conceptions of social reality by assigning both class contradictions and sexual divisions, to a prime place within the economic structure of the capitalist mode of production.

Not only does the capitalist mode of production assign women and men specific places but also a definite consciousness and character formation. As will be seen below this constitutes a typically structuralist theory of ideology which does not allow any place for ideological class struggle and in fact sees ideology as a function of the structure of the mode of production.

Secombe writes:

'...the totality of social relations that comprise a society are founded upon one central cluster of relations that substructure the rest, and are causally basic.' (Secombe 1974. P.5). (My emphasis).

Thus the mode of production

causes a society to be split between male and female, this split is inscribed in the structure of the mode of production and is necessary for its continued existence.

It is important to understand how he can argue in this way. That he is an economic reductionist is evident from his statement about the 'causally basic' nature of the economy and his notion of the economically determined places that men and women occupy. This economic reductionism arises because he has no concept of the relative autonomy of the instances. Such a concept would enable him to think the instances in their structure. As it is he is dealing with the effects of an ideological structure in economic terms. The absence of a concept of the structure of the ideological instance leads him to posit that these effects are caused by the structure of the economy, so much so that the domestic and industrial units are configurations within the capitalist mode of production.

The places that are structured directly by the economy are invested with sexed subjects who have a certain consciousness. Within historical materialism sets of places can be theorised but these places are not endowed with a sex or a consciousness. They can be occupied by any subject who exists as a support to such a structure. For Marx individuals enter the production process as agents of that process and as supports to the structure of the relations of production. No consciousness, feeling or point of view is implicit in any particular place. Because Secombe assigns the subject woman to the place of housework he is unable to accommodate different places occupied by the same subject. For instance, a woman can be a wage-labourer, a Trade Union militant and a mother, but for Secombe this is untenable because women are involved in 'private' labour in the domestic sphere and men are the ones who are active in 'public' life. Because Secombe has theorised women's

economic function as performing housework and producing labour-power, when he attempts to deal with the relation between women as 'housewives' and women as wage-labourers (in a subsequent article, Secombe, 1975) he refers to the job outside the domestic unit as a second job and the housewife's economically necessary task of housework remains her primary responsibility. The problem that he needs to confront is the fact, both theoretical and historical, that women perform an economic function in capitalist industry. He fails to treat it theoretically, escaping the problem by making an arbitrary distinction between the primary and secondary places assigned to women. He writes:

'I did not assume, a priori, that domestic labour exists in the form it does under capitalism,....I demonstrated its necessity flowing from the separation of the domestic and industrial units in this historically specific mode of production. As long as capitalism exists so will a residual core of private domestic labour.' (Secombe, 1975, p.96).

Thus woman has her economic place in the domestic unit and all else remains subsidiary as long as the capitalist mode of production exists. There is a discrepancy here however. On the one hand he argues that housework produces labour-power and as such is an essential condition for the existence of the capitalist mode of production, on the other hand he refers to housework as residual. This kind of contradiction is unavoidable given the framework within which he is working and his inability to come to terms with the existence of different places which are assigned to women.

Secombe's concept of the capitalist mode of production also involves a radical departure from the concept of the capitalist mode of production as analysed by Marx in Capital. I am looking

at Secombe's theory in this context not because of any biblical qualities assigned to Marx's Capital but because this text is Secombe's main reference and he claims to be basing his theory on Marx's analysis. For Marx the capitalist mode of production consists of the capitalist labour process existing under capitalist relations of production. He analyses the variant forms of the capitalist labour process in Volume I of Capital and nowhere do we find a domestic unit appearing as one of these variant forms. It is also clear from Marx's exposition that a labour process cannot exist apart from a structure of production relations. Although Secombe posits the 'domestic unit' as part of the capitalist mode of production he fails to establish the existence of capitalist production relations within this unit. In fact by saying that the capitalist law of value does not apply within the domestic unit he is assuming that capitalist relations of production do not exist within this unit. It is hard to see how he can maintain that the 'domestic' unit is part of the capitalist mode of production and at the same time maintain that this unit is outside the sphere of the capitalist law of value.

I would suggest that Secombe takes as the basis of his theory of the causes of the oppression of women the ideology that a woman's place is in the home. Rather than subjecting this ideology to a rigorous analysis it suffers a feminist twist. A woman's place, although it is still in the home, is seen as essential for the existence of the capitalist mode of production and this is theorised in economic terms. Woman as housewife is given a central position in the production and reproduction of the capitalist mode of production because of her production and reproduction of labour-power, in the form of husband and children,

which is essential for the capitalist production process to occur. She is also central in the reproduction of the relations of production through the 'socialisation' of the children into accepting modes of behaviour, attitudes and so on that will allow them to conform to the demands of the capitalist economy and ensure its continued existence. Here it is clear that woman as housewife is being treated as subject, a subject crucial to the maintenance and reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. If women ceased to undertake housework and the 'servicing' of their husbands and children then labour-power would no longer be produced. But clearly women, as women, are not essential to the daily reproduction of the labour-power of their husbands. To take one example, that of the migrant labourers in South Africa, it becomes clear that although the function of housework, cooking meals, mending clothes etc. is essential for the continued appearance of the migrant worker at his job it is by no means essential that these tasks are undertaken by a woman. And in fact, in South Africa, the men and women are separated for long stretches of time but the capitalist production process is kept supplied with labour-power. Thus certain processes, such as housework, child-rearing, education, training etc., all contribute to the formation and reproduction of labour-power. In many cases, such as in some mining areas in Bolivia, the services of cooking, cleaning, even sexual services are provided by the capitalists and not by housewives because in these situations the 'housewives' are absent. Thus the fact that, in the main, women undertake the tasks of housework within the bourgeois family is not a direct function of the economic significance of these tasks. There is nothing intrinsically feminine about housework, or about

child-rearing. It is the sexual division of labour which assigns to women and to men certain places within apparatuses such as the family. And, as will be argued below, the sexual division of labour is a mode of existence of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home. Thus the 'housewife' exists within the bourgeois family through the material ideological practices which produce and reproduce the sexual division of labour within the British social formation, and not because the mode of production ascribes certain female places which are integral to its very structure.

It is also important to distinguish two elements of the bourgeois family which Secombe confuses. In treating woman as housewife as the producer of labour-power he is treating her as the subject of the process. As we have seen the family is one of the apparatuses in a social formation which contribute to the formation of labour-power. This is not to say that the woman as such produces the commodity labour-power but that a whole series of material practices, including the sexual division of labour within the bourgeois family, act so as to contribute to the reproduction of labour-power. Thus in this formulation the notion of woman as subject and, incidentally, as central to the family has been eliminated. It is the very structure of and practices within the family which reproduce labour-power, not a subject, woman.

Clearly the existence of the bourgeois family and the division of labour which operates within it serves the interests of the ruling class in many ways. One of these ways is that housework and child-rearing is carried out within this social form at no cost to social capital. Another effect is that because it is women who undertake these tasks they cannot participate in production as can men and so constitute a weak and unorganised

sector of the working class. However, to deduce from this that women produce the commodity labour-power within a domestic unit which is part of the capitalist mode of production is to make a theoretically unsound leap.

Secombe takes the ideological notion of a woman being housewife and theorises it as economic necessity and as caused by the capitalist mode of production. He sees a woman's domestic labour as primary and argues that the housewife can only take a 'second' job 'if the additional goods and services bought with a second wage could...significantly reduce domestic labour-time,' if this was not the case 'then the alternative of taking an outside job could never exist for married proletarian women.' (Secombe, 1975, p.92) Thus the domestic labour that a housewife has to perform determines whether she can seek work outside the home. Again the example of women in vast numbers on the labour market in the last century in Britain springs to mind. Then there were no gadgets lessening so-called domestic labour-time but women worked outside the home in appalling conditions. The reasons for women working in factories were not that their so-called domestic labour-time was reduced but that the introduction of machinery into certain production processes permitted the capitalist class to employ cheaper female and child labour.

'...Machinery more and more supersedes the work of men. The human labour, involved in both spinning and weaving, consists chiefly in piecing broken threads, and the machine does all the rest. The work requires no muscular strength, but only flexibility of finger. Men are, therefore, not only not needed for it, but actually, by reason of the greater muscular development of the hand, less fit for it than women and children, and are, therefore, naturally almost superseded by them. Hence the more the use of arms, the expenditure of strength, can be transferred to steam or water-power,

the fewer men need be employed; and as women and children work more cheaply, and in these branches better than men, they take their places.' (Engels, 1969, p.169)

Clearly the determining factor in whether women worked in factories was not a change in the so-called domestic labour process, but a change in the capitalist production process which opened a space for the entry of cheaper female and child labour which had not been there before. Thus far from conditions in the so-called domestic unit determining women's entry into certain branches of production it was changing technical conditions in those branches of production which provided the material basis for their greater involvement. It was certainly not the case that domestic labour-time had been decreased as can be seen from Engels' description later on of women workers and their families.

'Women often return to the mill three or four days after confinement, leaving the baby, of course; in the dinner-hour they hurry home to feed the children and eat something, and what sort of suckling than can be is also evident.' (Engels, 1969, pp.171-2)

He goes on on to quote a report given by Lord Ashley.

"'H.W. has three children, goes away Monday morning at 5 o'clock, and comes back Saturday evening; has so much to do for the children then that she cannot get to bed before 3 o'clock in the morning; often wet through to the skin, and obliged to work in that state.' She said: 'My breasts have given me the most frightful pain, and I have been dripping wet with milk...'" (Engels, 1969, p.172)

These examples point to the fact that it is not the "domestic labour-time" that determines whether a 'housewife' can go out to work, but, on the contrary, when she goes out to work the time that she has to remain in the factory working for the capitalist and expending her labour-power determines the amount of time she can spend on domestic tasks. Indeed, Engels reports that,

'In many cases the family is not wholly dissolved by the employment of the wife but turned upside down. The wife supports the family, the husband sits at home, tends the children

sweeps the room and cooks. This case happens very frequently; in Manchester alone, many hundred such men could be cited, condemned to domestic occupations.' (Engels, 1969, p.173)(4)

It was not 'domestic labour-time' which called forth the protective legislation which prevents women from working such excessive hours that they cannot carry out their 'domestic duties', but the class struggle of the proletariat. This struggle wrung concessions from the bourgeoisie to protect male and female workers differentially, so reproducing the sexual division of labour; the effects of such differential treatment are examined below (Ch.6).

Thus far I have argued that an uncritical acceptance of the feminist ideology which asserts that women as housewives are crucial for the continuation of the capitalist mode of production, forms the basis of Secombe's theory. He has reduced this notion to an economic necessity invoking an economic determinism to make it become an inalienable part of the capitalist mode of production. Thus instead of woman's 'natural' role as wife and mother along with notions such as women being the 'weaker sex' seen as arising from biological causes, Secombe posits that the different places

4 Engels does not support the role of woman as wife and mother and the role of husband as breadwinner as might be supposed from this paragraph. He later argues that, 'If the reign of the wife over the husband, as inevitably brought about by the factory system, is inhuman, the pristine rule of the husband over the wife must have been inhuman too. If the wife can now base her supremacy upon the fact that she supplies the greater part, nay the whole of the common possession, the necessary inference is that this community of possession is no true or rational one, since one member of the family boasts offensively of contributing the greater share. If the family of our present society is being thus dissolved, this dissolution merely shows that, at bottom, the binding tie of this family was not family affection, but private interest lurking under the cloak of a pretended community of possessions.' (Engels, 1969, pp.174-5)

occupied by women and men, and the corresponding 'character formation', are directly determined by the structure of the capitalist mode of production. Thus he is guilty of economic reductionism which is a deviation from the concept of the economy and its place as theorised within historical materialism.

I shall now examine the transformation that Marx's concepts suffer within Secombe's theoretical framework.

Part of Secombe's argument involves the notion of housework or domestic labour as value-creating labour.

'When the housewife acts directly upon wage-purchased goods and necessarily alters their form, her labour becomes part of the congealed mass of past labour embodied in labour-power. The value she creates is realised as one part of the value labour-power achieves when it is sold.' (Secombe, 1974, p.9)

To understand how this statement differs from Marx's conceptions of labour, value-creating labour and the value of labour-power it is necessary to re-state his theoretical arguments on these points and then compare Secombe's concepts with those developed by Marx. I shall first examine Marx's notion of value-creating labour and then go on to look at the way the value of labour-power is determined within Marx's problematic.

The capitalist production process as analysed by Marx in Capital, is simultaneously a process of creation of value and a labour process producing use-values. Under capitalist relations of production the products of the production process are commodities, ie., they have a use-value, in other words are useful, and they also possess exchange value which is the most elementary form that value assumes.⁵

5 In Capital, Vol.1 Marx writes: 'We perceive, at first sight, the deficiencies of the elementary form of value: it is a mere germ, which must undergo a series of metamorphoses before it can ripen into the price-form.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.62)

Value is not a 'thing' that can be measured, it is an expression of social relations and can only become manifest as an effect of the structure of the relations of production. The exchange of commodities is made possible because each commodity produced under capitalist relations of production is an embodiment of value as well as being a use-value. Their equivalence comes about because their different concrete forms conceal a certain value created by the socially necessary labour-time needed to produce such a commodity. The labour that has gone into the production of the commodity has two aspects; it is a certain concrete labour producing a specific use-value, and it is labour that creates value; Marx terms this distinction concrete and abstract labour. But this does not apply to any labour; it only applies to labour carried out under capitalist social relations of production. Ranciere discusses the relation between commodities, represented by the equation x commodities A = y commodities B.

'The latter presents a relation between things, a connection between effects determined by the absence of a cause. This cause lies in the identity of useful labour, creative of use-values, and labour creative of exchange values, of concrete labour and abstract labour.' (Ranciere, 1971, p.36).

The 'unity' of concrete and abstract labour

'is the result of a social process, the absence cause to which we are referred is the social relations of production.' (Ranciere, 1971, p.36).

If this is true of the unity of abstract and concrete labour then it is also true of value-creating labour. It is incorrect to assert that labour produces value. The ability to create value is not an attribute of a labouring subject; labour is a creator of value when it takes place under certain production relations.

'It is only in this quite precise sense that labour involved in a certain structure of social relations is the source of value.' (Bettelheim, 1975, p.213).

Thus a commodity embodying use-value and exchange-value is also produced under a 'certain structure of social relations'.

This is what Marx is pointing to when he writes,

'A thing can be useful, and the product of human labour, without being a commodity. Whoever directly satisfies his wants with the produce of his own labour, creates, indeed, use-values, but not commodities.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.40).

Having established that, for Marx, labour is only value-creating when it takes place under certain relations of production, we can move on to examine the nature of domestic labour à la Secombe. Since he himself bases his argument about domestic labour creating value on the premise that the so-called domestic unit is part of the capitalist mode of production, then for him to argue consistently and convincingly it would be necessary for him to demonstrate that the 'housewife' performs domestic labour under capitalist relations of production. In fact at the beginning of his article he himself says that the industrial unit is the 'unit of capitalist production' and the domestic unit is 'the unit of reproduction for capital' (Secombe, 1974, p.6). This actually constitutes a major contradiction in Secombe's argument; if the domestic unit is not a 'unit of capitalist production' then labour performed within it cannot be taking place under capitalist production relations and it therefore does not constitute part of the capitalist mode of production. Secombe does not confront this problem but leaves it at the level of assertion. His statement that the labour of the wife in the home creates value in the form of the labour-power of her husband and later children is not treated to

a rigorous scientific proof according to the requirements of historical materialism. In my view to reduce housework to a purely economic function and to endow a labouring subject with the attribute of the creation of value with no demonstration of the relations of production, capitalist or otherwise, pertaining to it is contrary to Marx's whole analysis of commodity production and the capitalist production process. For Marx labour's attribute of value-creation is not reducible to the labour of a subject; it is an effect of the production relations under which this labour occurs. However, for Secombe the labour of a subject, the 'housewife', produces value and it is only in these directly economic terms that the domestic role of women is theorised as being of importance to the maintenance and reproduction of labour-power and of capitalist relations of production.

Since Secombe has not demonstrated that domestic labour occurs under capitalist relations of production (which he has to do since he has asserted that the domestic unit is part of the capitalist mode of production) it is impossible, within the theoretical framework of Marxism which he claims to be using, to assert that it creates value and contributes to the formation of the value of labour-power. It is important to make the distinction between the value of labour-power, and labour-power itself. The former is determined by the socially necessary labour-time required to produce the means of subsistence of the labourer, which cannot be seen simply in terms of the amount of food a wage-labourer consumes (which Secombe seems to do). Marx points out that social and cultural factors are crucial and the effectivity of these in relation to the value of labour-power is determined

by the class struggle around the conditions of sale of labour-power. Labour-power itself, as opposed to its value, is not, according to Marx, the result of the same process. Labour-power is the ability to work which is not produced simply by eating and watching television. Many determinations enter into the formation of labour-power, the family, education, industry and so on, and thus it is absurd to try to reduce the production of labour-power and the creation of the value of labour-power, which are the results of different processes, to the work a woman does in the home. It also points to the fact that labour-power is indeed a very different commodity from all other commodities which are products of the capitalist production process.

It is now apposite to examine the determination of the value of labour-power. Marx says that the value of labour-power is determined in the same way as the value of any other commodity, i.e., by the socially necessary labour-time required for its production. He writes,

'Given the individual, the production of labour-power consists in his reproduction of himself or his maintenance. For his maintenance he requires a given quantity of the means of subsistence. Therefore the labour-time requisite for the production of labour-power reduces itself to that necessary for the production of those means of subsistence; in other words, the value of labour power is the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of the labourer.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.171)

However the quantity and quality of these 'means of subsistence' are determined not by a biologically calculated minimum subsistence level but by historical and cultural factors. Marx cites the example that in England beer is a necessary means of subsistence but in France it is replaced by wine. Thus what is considered as necessary means of subsistence for the working class in Britain has not always been the same, for instance now a

television could be considered in this way whereas thirty years ago it could not. The economic class struggle determines what constitutes the necessary means of subsistence in a particular social formation at a particular stage in its development. Thus class struggle at the level of the economic enters into the determination of the value of labour-power.

It is important to note that Marx says the value of labour-power is determined by the value of the necessary means of subsistence. As we have seen above Secombe has not demonstrated that 'domestic' labour is value-creating labour even in terms of his own argument. Thus any 'domestic' labour performed on a commodity to transform it into a meal, for instance, does not add value to that commodity and thus can not enter into the determination of the value of labour-power. This is not to say that if such labour was performed in a capitalist enterprise, such as a restaurant, it would not become value-creating labour, on the contrary. It is because of this standard of comparison that estimates can be made of the cash equivalent of labour performed in the home and its "value" (in non-Marxist terms) to society estimated. But this is a far cry from imputing the creation of value to the housewife labouring in the home.

Marx is not unaware of the fact that not only the production but also the reproduction of labour-power is necessary for the capitalist production process to continue.

'....the sum of the means of subsistence necessary for the production of labour-power must include the means necessary for the labourer's substitutes, i.e., his children, in order that this race of peculiar commodity owners may perpetuate its appearance in the market.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.172) (6)

6 However children are not yet possessors of labour-power, they acquire this commodity through education etc., etc., etc.

And he develops an analysis of the way in which the value of labour-power is determined which does not rest on the notion of a 'domestic unit' as an integral part of the capitalist mode of production.

To approach this problem we must ask how the value of the commodities necessary for the means of subsistence of the wage-labourer and his/her substitutes is determined and this leads us once again to the production process. The value of these commodities, and hence the value of labour-power, is determined by the socially necessary labour-time requisite for their production, and this is determined within the production process. For instance, if the value of a particular commodity which forms part of the means of subsistence of the working class fell it would be due to a decrease in the socially necessary labour-time requisite for its production. This could result in a fall in the value of labour-power if the commodity concerned was a staple and large part of the necessary means of subsistence,⁷ and the fall would occur because of a change in the labour process which produces this particular commodity. This change would allow more commodities to be produced in the same time, each commodity would thus embody less value. Marx isolates three variables which can affect the value of labour-power and the magnitude of surplus-value: the length of the working day, the productiveness of labour and the intensity of labour. In order to examine how the value of labour-power varies he isolates the variables taking them one at a time.

7 The change in the price of labour-power would, of course, depend upon the strength of the organisations of the working class and the effectiveness of the economic class struggle.

He first takes the productiveness of labour as variable with a constant working day and intensity of labour. A working day of a certain length

'always creates the same amount of value, no matter how the productiveness of labour, and, with it, the mass of the product and the price of each single commodity produced, may vary.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.520).

If the productiveness of labour increases than the value of each single commodity will fall and the value of labour-power will fall. The magnitude of surplus-value will however increase. Marx formulates a third law which states that a change in the magnitude of surplus-value is always consequent on a change in the value of labour-power. He writes:

'According to the third law a change in the magnitude of surplus-value, pre-supposes a movement in the value of labour-power, which movement is brought about by a variation in the productiveness of labour. The limit of this change is given by the altered value of labour-power.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.522) (My emphasis).

This is very important as in defining the limit conditions of the fall in the value of labour-power Marx is indicating the space occupied by class struggle, he specifies the arena of class struggle and the production process delineates its limits at the economic level. For instance, if the value of labour-power falls from 4/- to 3/-⁸ then the price of labour-power may not coincide with the fall in value, and surplus-value will rise proportionally. Marx writes:

'The amount of this fall, the lowest limit of which is 3/- (the new value of labour-power), depends on the relative weight, which the pressure of capital on the one side and the resistance of the labourer on the other, throws into the scale.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.522).

8 In Capital, Vol.1 Marx takes price as equal to value, hence the treatment of value in money terms.

Thus the price of labour-power does not of necessity equal its value, and class struggle enters into the determination of this price. Marx also writes that:

'it is possible with an increasing productiveness of labour, for the price of labour-power to keep on falling, and yet this fall to be accompanied by a constant growth in the mass of the labourer's means of subsistence.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.523).

Marx next examines the effects of variations in the intensity of labour, given the length of the working day and productiveness of labour constant. With increased intensity of labour more labour is expended in a given amount of time, more products are produced, and a greater amount of value is created. If the value produced in a working day goes up then the two parts

'into which this value is divided, viz., the price of labour-power and surplus-value, may both of them increase simultaneously, and either equally or unequally.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.525).

Here again the price of labour-power does not of necessity correspond to its value.

'...the rise in the price of labour-power does not necessarily imply that the price has risen above the value of labour-power. On the contrary, the rise in price may be accompanied by a fall in value. This occurs whenever the rise in the price of labour-power does not compensate for the increased wear and tear.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.525).

The third variable is the working day which can either increase or decrease in length. Given the intensity and productiveness of labour an increase in the length of the working day means that more value is produced. If the length of the working day increases then the absolute magnitude of the surplus-value increases and the relation between necessary and surplus-labour, i.e., the value of labour-power and magnitude of surplus-value, changes. However the absolute value of labour-power

'can change only in consequence of the reaction exercised

by the prolongation of surplus-labour upon the wear and tear of labour-power. Every change in the absolute value is therefore the effect, but never the cause, of a change in the magnitude of surplus-value.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.526)

From this it is clear that, for Marx, the value of labour-power is not determined in the domestic labour-process but rather in the production processes which have as their end products the necessary means of subsistence.

Secombe is very mischievous in his appropriation of Marx's statements on the mystification of the wage-form. This mystification lies in the fact that the wage-form masks the exploitation relation existing between capital and wage-labour. Although the capitalist pays for the commodity labour-power in the form of the wage it seems as if he is paying for all the labour expended during the working day. However, labour has no value, what the capitalist actually pays for is the commodity labour-power which he then puts to use for the duration of the working day. Marx writes:

'The wage-form thus extinguishes every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus-labour, into paid and unpaid labour. All labour appears as paid labour! (Marx, 1970, I: p.539)

For the purposes of his analysis Marx assumes that commodities are exchanged at their value, thus the wage is a form of representation of the value of labour-power.

Secombe turns this wage theory on its head by arguing that the wage paid to the wage-labourer by the capitalist in fact pays for the labour of the 'domestic' labourer. Domestic labour of course appears to be unpaid, and therein lies the mystification of the wage for Secombe. Marx indeed theorises the wage as catering for the maintenance of the wife and children of a wage-labourer; it is a family wage. However he argues that the influx

of women and children onto the labour market with the introduction of machinery means that the man's wage is no longer adequate to procure the family's means of subsistence. Now the 'family wage' is spread over both husband and wife, and in the last century, children as well. Thus the wage is such that it ensures the replacement of the present generation of wage-labourers by the future generation. However the wage does not pay for labour performed in the home. Marx deals at great length with the fact that the wage appears to pay for a day's labour but in fact it pays for the commodity labour-power. And since, as has been argued above, neither this commodity nor its value is produced by the labour of women within the home it is hard to see how Secombe can argue that the wage is really paying for 'domestic labour' and at the same time claim to be working within Marx's theoretical framework.

The position that Secombe ends up with is a total contravention of Marx's wage theory. He writes,

'Rather than paying for industrial labour, the wage in reality pays for an entirely different labour - the labour that reproduces the labour-power of the entire family.'
(Secombe, 1974, p.12)

By this we must suppose that he means that the housewife's labour is paid for by the wage but the wage-labourer's labour-power is put at the disposal of the capitalist gratis! The notion operating here is similar to the argument of the Wages for Housework Campaign. Both Secombe and this campaign argue that women produce and reproduce labour-power by performing 'housework'. Consequently women are central to the production and reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. The difference between the two positions lies in the argument over the wage-form. The Wages for

Housework Campaign hold that women are only paid for the job that they do outside the home and that the other equally important job they perform inside the home should also be acknowledged by the payment of a wage. Secombe argues that this labour inside the home is in fact what the wage pays for rather than the purchase of the labour-power of the wage-labourer on the labour market.

The two articles of Jean Gardiner's that I am considering are: Political Economy of Female Labour under Capitalism (1973) and Women's Domestic Labour (1974). In both these articles Gardiner attempts to theorise housework, or domestic labour, in terms of its relation to capital. Thus she is trying to provide a purely economic explanation for the existence of 'domestic labour'. From the fact that 'domestic labour' exists under capitalism she assumes that capitalism needs this labour, i.e., cannot exist without it in its present form. She asks,

'...why domestic labour has been retained to such a large extent under capitalism in the reproduction and maintenance of labour-power.' (Gardiner, 1973, p.12)

and defines domestic labour as being performed by the female member of 'homo sapiens' and as being unpaid. One might ask what of the male who washes the dishes or digs the garden? He is surely performing unpaid domestic labour too. However Gardiner ignores this fact and takes as her main assumption, as does Secombe, that female labour in the home produces labour-power. If we are to attribute to women sole responsibility for the production of labour-power we must take the argument to its logical conclusion and attribute to women the production of capitalists. Thus again we see emerging the feminist notion that women working in the home are pivotal to the whole structure of the capitalist

economy. As I argued above, this attribution of a sex to a 'place' is in blatant contradiction to the Marxist notion of a system of places which can be filled by any individual. That some places tend to coincide with a certain sex in given social formations can be explained by the operation of other than economic determinations. Also particular individuals can act as supports to more than one place. Gardiner does not attempt to define a system of places; she attributes all work performed in the home to the female sex and from there tries to show the crucial nature of this female 'role' to capitalism.

In both her articles she is arguing in the same direction. She writes:

'...whilst the labour embodied in commodities consumed by the worker will clearly be directly related to the value of the wage, the labour-time spent by the housewife in caring for husband and children will normally vary inversely with the wage.' (9) (Gardiner, 1973, p.5)

This extraordinary assertion is elaborated more fully in her second article. She conceives of the 'historically determined subsistence level' as being achieved partly by using the wage to buy commodities and partly by the contribution of domestic labour. Thus the more domestic labour performed the larger its contribution to the subsistence level will be and the portion contributed by the wage will be less. This departure from Marx is permitted by her characterisation of Capital as an analysis of the 'pure' capitalist mode of production (see below) and is theorised as follows: Domestic labour keeps the value of labour-power down by performing work on commodities, such as cooking a meal.

9 As we have seen from Engels this is untenable historically and theoretically.

If the housewife did not perform this task the wage-labourer, her husband, would have to eat in a restaurant. This, Gardiner argues, would mean that the wage would have to be higher, which, in turn, would mean that the capitalist employing the wage-labourer would not extract so much surplus value from him - and hence the housewife performing domestic labour is contributing towards the formation of surplus-value.¹⁰

There are several ways in which this argument deviates from the analysis of wages and profits undertaken by Marx in Capital. The most obvious of these is that higher wages do not necessarily imply correspondingly lower profits, and, also, nowhere in Marx's wage theory do we find 'domestic labour' entering as an element in the formation of the wage. In the discussion above of the determination of the value of labour-power it was made clear that the price of labour-power is not necessarily equal to its value, that the value of labour-power is determined in the production process although the price of labour-power is determined by economic class struggle, and that the combined effect of all the variables does not permit the assumption that with every increase in wages the value of labour-power goes up and the rate of surplus-value falls. Marx gives an example of this:

10 Meillassoux in Femmes, Greniers et Capitaux (Maspero, 1975) provides a theoretically more rigorous analysis of how the 'domestic community' functions so as to keep down the value of labour power and women's role within this community as producers of labour power. A critique of his analysis has been undertaken by B. O'Laughlin in Critique of Anthropology, Vol.2, No.8, 1977. I am not going to attempt a critique here because I am primarily concerned with such theories as they have been taken up and developed in the women's movement in Britain and the consequences they produce politically.

'In the period between 1799 and 1815 the increasing price of provisions led in England to a nominal rise in wages, although the real wages expressed in the necessities of life, fell. From this fact West and Ricardo drew the conclusion, that the diminution in the productiveness of agricultural labour had brought about a fall in the rate of surplus-value...But, as a matter of fact surplus-value had at that time, thanks to the increased intensity of labour, and to the prolongation of the working day, increased both in absolute and relative magnitude.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.528)

Gardiner makes a similar mistake to that of West and Ricardo.

She asserts that the labour of the wife in transforming bought commodities into consumable food contributes to surplus-value because it keeps down the value of the commodities that the wage has to cover. If the wife did not perform this labour the wage would have to cover more expensive means of subsistence, e.g., a ready prepared meal. Because of the increased wage necessary to cover this increased price the value of labour-power would go up and the magnitude of surplus-value would come down. In fact it is often the reverse.

'...owing to the high level of intensity and productivity of labour in the rich countries, the wages of the workers in those countries, though nominally higher, and (to a less extent) higher in purchasing power than in the poor countries, generally correspond to a smaller proportion of the value these workers produce.' (Bettelheim and Emmanuel, 1972, p.302)

Thus a higher wage, and indeed a higher value of labour-power, does not mean a lower rate of surplus-value; it can mean a higher rate of surplus-value. Marx compares a 'rich' to a 'poor' country:

'...it will be found, frequently, that the daily or weekly, etc., wage in the first nation is higher than in the second, whilst the relative price of labour, i.e., the price of labour as compared both with surplus-value and with the value of the product, stands higher in the second than in the first.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.560)

Just as for Marx the value of labour power is not inscribed on a worker's forehead, so the rate of surplus-value cannot be read

from the 'size' of the wage packet. Thus to put forward an argument about the role of 'domestic labour' based on this assumption invalidates the conclusions reached.

The theoretical position underlying this argument is not worked out rigorously by Gardiner, however it is based on a position which holds that a social formation consists of several modes of production 'articulated' together. This is expressed by Terray when he states that:

'...any social formation...is the result of the combination of at least two distinct modes of production, one of which is dominant and the other subordinate.' (Terray, 1972, p.179)

Thus Gardiner categorises Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production as an analysis of the 'pure' capitalist mode of production which never exists because it is always in combination with other modes of production such as the 'family' and the 'state'. This allows her to reject many of Marx's rigorously worked out concepts because they do not apply to a concrete social formation where two or more modes of production exist in combination, the laws of motion that govern the capitalist mode of production are modified and changed by the action of other modes of production. Thus Marx's analysis of the value of labour-power and the wage can be abandoned because it only applies to the 'pure' capitalist mode of production and not to concrete social formations. This permits Gardiner to posit that surplus-labour is extracted from the capitalist production process and from the domestic labour process because both 'modes of production' exist in combination. Hence women performing domestic labour become as crucial as the wage labourer to the creation of surplus-value. Clearly to argue in this way she has departed radically from Marx's analysis of

the capitalist mode of production and indeed has made his analysis redundant rather than using it as a basis for analysing the bourgeois family and women's position within it.

Exploitation is another concept that suffers in this way.

She argues that:

'Exploitation takes place in any mode of production where workers receive the equivalent of less than they produce.'
(Gardiner, 1973, p.3)

Marx's definition of exploitation as expressing the rate of extraction of surplus value is rejected. The reason for Gardiner's rejection is that:

'...in a capitalist society...because modes of production other than the CMP exist alongside each other...the rate of exploitation ceases to be synonymous with the rate of surplus-value.'
(Gardiner, 1973, p.3)

For her, again, Marx's concept is not applicable to an analysis of concrete social formations. However her notion of exploitation as occurring when 'workers receive the equivalent of less than they produce' is meaningless because under any form of social organisation, whether it be socialism, primitive or advanced communism, a worker will not receive everything he/she produces. This can be simply demonstrated by the fact that in every social formation babies and old people unable to take part in social production will inevitably exist, and they will consume the surplus labour; this is without even considering the surplus labour set aside for the replacement of old means of production. Thus the workers cannot receive all that they produce, but this does not mean that exploitation takes place in every social formation. For Marx exploitation is a class relation, as Bettelheim says,

'...it expresses a production relation - production of surplus-labour and appropriation of this by a social class...'
(Bettelheim & Emmanuel, 1972, p.301)

Thus under capitalism it expresses the rate of extraction of surplus-value from the class of wage-labourers by the class of capitalists. Gardiner's definition completely obliterates the crucial place occupied by the relations of production within Marx's theoretical framework, for her exploitation is reduced to the level of a single labouring subject and his/her products. The same error occurs when she speaks of exploitation through the wage form; the wage is a distributive form and exploitation takes place within the production process. Thus she conceptualises the exploitation relation at the level of exchange relations rather than situating it within the structure of the relations of production.

Gardiner similarly misuses or reinterprets Marx's notion of productive labour. Firstly, she states that Marx's concepts of productive and unproductive labour allow

'workers producing cash registers' to be productive whilst those workers operating them would be unproductive.' (Gardiner, 1973, p.4).

However this is a misrepresentation of Marx who gives us a rigorous definition of productive labour in Capital.

'Capitalist production is not merely the production of commodities, it is essentially the production of surplus-value. The labourer produces, not for himself, but for capital. It no longer suffices, therefore, that he should simply produce. He must produce surplus-value. The labourer alone is productive who produces surplus-value for the capitalist, and thus works for the self-expansion of capital. If we may take an example from outside the sphere of production of material objects, a school master is a productive labourer, when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his scholars, he works like a horse to enrich the school proprietor. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of in a sausage factory, does not alter the relation. Hence the notion of a productive labourer implies not merely a relation between work and useful effect, between labourer and product of labour, but also a specific social relation of production, a relation that has sprung up historically and stamps the labourer as

the direct means of creating surplus-value.' (Marx, 1970, I: p.509)

Thus the concept of productive labour within historical materialism designates work performed within determinate relations of production.

In the capitalist production process value and surplus-value are created and labour that performs this function is productive. Bettelheim writes:

'In the economic sense...what is meant is the character of labour as abstract producer of exchange-value. In this sense, the productive or non-productive character of labour is determined by the nature of the social relations. Thus, under the capitalist mode of production, only labour that participates in the production of surplus-value is "productive" labour.' (Bettelheim, 1975, p.217)

Bettelheim distinguishes productive labour in the economic sense from productive labour in the technical sense which is the 'character of concrete labour which produces use-values.' (Bettelheim, 1975, p.217) I am taking productive as defining economically productive labour which is structured and determined by the relations of production. Within the capitalist mode of production the production process is simultaneously the creation of value and surplus-value; each minute of the day, figuratively speaking, can be divided into necessary and surplus labour-time. Thus productive labour is rigorously defined by Marx and needs no surgery by Gardiner to make it adequate to the twentieth century!

Although I have only dealt briefly with Gardiner's articles it is clear that she is basing her position on a reassessment of historical materialism in the light of twentieth century Britain and feminism. She herself says of Secombe that he,

'...is clearly focussing on ways in which domestic labour can be integrated into Marxist theory and not asking whether a more radical reappraisal of Marxist theory is necessary

in the light of feminist critiques.' (Gardiner, 1974, p.8)

Thus Secombe tries to base his analysis on Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production whereas Gardiner rejects many of Marx's concepts while still claiming to be working within historical materialism. However, what unifies the authors is their attempt to explain the position women occupy within bourgeois social formations in economic terms, thus ignoring the effectivities of other instances such as the legal, political and ideological. I am now going to turn my attention to an analysis of the ideological instance and outline its crucial role in an understanding of the family and of the position of women in bourgeois social formations.

Chapter 4

Ideology

My examination of the concept of mode of production and subsequent critique of Secombe's notion of the capitalist mode of production has demonstrated that the agents of production at the level of the economic are not subjects endowed with any particular consciousness, point of view or sex. There is nothing inscribed in the economic instance itself that determines that women, or men, shall occupy certain places in the process of production. Thus, contrary to Secombe's theory, the structure of the capitalist mode of production itself does not assign certain places to women and certain places to men. If this is so the concentration of women in certain spheres of work and men in others must be explained by other than economic factors, although the development of the economy itself defines the forms of economic practice onto which this sexual division of labour is articulated. Thus to theorise the sexual divisions of labour and the position of women in a social formation it is necessary to theorise the ideological instance of a social formation and its articulation with the economic basis. Marx himself, in the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy talks of the

'ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out' (Marx, 1971, p.21)

thus indicating that ideologies are more than just ideas and that ideological struggle is one level of the class struggle.

To say that the sexual division of labour is an ideological social relation is not to say that it is unreal or a figment of

someone's imagination, the ideological struggle is as 'real' as the economic struggle. Ideology has a material existence in the form of social practices which exist within ideological apparatuses. These ideological apparatuses are forms of class domination and are products of the class struggle. Althusser writes:

'...if it is true that the I.S.A's¹ represent the form in which the ideology of the ruling class must necessarily be realised, and the form in which the ideology of the ruled class must necessarily be measured and confronted, ideologies are not "born" in the I.S.A's but from the social classes at grips in the class struggle: from their conditions of existence, their practices, their experience of the struggle, etc.' (Althusser, 1971, p.173)

Thus the ideological forms, the family, the educational apparatus etc., are not empty shells which are given a different class content as soon as state power has been seized by a new ruling class. The forms themselves in their social relations and practices embody a certain class interest.

Ideologies, being material, are not simply "ideas" or "attitudes" and as such purely spiritual. They are, on the contrary, inscribed in social processes and these processes and practices form the basis of "ideas". Thus it can be said that "ideas" are embodied in and produced by discursive practices which are determined, in the last instance, by non-discursive social practices, viz., economic, political and ideological processes.

In stressing the materiality of ideological social relations and the relative autonomy of the ideological instance Althusser breaks with structuralist theories of ideology which posit a

1 I.S.A. is Ideological State Apparatus which Ranciere defines as follows: '...the ideology of a class exists, first and foremost, in institutions - in what we can call ideological apparatuses, in the sense in which Marxist theory talks about the state apparatus.' (Ranciere, 1974, p.9)

metaphysical dialectic between the mode of production and ideology, where ideology derives its form directly from the economic base. In his Self Criticism (Balibar, 1973, p.56) Balibar examines this 'structuralist' theory of ideology pointing out its very important political effects, viz., the denial of class struggle at the level of ideological social relations.

Balibar turns his attention towards Marx's analysis of fetishism in Capital which he characterises as 'totally idealist'.

'Because it prevents a materialist theory of ideology...'
(Balibar, 1973, p.57)

He goes on to say that ideology

'..can only be explained by a positive cause, the existence and functioning of ideological social relations historically constituted in the class struggle. Specific social relations really distinct from the relations of production though they are determined by the latter "in the last instance".'
(Balibar, 1973, p.57)

The theory of fetishism however does not explain the ideology of fetishism in this way:

'..it makes the misrecognition/recognition a structural effect (or 'formal effect') of the circulation of commodities, a (subjective) effect of the place occupied by individuals in the structures of exchange with respect to the commodity.' (Balibar, 1973, p.57)

Thus, within this conceptualisation ideology is seen as effecting a displacement such that relations between individuals are represented as relations between things and the commodity form itself is the cause of this misrecognition. Thus the ideology of fetishism arises directly from the existence of the commodity form. Because of this causal relation between the commodity form and ideology the theory of fetishism, as a theory of ideology, implies that with the overthrow of capitalism and the end of the production of commodities ideology will no longer exist and social

relations will become automatically knowable. Balibar writes:

'It is a theory of ideology in general, of the historically transitory role of ideology in general: if it is to be believed, one fine day not only will there no longer be class ideologies but, as there will no longer be any commodities, there will no longer be any ideology at all.'
(Balibar, 1973, p.58)

Thus this theory denies the effectivity of class struggle at the ideological level because it sees ideology as arising directly from the structure of the commodity form. Balibar also indicates that the theory of fetishism is 'a genesis of the subject'.

'...it is a genesis of the subject as an "alienated" subject (a genesis or theory of cognition as misrecognition.)'
(Balibar, 1973, p.58)

And that this is why

'it has been possible for this theory to be adopted and developed enthusiastically in a structuralist or formalist problematic (as in Godelier, the editors of Cahiers pour l'Analyse, etc.)' (Balibar, 1973, p.58)

These theories posit the view that it is the mode of production that produces ideologies and ideological forms appropriate to itself. Thus they differ from Marx's analysis of fetishism over the cause or origin of ideology; for Marx it is the commodity form whereas for the 'structuralists' it is the structure of the mode of production. According to the structuralist problematic the mode of production produces the places occupied by subjects and assigns to these places, consequently to the subjects occupying them, particular points of view. Thus instead of a subject occupying a place in commodity circulation with its consequent recognition/misrecognition effect, as in the theory of fetishism, we have the structure of the mode of production determining the place and corresponding consciousness of the subject in the 'whole'. Ideology is thus explained as an effect of a structure which determines the places that are occupied by subjects and the corresponding points of view or ideologies through which these subjects

live.

The structuralist problematic effectively negates any ideological class struggle, since ideologies are only an expression of the structure of the mode of production, with a transformation at the economic level of a social formation ideologies will be automatically transformed in a corresponding manner. Balibar comments on this:

'..what then remains unintelligible (and fundamentally useless) is a social practice of the material transformation of ideological relations (as a specific revolutionary practice) and hence the distinct reality of these relations. If the effect of illusions is the effect for the individual of the place in the "whole" that constitutes him as a subject, then the lifting of the illusion is still no more than a subjective, individual matter....it is only the effect of a different place or of a coming to consciousness in one place.' (Balibar, 1973, p.58)

This problematic, which relies on the notion of the subject and the subject's experience, opens the door to notions of true and false consciousness. When the 'illusion' of ideology is removed from the subject 'false' consciousness is replaced by a 'true' consciousness. However, according to Althusser, ideology is not a representation of man's real conditions of existence, true or false, but is embodied in material ideological social relations. The question of whether these social relations are true or false is thus a non-pertinent question, they exist and must be analysed in terms of the ideological class position that they represent.

The 'specific revolutionary practice' of ideological class struggle is important as has been demonstrated by the Chinese Proletarian Cultural Revolution². Ideological class struggle is an

2 Ranciere writes: '...the 'ideological forms' which the Preface talks of are not merely social forms of representation, but the forms in which a struggle is fought out. The realm of ideology is not that of subjective illusion in general, of the necessarily inadequate representations men form of their practice. Ideologies can only be given an objective status by considering them in terms of the class struggle.' (Ranciere, 1974, p.9)

extremely important aspect of the revolutionary transformation of a social formation and the experience of the Chinese should leave us in no doubt as to the 'reality' of ideological social relations. After the seizure of state power by the proletariat, which provides the conditions necessary for the transformation at the economic level, the struggle has to be continued in the ideological sphere. This ideological struggle has been expressed in China by the struggle between the two roads, capitalist and socialist, and its object was the elimination of bourgeois practices whose continued existence provided the basis for a restoration of capitalism. The Cultural Revolution was the form which this ideological struggle took and it allowed the effective involvement of the masses in the transformation of bourgeois ideological apparatuses and the installation of proletarian ideological apparatuses and practices.

At this point we can indicate that ideologies have two forms of existence, practical ideologies embodied in ideological social relations, and theoretical ideologies which arise from these practical ideologies and formalise them. An example of the latter is the elaboration by Ruskin of a woman's place being in the home³ or equally Hitler's "kinde, kirche, kuche"⁴. In China the theoretical ideology of Confucius with its pronouncements on the

3 'Of Queens Gardens' in *Sesame and Lilies*.

4 'If we say the world of man is the state, the world of man is his commitment, his struggle on behalf of the community, we could then perhaps say that the world of the woman is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home.' Hitler, speech to the National Socialist Women's Organisation, Nuremberg Party Rally, 8 Sept., 1934. (Mason, 1976, p74)

inferiority of women and their duties, as well as behaviour in general, was, before the downfall of the 'Gang of Four', the object of struggle and criticism. However this did not occur without transformations in the material practices of women and men within ideological forms such as the family. Thus the Chinese in their political practice have recognised both the practical ideologies and the theoretical ideologies and have struggled for transformation at both levels. Clearly class struggle takes place at the ideological level as well as the economic, and although we can speak of the levels as being 'relatively autonomous' we still have to theorise the relation between the economic and the ideological without losing sight of the primacy of the economic in this relation. To theorise this articulation in any rigorous way a concrete analysis of specific ideologies and their effectivities in a specific economy must be undertaken. However some broad indications of a way to approach such an analysis can be gleaned from Althusser's comments on ideology and the state. He suggests that the only way of 'thinking' the articulation of the ideological instance with the economic is to regard it from the point of view of reproduction. Since a mode of production consists of forces of production set in motion under determinate relations of production, for the reproduction of that mode of production to occur both the forces and the relations of production must be reproduced. The forces of production consist of the means of production, which are reproduced at the economic level, and labour power. The reproduction of labour power is ensured at the economic level by,

'..giving labour power the material means with which to reproduce itself by wages' (Althusser, 1971, p.126)

However, this is not enough to ensure the reproduction of labour power, this is where the intervention of the ideological instance is crucial and it is in fact a condition of existence of the economic. Balibar writes:

'...the reproduction of the means of consumption is not yet, of itself alone, the reproduction of labour power, (the process of which obligatorily includes the practices of the superstructure), but only its pre-conditional basis.'
(Balibar, 1973, p.66)

Althusser posits that both the skills which constitute labour power and the subjection of that labour power to the ruling ideology takes place through the ideological state apparatuses. He writes:

'...it is in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labour power.' (Althusser, 1971, p.128)

In his discussion of reproduction he looks at the educational apparatus which produces different labour powers at different levels of the system. For instance, at 15 or 16 years of age boys and girls leave school to become wage-labourers, those that continue their education are ejected at different levels until at the top level managers and so on are produced; thus the 'superstructure' is crucial to the formation of labour-power. It is also essential for the continued reproduction of the relations of production and to understand its role, and more specifically the role of the I.S.A's in the reproduction of capitalist relations of production we have to turn to the Marxist theory of the state.

The importance of ideology and ideological state apparatuses for the maintenance and reproduction of state power alongside the repressive state apparatuses is crucial to our understanding of the nature of ideology. The 'classical' Marxist definition of the state, as developed by Lenin (1964), includes the army,

government and administration, police and prisons etc., which constitute the repressive state apparatus. Althusser extends this definition to include the ideological state apparatuses as a fundamental element in the wielding of state power. He gives a list of the I.S.A's which includes the family, education system, political parties, Trade Unions and so on. (Althusser, 1971) In order for a class that has seized state power to successfully retain that state power it must also extend its hegemony over the ideological instance. Thus the ruling class must exercise its hegemony over the ruled through holding political power and through transforming the ideological state apparatuses. The I.S.A's are thus forms of class rule which, in a bourgeois social formation reproduce bourgeois ideological social relations and therefore bourgeois divisions of labour.

This thesis is born out by the ideological struggles waged by the Chinese proletariat. In an article discussing the organisation of a steel plant one of the workers pointed out the bourgeois nature of stressing the productive forces and the slogan 'production first', which obscure the class struggle so paving the way for the restoration of capitalism. He said:

'The steel plant is not only a production unit; it is primarily an organisation at the grass-roots of the dictatorship of the proletariat, just like all factories, the rural people's communes, government organisations and schools throughout China. Every grass-roots unit must first of all make a point of strengthening all-round dictatorship over the bourgeois.' (Peking Review, No.17, 1976, p.21)

Thus the I.S.A's, which include forms of economic organisation, are seen as crucial in maintaining and consolidating the class rule of the proletariat and protecting the emerging communist relations of production. Conversely they can also be the site of the restoration of capitalist relations of production.

The forms that such 'institutions' as the family or the school take in a bourgeois social formation make possible the reproduction of capitalist relations of production through the reproduction of the bourgeois social division of labour. However contradictions exist within the ideological system and as Althusser says, the I.S.A's are themselves the 'stake' and 'site' of class struggle; they are not merely forms which reflect the structure of the economic base. Thus a revolutionary transformation of the relations of production at the economic level does not automatically produce ideological forms which correspond to the new base. On the contrary a hard and prolonged struggle has to be waged in order to transform the ideological state apparatuses. The experience of the Chinese revolution demonstrates that the ideological instance does indeed constitute one of the conditions of existence of the relations of production and has to be transformed through struggle. An example of this was the struggle waged against the 'capitalist roader' Teng Hsiao Ping which was commented on in Peking Review, (No.17, 1976). He attempted to replace the slogan of class struggle as the key link with 'taking the three directives as the key link'. The effect of this, if it had been successful, would have been to obscure the fact that the principal contradiction under socialism is that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and would have opened the way to bourgeois restoration. This is the same tactic in a different form as that used by Liu Shao Chi in the early 1960's. The article states:

'The unrepentant capitalist roaders incited people to fan up a "gale for vocational work", and an "economic gale" and clamoured that "if a gale is not strong enough have a

hurricane then." Their vain attempt was to lure the masses and cadres to become engrossed in production and vocational work and forget class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat so that they could restore capitalism with ease.' (Peking Review, No.17, 1976, p.17) (5)

Similarly in capitalist countries ideologies of nationalism etc., pushed through the media serve to obscure the class struggle and class contradictions and ensure the continued reproduction of capitalist relations of production. It is clear that proletarian ideology differs from bourgeois ideology in one particular way. Proletarian ideology reveals the class contradictions that exist in a social formation whereas bourgeois ideology masks these contradictions by concentrating on and reproducing other divisions, e.g., nation versus nation, black versus white, male versus female.

An illustration of the way that the ideological instance constitutes one of the conditions of existence of the reproduction of the relations of production is provided by Mavrakis in his book On Trotskyism. In a discussion of the development of the U.S.S.R.

5 It is interesting to compare these statements with what is happening in China today with the new emphasis on production and material incentives and the importation of foreign technology. The shift away from emphasising the class struggle is illustrated by the following extract from an article entitled 'Carrying out the four modernisations is the biggest politics' in Peking Review recently. They write that Lenin and Mao 'never regarded the struggle between the classes as the sole and whole content of politics, especially after the proletariat had seized power.' (Peking Review, No.17, 1979, p.10) They say later that 'We should resolutely give substance to politics by way of production, vocational and technical achievements...Politics in the petroleum industry is to get out more oil. For coal miners politics is extracting more coal, for peasants it is producing more cereals, for servicemen it is defending the frontiers, and for students it is studying hard.' (Peking Review, No.17, 1979, p.11) For a detailed analysis of recent trends in China see Bettelheim's The Great Leap Backward (Bettelheim, Burton, China Since Mao, 1978)

in the late 20's and early 30's he writes:

'They [Stalin and Trotsky] suspected even less the dialectical interaction between these transformations revolutionising the relations of production and the social relations connected to them and the development of specifically socialist productive forces. Assembly line work, the parcellisation of tasks, the conception of machines, the capitalist organisation of production, presupposes a recalcitrant labour force which submits unwillingly and passively to wage slavery....The authoritarian relationships in the factory, the type of discipline which rules it, the gulf between intellectual and manual work are equally necessary conditions for exploitation. On the other hand, the productive forces proper to socialism are based on the initiative and creativity of the masses, their enthusiasm, their ingenuity, their self-discipline and their self-education.' (Mavrakis, 1976, p.53)

And this is precisely where the I.S.A.'s are crucial. On the one hand, in a bourgeois social formation they reproduce bourgeois ideologies and divisions of labour so that the workers will perform the tasks essential for the continuance and reproduction of capitalism. On the other hand, under socialism, I.S.A's must be of a very different character to create the conditions under which communist forces and relations of production can exist and be reproduced. It is in this sense that the ideological instance is one of the conditions of existence of the reproduction of the relations of production, but the reproduction of the relations of production takes place at the level of the economic.

The reproduction of bourgeois ideologies and, hence bourgeois divisions of labour through the I.S.A's has two aspects, on the one hand, the reproduction of these divisions of labour is essential for the maintenance of bourgeois class rule, i.e., they are one of the conditions of existence of the political power of the bourgeoisie. And on the other hand, the continued reproduction of bourgeois divisions of labour ensures the maintenance and reproduction of capitalist relations of production. Thus in

using the term bourgeois social division of labour we are addressing ourselves to both the political and the economic conditions of class rule. To conceptualise the I.S.A's in these terms is crucial to an understanding of the way in which bourgeois ideologies function within a specific social formation and allows us to theorise the complex way in which the I.S.A's constitute one of the conditions of existence of the reproduction of capitalist relations of production.

In reproducing bourgeois divisions of labour the I.S.A's reproduce ideological divisions within the working class which act so as to prevent the unity of the working class and hence the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat.⁶ Divisive ideological social relations and practices within the working class ensure the continued reproduction of capitalist relations of production. Thus the bourgeois social division of labour is one of the conditions of bourgeois class rule and constitutes the form in which the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the whole social formation is guaranteed. The I.S.A's reproduce these divisions of labour and are therefore a crucial part of the bourgeois state apparatus, in this way they constitute one of the conditions of existence of the capitalist mode of production.

6 'To talk about the proletariat is also to take into account the divisions induced by capitalism among the working people, especially within the working class.

But it is also take into consideration the struggle of this people against such divisions, an economic and a political struggle: a struggle which as an economic struggle, is already as such a decisive political phenomenon on the scale of the entire history of capitalism, because its primary objective and principal result is to transcend these internal divisions, to unite the exploited masses against capital, in short, precisely to create a class antagonistic to the bourgeoisie.'

(Balibar, 1977, p.85)

The mechanisms through which the social division of labour is reproduced within the I.S.A's are specific to specific social formations, but in general the ideologies and ideological social relations are rooted in material practices within each I.S.A. which ensure the reproduction of bourgeois divisions of labour. Thus these practices, through maintaining and reproducing the bourgeois division of labour, also maintain the hegemony and political power of the bourgeoisie and ensure that capitalist social relations of production continue to be reproduced. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution the importance of I.S.A's such as the education system in reproducing bourgeois divisions of labour, and hence capitalism, was recognised. These I.S.A's became the site of intense class struggle in order to transform them and the practices within them so that they would no longer uphold bourgeois divisions and act so as to help the restoration of capitalism.⁷

To transform the social division of labour it is therefore necessary to struggle against the practices which reproduce it. Balibar writes:

'...socialism, as an historical process, can only develop on the basis of a profound, progressive transformation of the division of labour, on the basis of a conscious political struggle against the division of manual and intellectual labour, against 'narrow' specialisation, for what Marx called 'all-round competence'. Socialism cannot consist in the permanent association, in the service of their common interest, of the various social strata and categories of 'working people' existing in capitalist society: it cannot perpetuate, or even 'guarantee' the distinctions in function and status which divide them, as if there always had to be engineers on the one hand and unskilled workers on the other,

⁷ See Hinton: Hundred Day War (1972) for an account of this struggle as it took place at Tsinghua University.

professors, lawyers and labourers...it can only be the continuous process of the transformation of these divisions, which will finally suppress the foundations of all competition, in the capitalist sense of the term, between working people, therefore the very foundations of wage labour and consequently the bases of commodity production, whether planned or not.' (Balibar, 1977, p.149)

The Woman Question and Ideology

The ideology of a woman's place being in the home is also a bourgeois ideology which is rooted in material practice within concrete social forms (I.S.A's and R.S.A's) in specific social formations. The practices which reproduce and maintain these ideological relations which tie women to the home have a definite material existence against which specific revolutionary struggle can and must be directed. If we look briefly at Engels' and Lenin's writings on the woman question we can see that although they do not call the struggle for women's liberation part of the class struggle at the ideological level, they do recognise the materiality of the practices which prevent women from becoming politically and socially active and maintain them in domestic drudgery as man's inferior. At the same time as stressing the importance of the full participation of women in the process of production they both recognise the crucial need to transform women's material conditions of existence. Thus, implicitly, they are expressing the notion of conducting struggles against the practices within I.S.A's which reproduce the ideological divisions specific to the bourgeois state. This has also been true in China where much of the explicit theory of women's oppression has been based on Engels although their actual political practice has gone beyond Engels' conclusions.

Thus Engels states that:

'...the first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry. (Engels, 1972, pp.137-8)

However, the participation of women in the work force is clearly not the only prerequisite for the ending of women's oppression, in fact Engels himself in the same chapter remarks that:

'...large-scale industry has taken the wife out of the home onto the labour market and into the factory, and made her often the breadwinner of the family'. (Engels, 1972, p.135)

and carried away by optimism goes on to say,

'...no basis for any kind of male supremacy is left in the proletarian household, except, perhaps, for something of the brutality toward women that has spread since the introduction of monogamy.' (Engels, 1972, p.135)

This view represents an idealisation of the 'proletarian' family and a simplification of the socio-ideological relations which constitute the sexual division of labour within the family. The simple fact of women going out to work does not necessarily give them economic independence from their husband because of the other sets of ideological practices which reproduce their dependence. Engels later makes a different statement about the liberation of women which concerns the nature of housework.

'With the patriachal family and still more with the single monogamous family, a change came. Household management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a private service; the wife became the head servant, excluded from all participation in social production.(8) Not until the coming of modern large-scale industry was the road to social production opened to her again - and then only to the proletarian wife. But it was opened in such a manner that, if she carries on her duties in the private service of her family, she remains excluded from public production and unable to earn; and if she wants to take part in public production and earn independently, she cannot

8 This is not strictly true - women have always worked outside the home.

carry out family duties... The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife...' (Engels, 1972, p.137).

This contradiction between women's participation in production and their 'duties' to their family is maintained by contemporary government policies. Women must continue to be domestic slaves and at the same time participate in production as and when they are needed.⁹ Thus women's participation in production alone is not enough to ensure their economic independence and consequent 'liberation'. If this were the case then these preconditions have already been met in capitalist Britain. Clearly the 'domestic slavery' of women is crucial in maintaining the position of women within a bourgeois social formation and reproducing the divisive bourgeois ideology of a woman's place being in the home.

Engels does in fact confront the problem of individual housework and its transformation, but his analysis rest on the notion of private property and the continuing necessity of its inheritance in bourgeois society and does not take into account the ideological relations pertaining within the family. Thus monogamy is necessary to ensure the inheritance of the means of production which are privately owned. With the advent of the 'transformation of the means of production into social property' there will be no more private property and thus no need to

⁹ Broyelle points out that, 'The bourgeoisie's attempts to avoid a clash between the working mother's domestic duties and her paid work (by rearranging factory hours, for example) show how vital women and the housework they do are. And that's the whole point. Our society aims to reconcile the irreconcilable, to make paid slavery compatible with domestic slavery, to magnify the exploitation of women to the limit by making them work 70 hours a week, half of it at home and half of it 'at work'.' (Broyelle, 1977, p.63).

guarantee the paternity of the offspring of a marriage, so there will be no longer be any material basis for women's oppression by men. He writes,

'With the transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the single family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public affair; society looks after all the children alike...' (Engels, 1972, p.139)

Thus the bourgeois monogamous family is transformed, in Engels' view, because of the abolition of private property. Unhappily this change is not automatic and the transformation of the bourgeois family involves a long and protracted struggle against the ideological relations which constitute this I.S.A.¹⁰ However, it is clear that for Engels the entry of women into the work force was not the only element necessary to ensure their 'liberation'.

Lenin also stresses the need for women to enter production and at the same time transform the bourgeois family and more particularly housework and child-care.

'...woman...continues to be a domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real emancipation of women...will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins...against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins.' (Lenin, 1965, CW Vol.29: p.429)

Thus for 'classical' Marxism women's domestic duties, in other words the ideological relations which constitute the bourgeois family, must be transformed in order for the oppression of women to be ended. The emancipation of women is not seen only in terms

10 See Broyelle: Women's Liberation in China (1977) for an account of this struggle as it has taken place and is taking place in the People's Republic of China.

of their participation in the work force, on the contrary, this participation must go hand in hand with the socialisation of the tasks which had previously been assigned to the woman within the bourgeois family. Lenin points out that the Soviet state was

'setting up model institutions, dining rooms and nurseries, which will emancipate women from housework.' (Lenin, CW, Vol.30, 1965: p.44).

Thus to concentrate only on women's participation in production and to see this as the major prerequisite for their liberation is not consistent with the Marxist tradition. It is in fact to concede to the bourgeois ideology of a woman's place being in the home because it ignores the problem of women's 'domestic slavery' and therefore tends to reproduce the socio-sexual division of labour. This very problem arose in China during the period when production was organised in cooperatives rather than communes.¹¹ At this stage involving women in production was seen as crucial to their liberation, but the burden of housework which still fell to the women in the family was a real obstacle to such participation. Thus although formal equality had been achieved the material conditions of China at that time prevented this formality becoming a reality.

'The farm co-ops were still unable to provide collective welfare facilities on a large scale and household affairs in peasant families had to be taken care of by their women. Many women found it impossible under such conditions to take part in production regularly: some, with a heavy burden of housework were completely tied by family cares.

¹¹ See David and Isabel Crook's books, Revolution in a Chinese Village; Ten Mile Inn and The First Years of the Yangyi Commune for an account of the development of agricultural production from the formation of mutual aid teams through the stage of small and large cooperatives to the emergence of the commune.

Though social and political activities and opportunities for cultural and technical education were all equally open to women, their preoccupation with household affairs gave them, compared with their menfolk, less chance of joining such activities. This could not but affect their efforts to advance politically and raise their cultural and technical levels. Before housework was socialised, women's household labour was something society could not do without. Though women did this diligently, the work done by men was the main source of a family's income. This inevitably affected women's position in the family and left some foundation for the remaining elements of the patriarchal system.' (Croll, 1974, p.63)

Clearly the Chinese understood that the problem of women's oppression and the ideology supporting it was not only a question of attitudes, but was firmly rooted in the material conditions of existence which, at the time this article was written, served to reproduce the ideological relations which supported the notion that a woman's rightful place was in the home.

Thus the material ideological relations of housework etc., were acting as an obstacle to prevent women from participating in production and political activities, the ideology of a woman's place was acting as a brake on women's liberation and on the construction of socialism in China. That these two social processes, the liberation of women and the revolutionary process, are indissolubly linked is recognised in the political practice of the Chinese Communist Party.

'For women to improve their political and economic status, they must take part in political and productive activities together with men. And to enable them to do this, a series of special problems related to women, such as physiological factors, bringing up children and housework, have to be taken into consideration and solved. Hence particular attention must be paid to safeguarding their interests and satisfying their special demands in mobilising women to take part in social revolution and the women's emancipation movement.' (Peking Review, No.13, 1974, p.15)

In another article in Peking Review the importance of women's liberation is stressed:

'The proletariat which takes upon itself the task of liberating

the whole of mankind naturally demands the real emancipation of women, who make up one-half of the population. Lenin pointed out that "the proletariat cannot achieve complete liberty until it has won complete liberty for women" and that "the experience of all liberation movements has shown that the success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it." Chairman Mao has also pointed out: "When women all over the country rise up, that will be the day of victory for the Chinese revolution." (Peking Review, No.14, 1974, p.19)

The ideology of a woman's place, in its theoretical and practical existence, produces divisions within the working class which can only hinder its development and weaken it in its struggle against the bourgeoisie.

The transformation of the ideological relations which tie women to the home and prevent them from participating fully in production and political life in China is described by Broyelle in her book Women's Liberation in China. Again women's participation in production and the transformation of the family I.S.A. are seen as two crucial aspects of women's liberation. One of the tasks given great importance by the Shewan women's revolutionary committee was,

'..to do everything to enable women to participate fully in all the various political activities, so that they fulfil their role as "half of heaven".' (Broyelle, 1977, p.29)

Housework is one of the ideological practices confining women to the home and has been the object of ideological struggle and transformation in China.

'...if we are to achieve equality between the sexes: housework must be transformed. I have been concerned, first of all, to trace how the fact that women began to participate in production played a decisive role in their emancipation, because I believe that this was the route actually taken by Chinese women towards their liberation. Women who have been confined to household tasks which keep them outside the main stream of society will liberate themselves only by plunging straight into social production,...But as long as it is the women who do the housework, this participation is in reality impossible.' (Broyelle, 1977, p.35)

Later Broyelle points out that the practices which take place

within the family are products of a particular social formation and a specific division of labour. Thus in the bourgeois family such tasks as child-rearing, clothes mending etc., are the woman's job. In China these ideological relations, and hence the family I.S.A. were being transformed through the institution of different proletarian practices.

'Increased collectivisation of housework has made it more and more obvious that the idea of housework as a family-based activity is only a product of a particular (and temporary) social organisation that requires individual families to bear the brunt of the responsibility for the household work, which has always been just another kind of production. When you've shared the task of darning a whole community's socks with a group of other men and women, you begin to understand why such work was previously servile and inglorious. It was universally scorned and we women were enslaved by it because its useful and necessary character was not socially recognised.' (Broyelle, 1977, p.57)

Other measures such as the provision of creches, nurseries, canteens, paid maternity leave etc., are all transforming the material basis and practices which reproduce the socio-sexual division of labour.

The Chinese Cultural Revolution has demonstrated that it is not only necessary for the proletariat to transform the repressive state apparatuses but also the ideological state apparatuses. Without such transformations practices within these apparatuses would continue to reproduce a bourgeois social division of labour and hence the bourgeois state. Conversely ideological practices within a bourgeois social formation serve to reproduce a bourgeois social division of labour on which the state power of the bourgeoisie rests. The sexual division of labour which divides and weakens the working class is also maintained and reproduced by ideological relations and practices. The ideology of a woman's place being in the home exists through

these relations and practices and because its effects within the working class are divisive it clearly constitutes one form of bourgeois ideology.

The way that these ideological relations are maintained and reproduced through practices at various levels of the social formation and the divisions and weaknesses that it produces within the working class are analysed below.

Before moving on to this analysis it is important to understand the significance of the fact that ideologies are class ideologies which have a material reality and are part of the means of reproduction of class rule. This means that to struggle for women's liberation (as opposed to formal equality between the sexes) is to conduct class struggle at the ideological level. And, conversely, to support the ideology of the place of women being in the home is to support one of the forms of the bourgeois division of labour and hence concede an important arena of struggle to the bourgeoisie. Thus to struggle against the socio-sexual division of labour is already part of the class struggle and does not need any theoretical justification in economic terms.

Although I am going to concentrate on the modes of existence of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home, and the effects of this in terms of the class struggle of the proletariat in the subsequent pages, it is important to summarise the relation of the I.S.A's and the ideological instance to the economic as it has been developed above.

The ideological instance has been theorised as constituting part of the conditions of existence of the capitalist mode of production in a concrete social formation. This means that it ensures the reproduction of the forces and relations of production. The forces of production are constituted by the means of production

and labour-power, the former is reproduced at the economic level in the capitalist production process. Labour-power, which is the ability to labour subsumed under bourgeois ideological relations, is reproduced at the superstructural level of a social formation. The ideological instance also ensures the reproduction of the relations of production through reproducing the social division of labour. The sexual division of labour in a social formation is part of the social division of labour and therefore constitutes one of the conditions of existence of the relations of production. Thus bourgeois ideology functions to reproduce the conditions of existence of the economic. It also functions so as to divide the working class thus ensuring the hegemony of the ruling class and is thus a crucial factor in the maintenance of state power. It is this latter aspect of bourgeois ideology that I am going to concentrate on in my subsequent analysis of the ideology of a woman's place as it exists within the British social formation.

Chapter 5

The Distribution of Women in the Work Force

The ideology of a woman's place does not only exist in statements about what women ought or ought not to do which are theoretical ideologies, but in material practices, and it is these practices which reproduce the ideological social relations which confine women to the home and provide the basis for the elaboration of theoretical ideologies. As has been argued above, ideological divisions constitute one of the forms of the bourgeois social division of labour and are, hence, part of the conditions of existence of the capitalist mode of production and a means by which the hegemony of the bourgeoisie is maintained.

The preceding analysis of ideology, as existing in the form of material practices within ideological state apparatuses and constituting one of the forms of class rule in bourgeois social formations, makes it imperative to move to a concrete analysis of this ideology within a specific social formation. This is so because without such an analysis any theory remains at a level of generality which, although it orientates political practice in a certain direction, i.e. that of transforming material practices in order to transform ideological social relations, does not produce a knowledge of the material practices that have to be transformed and the specific modes of existence of these ideological divisions within the British social formation. The theoretical framework developed in the preceding chapters provides the basis for an analysis of the mechanisms

by which ideological divisions are maintained and reproduced within a specific social formation and the way these ideological social relations function to maintain the rule of the bourgeoisie. Thus, through a concrete analysis of the forms of existence of specific ideologies we can begin to grasp the modes of reproduction of bourgeois hegemony. Such an understanding is crucial before a successful struggle aimed at transforming these bourgeois ideological relations can be waged. To proceed from a general theoretical elaboration to a concrete analysis of conditions as they exist within a given social formation is essential in order to be able to proceed to political practice based on a sound knowledge of 'thy enemy'.

My analysis of the forms of existence of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home will begin with a description of the sexual division of labour as it exists within the work force which is part of the bourgeois social division of labour. Divisions within the working class, such as those between men and women, racial divisions, and those between skilled and unskilled workers, all operate so as to divide the interests of certain sectors of the working class from others. For instance, skilled workers fight to maintain differentials and pit themselves against other groups of workers. This competition between sectors of the working class prevents it from uniting in a struggle against the capitalist class. Thus ideological divisions within the working class operate in the interests of the bourgeoisie because they prevent the unity of the proletariat. In order to understand the mechanisms by which these divisions are reproduced and the forms that they take, it is important to describe the sexual division of labour within the work force.

During the course of this description it will become clear that women workers are confined to certain types of jobs, are in general paid considerably lower wages than men, and that areas exist which can be called "women's work" where there are very high concentrations of women; there is no comparable concentration of men.

In subsequent chapters I will analyse the ideological practices at other levels of the social formation which maintain and reproduce the sexual division of labour throughout the British social formation. Special attention will be focussed on those ideological practices which produce and reproduce the sexual division of labour within the work force, because of their importance in terms of the class struggle of the proletariat.

In 1973¹ women constituted 39% of the work force in Britain, approximately 43% of all women being in paid employment at any one time. (Women and Work, a Statistical survey, 1974)². However, there is a marked concentration of women in certain types of occupation with the three major service industries accounting for over half of all female employees, whereas no industry accounts for more than 10% of the male labour force (see Appendix 3, Table 1). Thus in 1971, 17.1% of the female labour force was employed in the distributive trades, 23.1% in

1 'In June 1977 men accounted for 59% of all employees and women for 41% (about two fifths of whom worked part-time)' (Britain 1979, An Official Handbook, 1979. p.310).

2 This compares with an economic activity rate for men of approximately 81%. (Women and Work: a statistical survey, 1974.)

the professional and scientific services, which include nursing and teaching, and 11.7% in miscellaneous services, e.g. catering, laundries. (Women and Work, a statistical survey, 1974).

The work force in the service industries is over 50% female thus, as well as employing a sizeable proportion of the women in the work force the labour force of these particular industries is largely made up of women. The other industries where women constitute a large proportion of the work force are those such as textiles, clothing and footwear (see App.3, Table 3).

Historically the reasons for women being in a majority in these types of occupation are not the same. The service industries have developed this century and have expanded rapidly since the second world war. The so-called manufacturing industries in which women predominate have been established for centuries, developing from the early capitalist cottage industries where the whole family was employed on such tasks as weaving and spinning. (Lewenhak, 1979. P.8). Thus the textile, clothing and footwear industries where women still constitute the majority of the work force are traditionally areas of women's work. (Lewenhak, 1979. P.17) However, as we shall see below, in other occupations such as mining, building and so on, women do not predominate even though there used to be a tradition of female as well as male employment. In some occupations women were excluded by definite policies pursued by their fellow male employees, in others women were favoured by employers for various reasons which will be examined below. Thus although the 'manufacturing' industries where women constitute a majority of the work force are 'traditionally' areas of high female employ-

ment there are other determinations besides 'tradition' which constituted them and maintain them as such.

The service industries, having developed rapidly this century, have no such historical roots and the reasons for the high concentration of female employees in these areas are different. In this century, particularly after the second world war, there has been a huge increase in the number of jobs available in this rapidly developing sector of the economy. The only sizeable pool of labour available to fill these places was that constituted by married women. Thus, with no tradition of trade union organisation, and hence no agreements excluding women from employment, women flocked to the service industries. So the two regions of the economy where women workers are in a majority, the manufacture of clothing, textiles, footwear and pottery and the service industries, have become areas of 'women's work' in two apparently very different ways. It should be pointed out here that there is nothing intrinsically 'feminine' about being a telephone operator or a secretary, on the contrary, the exigencies of the development of the economy have made it possible for women to become employed in these areas. And because, for reasons which will be looked at below, they have been traditionally excluded from many other areas of employment, women have become the majority of workers in these areas and the work has subsequently earned the name of 'women's work'.

The notion of 'women's work' is supported by the preponderance of women in certain occupations.

Table 1 Percentage of women employed in certain occupations.

<u>Occupation</u>	Women as % (approx)
Domestic housekeepers	98.8
Maids, valets & related service workers	96.9
Canteen assistants & counter hands	96.8
Charwomen, office cleaners, window cleaners and chimney sweeps	91.7
Hand & machine sewers & embroiderers, typists, secretaries and shorthand writers	over 90
Nurses	91.6
Shop salesmen and assistants	81
Kitchen hands	82
Office machine operators	86
Hairdressers, manicurists & beauticians	78
Telephone operators	83
Waiters & waitresses	73
Packers,labellers & related workers	73
Bartenders	71
Cooks	66
Primary & secondary school teachers	64
Clerks and cashiers	62

Source: Women & Work, a statistical survey, 1974, and Women In Britain, 1975.

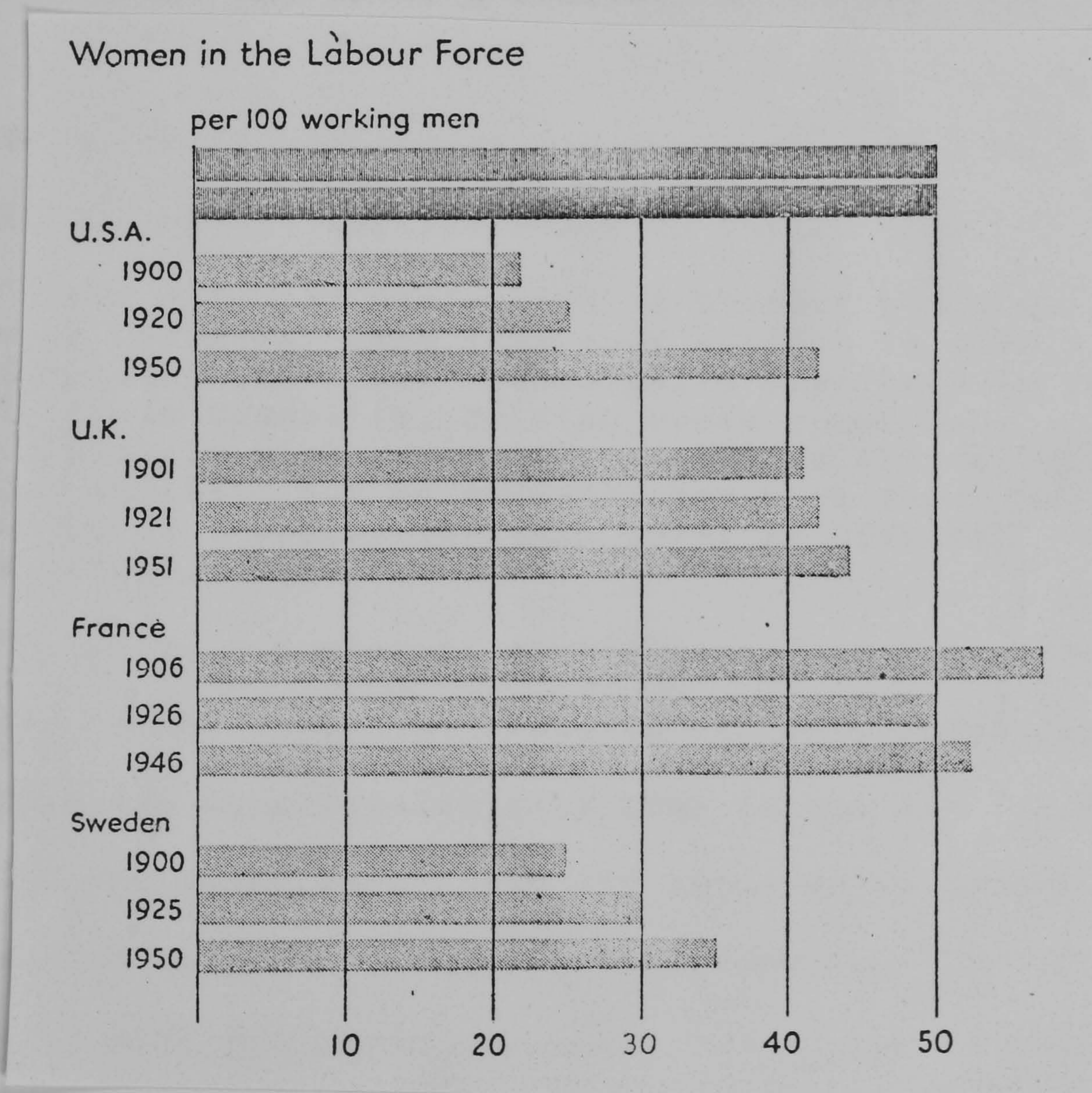
Since the beginning of the century the number of women working outside the home in paid employment has increased steadily (see Appendix 3, Table 2). The 2 wars have certainly influenced this trend as women were employed in their thousands in place of the men who were fighting at the front.³ In both wars they were expected to down tools without a murmur and give up their jobs to the returning men. In spite of this they soon re-entered the work force and have continued to do so in increasing numbers.

Between 1951 and 1971 the work force increased by 2.5 million, 2.2 million of whom were women (CIS report. P.8). However, this

3 In the first world war 'In industry as a whole the total employment of women and girls over 10 had increased between 1914 and 1918 by about 800,000, from 2,179,000 to 2,971,000'. (Marwick, 1977. P.73).

increase in the number of women working must not be seen out of context. As the chart below shows women have always formed a very substantial part of the work force, and although there has been a steady increase throughout the twentieth century it must not be forgotten that women have worked in factories and mines as well as in the more usual 'female' occupations as long as men have.

Table 2



Source: Klein & Myrdal, Women's Two Roles: Home and Work, 1968.

The increase in the number of women in paid employment has come largely from married women who are returning to the work force in ever increasing numbers.⁴

Table 3 Married women workers as Percentage of all women workers.

	Total female employees	Married	Those married as % of all female employees
June 1961	8,064,000	4,256,000	52.8
June 1971	8,584,000	5,334,000	62.1

Source: Women and Work, a statistical survey. P.47.

In a recent government report it was revealed that approximately 50% of all married women go out to work.

'Since 1951 the proportion of married women who work has grown from just over a fifth to a half. Compared with their counterparts elsewhere in the European Community, British women comprise a relatively high proportion of the workforce, about two-fifths, but on average they work fewer hours, about 31 a week.' (Britain 1979: An Official Handbook, 1979. P.16).

There are a number of significant factors relating to this increase in the number of women in the work force (see Chapter 7). This has been particularly true in the service industries where it was essential to tap any reserves of labour available and married women were seen as this reserve. The provision of part-time work for women was seen as a way of enabling married women in particular to work outside the home and at the same

4 Klein and Myrdal in their book 'Women's Two Roles' point out that, 'Between 31 December 1947 and June 1951, the number of women employed in Great Britain rose by some 710,000, despite the fact that in the meantime the school leaving age was raised from 14 to 15 years, and by more than another million between 1951 and 1965. This addition to the female labour force is entirely due to the increased proportion of married women going out to work' (Klein and Myrdal, 1968. P.79).

time carry out their domestic duties. That this has been effective is borne out by the fact that married women constitute nearly nine-tenths of part-time women workers whereas they constitute under a half of full-time women workers (Hunt, 1968, P.25).

Part-time workers have accounted for a large proportion of the increase in the female labour force and this ties in with the fact that a high proportion of part-time workers are married and that the greatest increase in the female work force has come from married women. This is no accident but, as will be seen below, is due to government policies on female employment. There is a higher proportion of women than men working part-time. In June 1973 over 3 million of the 8.7 million women in paid employment were part-timers compared with one in 20 of the men (Economic Progress Report, No.56: November 1974, P.2).

It is not surprising that the greatest proportion of part-time women workers is to be found in those industries employing most women. This is a function of the use of part-time employment as a means of attracting married women into the work force, and in industries where female labour is largely relied on it has been necessary to provide part-time work in order to maintain the labour force (see Chapter 7). The chart below shows that the major service industries have the highest proportion of part-time female workers. On the other hand the clothing and footwear group does not have a high percentage of part-time women workers. This difference reflects the different histories of these industries. The service sector of the economy, having developed comparatively recently and needing to tap the reserve supply of labour constituted by married women

has had to adapt its hours to fit in with the family commitments of its employees. However in the older established industries, where women have always been employed outside the home, there has not been such a marked development of part-time working.

Table 4

WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT 1973

	No. of women employed ('000s)	Women as percentage of all employees										Percentage of women working part-time						
		0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	114.6	[Bar chart showing ~20%]										[Bar chart showing ~45%]						
Mining & quarrying	13.3	[Bar chart showing ~5%]										[Bar chart showing ~15%]						
Construction	93.9	[Bar chart showing ~5%]										[Bar chart showing ~45%]						
Manufacturing industries																		
Food, drink & tobacco	294.6	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~45%]						
Coal & petroleum products	4.4	[Bar chart showing ~10%]										[Bar chart showing ~15%]						
Chemicals & allied industries	123.0	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Metal manufacture	58.3	[Bar chart showing ~15%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Mechanical engineering	150.0	[Bar chart showing ~15%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Instrument engineering	57.5	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Electrical engineering	317.6	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Shipbuilding & marine engineering	11.8	[Bar chart showing ~10%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Vehicles	96.8	[Bar chart showing ~15%]										[Bar chart showing ~25%]						
Other metal products	166.2	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Textiles	256.1	[Bar chart showing ~35%]										[Bar chart showing ~45%]						
Leather, leather goods & fur	19.1	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Clothing & footwear	314.6	[Bar chart showing ~45%]										[Bar chart showing ~25%]						
Bricks, pottery, glass, cement etc.	64.7	[Bar chart showing ~15%]										[Bar chart showing ~25%]						
Timber, furniture etc.	55.3	[Bar chart showing ~15%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Paper, printing & publishing	185.4	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Other manufacturing industries	127.1	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Total, manufacturing industries	2,302.5	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Services																		
Gas, electricity & water	59.7	[Bar chart showing ~15%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Transport & communications	256.3	[Bar chart showing ~15%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Distributive trades	1,486.4	[Bar chart showing ~35%]										[Bar chart showing ~45%]						
Insurance, banking, finance & business services	540.0	[Bar chart showing ~35%]										[Bar chart showing ~45%]						
Professional & scientific services	2,115.3	[Bar chart showing ~45%]										[Bar chart showing ~55%]						
Miscellaneous services	1,171.0	[Bar chart showing ~45%]										[Bar chart showing ~55%]						
Public administration & defence	550.7	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						
Total, services	6,179.4	[Bar chart showing ~35%]										[Bar chart showing ~45%]						
Grand total for all industries and services	8,704.3	[Bar chart showing ~25%]										[Bar chart showing ~35%]						

Source: Census of employment (Department of Employment Gazette, May 1974)

For a further breakdown of part-time work see Appendix 3.

This increase in the numbers of women going out to work has not brought about a corresponding improvement in their situation in the work force, women have not entered the work force evenly across the whole spectrum of employment but have remained concentrated in certain areas. Some occupational groups, such as clerks for instance, have seen a very large increase in the employment of women, whereas the percentage of female managers and administrators has decreased. In manual work the same phenomenon is apparent. The percentage of skilled female manual workers has undergone a marked decline whereas the proportion of women working in semi-skilled manual occupations has risen slightly, and the proportion of women working as unskilled manual workers has risen substantially. Thus despite the increasing numbers of women entering the work force they have mostly taken up unskilled work. This concentration of women in the unskilled jobs has meant that the segregation of male and female jobs that exists within the work force has not been challenged and women are still confined to so-called women's work. This can be seen from the table below:

Table 5 (see overleaf)

Table 5 Percentage of female workers in major occupational groups, 1911-66 U.K.

	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1966
1) Employers and Proprietors	18.8	20.5	19.8	20.0	20.4	23.7
2) White collar workers	29.8	37.6	35.8	42.3	44.5	46.5
a) Managers and administrators	19.8	17.0	13.0	15.2	15.5	16.7
b) Higher professionals	6.0	5.1	7.5	8.3	9.7	9.4
c) Lower professionals & technicians	62.9	59.4	58.8	53.5	50.8	52.1
d) Foremen & inspectors	4.2	6.5	8.7	13.4	10.3	11.4
e) Clerks	21.4	44.6	46.0	60.2	65.2	69.3
f) Salesmen & shop assistants	35.2	43.6	37.2	51.6	54.9	58.7
3) All manual workers	30.5	27.9	28.8	26.1	26.0	29.0
a) skilled	24.0	21.0	21.3	15.7	13.8	14.7
b) semi-skilled	40.4	40.3	42.9	38.1	39.3	42.6
c) unskilled	15.5	16.8	15.0	20.3	22.4	27.5
4) Total occupied population	29.6	29.5	29.8	30.8	32.4	35.6

Source: Women and Work, a statistical survey. 1974. P.54.

Within occupational categories women are again concentrated in the low status, unskilled jobs. For instance the category 'clerical workers' (see table 5) includes jobs ranging from civil service executives to cashiers (CIS report p.9) but women occupy the lowest rungs of this job hierarchy with correspondingly low pay. This pattern is repeated throughout all spheres of employment.

A breakdown of occupations within the so-called manufacturing sector of the economy reveals that in all the industries, with the exception of clothing and footwear where women constitute 75% of the work force, the proportion of women classed as skilled operators is lower than the proportion of women

employees in the industry as a whole (see Appendix 3, table 4). On the other hand the semi-skilled, and the administrative, technical and clerical categories have a higher proportion of women in them. Within this latter category women are employed mainly as clerks, typists etc., which are the lowest paid jobs.

In the textile industry, although women constitute 51% of the total work force, they make up 47% of the skilled operators compared with 65% of the 'mainly semi-skilled' category.

This pattern is repeated for apprenticeships in these occupations. Without exception the proportion of women apprentices in each industry is far below the proportion of women in that industry's work force. For instance in textiles, although 47% of the skilled operators are women they represent only 14% of the apprentices. Even in the clothing and footwear industry where 80% of the skilled operatives are women they make up only 27% of the apprentices.

The figures for women undergoing training of any description bear a much closer relation to the proportion of women employed and this is presumably because the majority of new employees will need some rudimentary training when starting work for the first time. Such training may only constitute a few hours spent by a fellow employee on the shop floor showing someone the 'ropes'. It is evident that in general within the so-called manufacturing sector of the economy women are employed as semi-skilled rather than skilled manual workers, and as "white collar workers", mainly clerks and typists, rather than in the higher ranking, and higher paying, jobs in the non-manual sector.

In other occupations the same phenomenon is apparent. In a

report entitled 'Women in Britain' (1975) it was noted that in teaching women occupy the lower end of the promotion scale even though they constitute just over half of all full-time teachers.⁵

In Public Administration at the beginning of 1975,

'women accounted for some 15% of the total of approximately 80,000 civil servants; in the non-industrial sector...about 43% of the staff... 500,000 were women. The ratio of women is higher in the lower grades. Most typists are women and so are over three quarters of clerical assistants. On the other hand there are very few women in the top grades of the Civil Service.' (Women in Britain, 1975, p.17). 6

From this brief description it is clear that not only are women concentrated in certain types of employment known as women's work, but in areas where men and women are employed they are generally to be found in the unskilled and low-status jobs or at the lower end of the promotion scale as in teaching. This, of course, affects the pay that women receive and in general women's pay is considerably less than men's. The introduction of the Equal Pay Act (1970) (see Chapter 10) has not altered the general picture of women receiving less pay nationally than do men. Department of Employment figures for full-time female

5 'Women represent rather more than half of the full-time teachers in publicly maintained or assisted educational establishments in Britain. In 1971 over three quarters of all primary school teachers were women compared with 43% of secondary school teachers. In the universities 'in the academic year 1973-4, 3,924 (10.7%)' of the teaching and research staff were women. If this figure is broken down further we find that 'women represented about 1.7% of the professors, 6.3% of the lecturers and assistant lecturers, and 26.9% of the other members of the academic staff.' (Women in Britain, 1975. p.17).

6 In 1971 'Women represented just 18% of medical practitioners, 11% of senior civil servants, M.P.'s etc., 17% of senior local government officers, 4% of barristers and solicitors, 1% of engineers and technologists, and 17% of accountants and company secretaries.' (Women in Britain, 1975, p.15).

manual workers clearly illustrate the huge disparity that exists even after the introduction of the Equal Pay Act.

Table 6 Women's average weekly earnings as a percentage of men's - full-time manual.

1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
58.7	51.7	51.1	49.0	49.9	51.1	51.1	51.7	55.5	57.4

Source: CIS Report. Women Under Attack, (p.3).

The figures for non-manual workers are usually lower; in 1971 the percentage of female to male pay in median earnings among non-manual workers was 54% (Women and Work, a statistical survey, 1974).⁷

The situation has not changed significantly since the full implementation of the Equal Pay Act. In some industries the Act has resulted in women's wages going down in relation to men's. This happened with an agreement negotiated by the Bakery Workers in December 1974 which,

'rearranged the grading system, dropped the words male and female, pushed all the women into the lower grades, and actually widened the differential between men's and women's wages.' (CIS Report, p.3).

They were not stepping outside the terms of the Act because the new grades were not actually defined as male or female although this is what they constituted in practice.

7 'According to the latest annual survey conducted by the Department of Employment...the average weekly earnings of full-time male adult manual workers in April 1977 were, including overtime, £71.50; while for full-time female adult manual workers they were £43.70. The corresponding figures for non-manual workers were £88.90 and £53.80. Women's earnings are thus markedly lower than those of men, partly because on average they work shorter hours, with less overtime paid at premium rates, and partly because they tend to be concentrated in the less well-paid jobs.' (Britain 1979, An Official Handbook 1979. P.318).

The ways of sidestepping the Act are explored in detail below but an example here suffices to show the lengths to which employers will go to retain a cheap female labour force. Incidentally this also illustrates that part-time workers are usually cheaper than full-time workers, another reason for the dramatic rise in part-time employment since the war.

The Wages Council⁸ in agriculture discovered a way of going against the spirit - never very strong - of the Act while sticking to the letter.

'In 1975, 5 months before the Equal Pay Act came into force, new minimum hourly rates for agricultural workers were agreed via the Agricultural Wages Council...A differential was established, with full-timers getting 91½p per hour, while part-timers got 80p - about 87½% of the full-time rate. Before the new agreement women workers in agriculture used to receive 87½% of male rates, but now the differences being established were strictly between part-time and full-time workers irrespective of sex, as the legislation required. The effect of the new agreement was that part-time women workers in agriculture could now only demand parity with men doing the same job if those men were also part-timers. The official agreement negotiated via the Agricultural Wages Council, because its wording carefully avoided differentiation according to sex, effectively blocked the way towards equal pay for men and women doing the same job as long as the men were full-time and the women were part-time. The full significance of the 12½% differential became apparent when it was realised that the employers had also embarked upon a deliberate policy of reducing the hours of large numbers of full-time women workers to below 30 hours a week, so that they would fall into the part-time category. The Equal Pay Act had been easily side-stepped, and the 12½% differential between male and female workers was substantially maintained.' (CIS Report, pp.16-17).

Although in the teaching profession equal pay has been the rule for over a decade, in April 1974, when equal pay had been

8 Wages Councils are bodies set up by government with trade union representatives on them to protect the wages of workers in fields of employment where trade union organisation is poor.

enforced for 14 years, female teachers' earnings were still only 82.8% of male teachers'. (CIS report p.6) Clearly women's low wages in comparison with men's are produced by factors other than purely economic considerations in the buying and selling of labour power, since even where equal pay is the rule women have not yet achieved full equal pay. The table below shows the salary structure of the teaching profession and the concentration of women in the lower levels of this structure.

Table 7 Primary and Secondary teachers, England and Wales,
31/3/73

Salary scale	Men	%	Women	%
1	38,613	24.5	123,851	54.2
2	27,091	17.2	44,584	19.5
3	25,180	16.0	21,640	9.5
4	26,231	16.7	10,502	4.6
5	9,782	6.2	2,296	1.0
Senior teacher	872	0.6	169	0.1
Second master	776	0.5	1,609	0.7
Deputy head	10,918	6.9	12,659	5.5
Head	17,975	11.4	11,275	5.9
Total	157,438	100.0	228,585	101.0

Source: CIS Report p.6.

One of the unions which is concerned with low paid workers is the National Association of Local Government Officers, hereafter referred to as NALGO. They have conducted a survey among those of their members employed in local government and services to ascertain the full extent of women's low pay. The table below shows that in every service there is a higher percentage of women who are paid below the TUC low pay target of £30/week than men.

Table 8 % of members below TUC low pay target (£30/wk) by service.

<u>Service</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Local government	8.0	33.0
Health	4.5	36.5
Gas	5.0	32.0
Electricity	12.5	48.5
Water	10.5	42.5
Universities	0.0	33.0
New Towns	5.0	36.5

Source: NALGO Equal Rights Working Party Report 1975, p.9.

In occupations where women constitute a large proportion of the work force the percentage below the TUC's minimum is even greater. For instance 98.7% of the typists and secretaries in this survey were women and 50% of them were paid below the low pay target whereas none of the men were. Women constitute 81.1% of clerks and in this category both men and women were paid below the minimum - 34.5% of the men and 59.5% of the women. Nationally women constitute the majority of low paid workers. In April 1974 out of 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ million full-time workers earning less than £30 a week 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ million were women (Low Pay Bulletin No.6. p.3). As well as women occupying the lower paid areas of the labour market those industries that employ large numbers of women are,

'invariably low paying industries; that is, pay levels for both men and women in the industry are low relative to the average in Britain.' (Low Pay Bulletin No.6, p.3).

The three main areas in which women are employed, miscellaneous services, distribution and professional and scientific services, are also those areas where the concentration of low paid workers is high. The Low Pay Bulletin states that:

'In April 1974 they accounted for 63% of all full-time women workers earning less than £17 per week. They were also the 3 main employers of low paid men.' (Low Pay Bulletin No.6, p.3).

We saw above that women form a large proportion of those employed as clerks. The increase in the numbers of women taking jobs as clerks has occurred since the war and the wages of clerks, both male and female, have fallen in relation to wages in other industries. The mechanisms which result in women constituting a low paid sector of the work force are many and complex and I shall examine them below; here I am merely describing the situation as it exists.

The following table shows that the wage rate for the job of clerk has fallen from parity with skilled manual workers to parity with semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers.

Table 9 Earnings of male clerks in relation to manual workers earnings in %'s

<u>Occupation group</u>	1913/14	1960	1971
Clerks	122	102	96
Skilled Manual	122	119	106
Semi-skilled manual	85	87	99
Unskilled Manual	78	80	87
All manual	100	100	100

Source: CIS Report p.10.

The rates of pay of women who work part-time are even lower than those who work full-time. In October 1975 the average hourly earnings in pence for a selection of industries was as follows:

Table 10 Average hourly earnings in pence. October 1975.

<u>Industry group</u>	Men	Youths	Full-time women	Part-time women
Chemicals and allied industries	147.78	99.19	98.68	91.14
Textiles	126.53	89.75	87.98	80.98
Leather, leather goods and fur	116.16	77.10	77.07	70.91
Metal manufacture	149.16	95.70	96.49	86.81
Timber, furniture, etc.	129.54	82.67	99.38	81.46

Source: CIS report, p.21.

Thus the increased employment of part-time workers has been a means of minimising labour costs, this is so because employers pay out less in wages to part-time workers than they would to their full-time equivalents.

This description of the distribution of women in the labour force shows that a very marked sexual division of labour exists. Women are concentrated in unskilled, low-paid jobs and in areas of employment known as 'women's work', where wage rates are generally lower than in other sectors of the economy. Despite the influx of women into the work force there has been virtually no improvement in their position - the range of jobs open to women is still limited despite the Sex Discrimination Act, women's pay is on average 60% of men's despite the Equal Pay Act and they are still not receiving the training which would take them out of the ranks of the unskilled workers.

This division of labour constitutes one of the material forms of existence of the ideology of a woman's place as it

exists within the British social formation. Women are confined to the lower status jobs, and the influx of women into certain jobs, as in the case of clerical work, often lowers the relative pay of these jobs. Areas of "women's work" such as teaching and nursing are lower paid than many equivalent jobs in which men predominate, and even in areas where women constitute the majority of the labour force men usually occupy the top rungs of the promotion scale while women occupy those at the bottom. There are clearly forces at work which preserve the situation in which men, in general, receive 40% more pay than women and their work is invested with more importance. The ideological practices which maintain and reproduce this sexual division of labour exist throughout the British Social formation and they act so as to reproduce sexual divisions within the work force and within the working class as a whole. In the following chapters I will show how the sexual division of labour in the work force has been constituted and is maintained, through ideological practices which, in every case, are forms of the ideology of a woman's place.

These ideological practices find expression in government statements which rationalise positions adopted towards women. These statements, in many cases, clarify the social role expected of women, their duties to their family and their husbands, and point to the way in which certain measures are taken in order to preserve this role. Thus I shall turn my attention, firstly, to examples of legal practices which, while being forms of existence of the ideology of a woman's place, both reproduce the sexual division of labour through material practices and elaborate the ideological social relations which these practices uphold.

CHAPTER 6

Legal ideologies: Social Security law
and protective legislation

It is clear from the last chapter that a marked sexual division of labour, maintained and reproduced by ideological practices throughout the British social formation, exists within the work force. In this chapter I shall seek to show how the ideological social relations of which the sexual division of labour is a form, are reproduced through material practices and how specific legal practices have definite effects within the work force in maintaining the divisions between women and men. The legal practices with which I am concerned are those relating to Social Security law and protective legislation. I shall show that both these sets of laws embody practices which reproduce the ideological relations which define woman's place as being in the home. Woman's prime social duty is seen as being a wife and mother and any work she might take up outside the home has to be subordinated to these prime considerations. This ideology is clearly formulated in documents relating to these laws and I shall examine various government documents discussing the workings of the Social Security and National Insurance system in order to reveal its ideological basis. I shall also examine documents relating to protective legislation and shall then go on to outline the effects that these sets of legal practices have on the working class.

The ideology defining a woman's place within the home is unambiguously formulated in Social Security law and practice. It can be found in reports, such as the Beveridge Report, (Beveridge, 1942), which forms the basis for the present day Welfare State,

and in the practices and functioning of the Social Security system which reproduces the position of woman as homemaker and childrearer.

In the Beveridge Report, which was commissioned by the Coalition government during the war in order to make concrete proposals for the setting up and functioning of the Social Security and National Insurance systems, the ideology of the family and woman's place within it comes across very clearly and in a very unambiguous form. The declining birthrate in Britain at the time was of concern to the commission and the solution to this problem was seen in terms of strengthening the family and motherhood. The report states that unless the reproduction rate of the

'British community is raised very materially in the near future, a rapid and continuous decline of the population cannot be prevented.' This problem 'makes it imperative to give first place in social expenditure to the care of childhood and to the safeguarding of maternity.'
(Beveridge, 1942, p.8)

Of course it is not the government which is going to make provisions for child-care facilities but women who must take their duties as mothers seriously and perform the job of rearing the next generation of workers within the bourgeois family with little or no expense to the State. Thus woman's role within the family was central to the whole system of proposals put forward by the Beveridge report. Accordingly Sir William divided the population into six main classes: employers, the self-employed, housewives, adults who do not earn, children, and people of over working age. Thus married women, even if they are employees, are not classed as such under this system, but occupy a completely different category as 'housewives'. In terms of the Social Security laws they

are 'housewives' and not workers, home making and child-rearing being designated as their rightful sphere of activity; this characterisation of women is identical to that used by Secombe (see Chapter 3).

A corollary of woman's place being in the home is that they are not expected to earn a living and are therefore assumed to be economically dependent on a man, either their father or their husband. This economic dependence is enshrined in the practical measures recommended by the report, and because these measures were put into practice they designate a reality and so help to ensure the continued reproduction of this dependence. Thus the rate of National Insurance contributions that women are expected to pay is less than is expected of men.

'The contribution will differ from one class to another, according to the benefits provided, and will be higher for men than women, so as to secure benefits for Class III' (i.e. housewives) (Beveridge, 1942, p.10)

This measure means that women are covered, in terms of entitlement to benefits, by their husband's contributions and not by their own. So even if women worked they were not to be entitled to the same benefits as men because their true role in life was to be 'housewives' and not 'employees'. However, then as now, 'reality' did not conform to this ideal and a large number of women, married and unmarried, worked outside the home to earn their living. In 1931 fewer than one in eight married women had been working outside the home, by 1939 this proportion had increased to one in seven and by 1943 over half of married women between the ages of 24 and 44 were earning a living outside their homes. (Land, 1971, pp.185-6) This large proportion was due to a certain extent to the advent of the second world war and the influx of women into the work force. But even though these figures

may exaggerate the underlying trend the existence of this trend, increasing numbers of married women entering the work force, could not be denied. Thus Beveridge's report did not take account of the 'reality' of the lives of a large proportion of working class women who expected to be in paid employment for the major part of their lives. But is this all the 'reality'? Or does such a counterposing of facts lead to the erroneous conclusion that ideology, and specifically familial ideology, has no roots or even existence in the daily realities of life? I would argue that even though women at that time were working in large numbers they were also economically dependent on their husbands. This is because, in general, women's wages are much lower than men's; therefore even though they might be necessary for the household budget they are expendable and indeed are expendable when a baby is born, when a child needs looking after, when an aged relative needs extra care. In these cases it is always the wife who stops work and therefore becomes dependent on her husband. Also even while she is out at work her wage is usually lower than his so in effect she is more dependent on him than he is on her; he really is the main breadwinner and her wage really is secondary. Thus although total economic dependency may be a temporary phenomenon it is always a situation that recurs. This situation is reinforced and actively reproduced by practices such as those within the Social Security system. If a woman is not working she cannot claim benefit because it is assumed that her husband supports her, this means that whether the parties involved want to live in that way or not she is in reality forced into an economically dependent position. Thus the ideology embodied in the Beveridge Report and the Social Security laws is not in

contradiction with reality even though at first glance it seems to be; in fact the ideological relations which it represents are reproduced and perpetuated through the operation of the legal instance.

Beveridge recognises that married women go out to work for certain periods in their lives, but the fact of them earning a wage makes no difference to their status as 'housewives' and their dependence on their husbands' National Insurance contributions. Working married women were to be entitled to maternity benefit by virtue of their own contributions but to lower unemployment and disability benefits than their male counterparts. (Beveridge, 1942, p.10) Thus unemployed women would be much cheaper to the National Insurance system than unemployed men because they could be assumed to have a male relative to support them. It is ironic to read later in the report that one of the important features of the Unified Social Security system is that it,

'retains and extends the principle that compulsory contributions should provide a flat rate of benefit, irrespective of earnings, in return for a flat contribution of all.'
(Beveridge, 1942, p.17)

That is all except married women.

The role expected of married women and the ideological relations which the marriage contract and the bourgeois family uphold are very clearly expressed in the Beveridge Report.

'...all women by marriage acquire a new economic and social status...On marriage a woman gains a legal right to maintenance by her husband...she undertakes at the same time to perform vital unpaid service..' (Beveridge, 1942, p.49)

Clearly a woman's place, once married, is firmly in the home fulfilling her unpaid domestic duties. Beveridge recognises the importance of this role to the 'nation' when he writes:

'In the next thirty years housewives as mothers have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world.' (Beveridge, 1942, p.53)

Thus the unpaid domestic labour of women in the home, particularly as mothers, is recognised as vital for the (imperialist) success of the British nation.¹ Women's contribution to the national interest is best fulfilled through devotion to her family and not through working outside the home. In terms of this bourgeois ideology a man's social duty is to work in order to support his family, a woman's is to marry and devote herself to her domestic duties; such a sexual division of labour is seen as vital to the continuance of national life.

The effects of these ideological divisions on women's employment and their position in the work force are not spelt out

1 The nationalism exacerbated by the war and the need to produce healthy men for the army is reminiscent of the jingoistic ideology which had developed at the beginning of the 20th century. Anna Davin in a recent article (Imperialism and Motherhood) quotes from an article by a soldier on the importance of motherhood to the imperialist interests of the British nation (Frederick Maurice, 'National Health: A soldier's study' Contemporary Review, January 1903). 'Whatever the primary cause we are always brought back to the fact that...the young man of 16 to 18 years of age is what he is because of the training through which he has passed during his infancy and childhood. "Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined". Therefore it is to the condition, mental, moral and physical, of the woman and child that we must look if we have regard to the future of our land...Mr. Barnet in Whitechapel...found that the health and long life of the Jews, whose women did not go out to work, compared most favourably with that of the Christian population, the women of which worked without adequate regard to their function as mothers. It does not follow that a stereotyped copying of the habits of the Jews would be desirable, but it may explain and justify the view of the Emperor of Germany that for the raising of a virile race, either of soldiers or of citizens, it is essential that the attention of the mothers of the land should be mainly devoted to the 3 K's - Kinder, Kuche, Kirche. /Children, Kitchen and Church/ (Davin, 1978, p.16)

by Beveridge but can be clearly seen if we look at the measures proposed.

Married women workers are different from other workers in Beveridge's eyes, they are temporary members of the work-force, and the measures recommended in his report are based on this situation. He notes that:

'...even if a married woman, while living with her husband undertakes gainful occupation, whether by employment or otherwise, she does so under conditions distinguishing her from the single woman in two ways. First, her earning is liable to interruption by child-birth. Second, to most married women earnings by a gainful occupation do not mean what such earnings mean to most solitary women.'
(Beveridge, 1942, p.49)

This situation justifies the denial of benefits to married women workers and, incidentally, also justifies the paying of low wages to women workers because, so the story goes, they only work for pin money. If a married woman goes out to work she is not entitled to the same benefits as a single woman because of her assumed economic dependency on her husband and her different social 'duties'. The 'temporary' nature of married women's employment serves to rationalise this treatment.

'Such paid work in many cases will be intermittent; it should be open to any married woman to undertake it as an exempt person, paying no contributions of her own and acquiring no claim to benefit in unemployment or sickness. If she prefers to contribute and to re-qualify for unemployment and disability benefit she may do so, but will receive those benefits at a reduced rate.' (Beveridge, 1942, p.50)

Thus, even though a married woman pays the requisite contributions she is still not to be entitled to the full benefits. Of course the effects of this type of measure are, on the one hand, to discourage married women from paying contributions thus reinforcing their dependence on their husbands' contributions, and, on the other hand, to minimise the cost to the National

Insurance system of married women workers; hence women constitute a source of cheap labour in more ways than one. Because the National Insurance system is framed within the ideological relations which define a woman's place as being in the home, they have few rights when in work and are in effect permanently treated as temporary members of the work force.

This unfair treatment of married women is justified by Beveridge in terms of the sexual division of labour within the bourgeois family.

'It is undeniable that the needs of housewives in general are less than those of single women when unemployed or disabled, because their house is provided either by their husband's earnings or by his benefit.' (Beveridge, 1942, p.5)

A woman's potential motherhood is also used as justification for paying her less benefits. One of Beveridge's proposals was maternity benefit and married women were to forfeit their rights to other benefits because they, and no other sector of the work force, would be able (perhaps) to receive maternity benefit.

'...the special maternity benefit must be paid for by someone. It is a benefit additional to other benefits, which will be confined almost wholly to gainfully occupied married women and will reduce the contributions available for supporting their unemployment benefits.' (Beveridge, 1942, p.51)

Thus women are exhorted to look after the home and produce children for society, but at the same time they have to forfeit the benefits afforded to all other workers to pay for the grant which aids them at the time of child-birth; thus they themselves have to pay for the privilege of producing children which is in fact regarded as their social duty.

The proposals put forward by Beveridge are framed in such a way as to safeguard and perpetuate the ideological relations which constitute bourgeois marriage. The sexual division of labour

within the bourgeois family is thus to be supported and reinforced by the functioning of the National Insurance system and couples who do not marry and conform to this pattern will be penalised.² This puts a premium on marriage as is pointed out by Beveridge himself.

'Taken as a whole, the Plan for Social Security puts a premium on marriage, in place of penalising it. The position of housewives is recognised in form and substance. It is recognised as treating them, not as dependants of their husbands but as partners sharing benefit and pension when there are no earnings to share.' (My emphasis)
(Beveridge, 1942, p.52)

This last sentence rings rather a hollow note when we consider what has gone before and that all the measures proposed are underpinned by the notion of a married woman's economic dependence on her husband.

2 'Quite apart from maternity grant and benefit, the unified scheme attaches advantages to the condition of marriage amply compensating for any loss involved in the lower rate of unemployment and disability benefit for those married women who are gainfully employed. The unmarried woman living as wife will get no widowhood benefits. If she is gainfully occupied she will pay contributions for all purposes, including medical treatment, pension and funeral grant which she would get without contributions if she married; she will not have the married woman's option of exemption...for pension she will have to contribute throughout her working life, and if she does not do so will not be qualified for a pension. The contributions of the man with whom she is living, if he is married to someone else, will go to secure benefits for his legal wife; if he is not married his contributions as a single man will go to support the benefits of married women generally.' (Beveridge, 1942, p.52) Thus a woman living with a man is not entitled to benefits from the man's contributions nor is she usually from her own. This is because women break their working lives to have children and since the period of continuous contributions required to qualify for a pension is 45 contributions a year for 44 years (for a woman) between the ages of 16 and 60 (Social Insurance Part 1, Cmnd 6550, 1944) most women who have had children do not qualify for this benefit under the terms of this act. Thus women who do not get married but live with a man are heavily penalised by the National Insurance system, they get none of the financial benefits of marriage but all the disadvantages, as will be seen when we examine the co-habitation ruling.

Thus, in the Beveridge Report the ideology governing the National Insurance and Social Security systems is clearly formulated. Woman's place is in the home. Once women are married they are economically dependent on their husbands and if they do go out to work they are regarded as temporary members of the work force entitled to none of the benefits accorded to male and single female workers. Clearly the home is woman's true sphere and the world of work is a 'man's' world - this is the ideology underpinning all the proposals in the report.

The functioning of the present National Insurance system is largely based on the proposals contained in the Beveridge Report. Thus the ideology which finds representation in that report is translated into material practices which serve to reproduce the bourgeois family with its specific sexual division of labour.

In 1944 the coalition government set up a National Insurance system and every practical measure embodies the economic dependence of a wife on her husband. Women, by virtue of the fact that their employment record is interrupted by child-birth and that the National Insurance contributions required from married women have, until recently, been lower than those required from men, usually pay fewer and lower National Insurance contributions than their husbands. When this is translated into the pensions that married couples receive women are again worse off than men. Thus, far from marriage being a 'partnership' in economic terms, as Beveridge would have us believe, the wife does not have equal financial rights with her husband; the man is regarded as the economic head of the household. In the White Paper on Social Insurance it is proposed that:

'The joint pension of 35/- will be payable on the husband's

retirement, provided that his wife is living with him or is wholly or partly maintained by him, and if under pensionable age, is not gainfully occupied. The joint pension will normally be paid to the husband, but where the wife is of pensionable age and makes application for separate payment, a pension of 15/- will be paid to her and the husband's pension will be reduced to the single rate of 20/-. It is felt that such a division is justified on the ground that the pension is mainly provided from the husband's contributions and it would be inequitable to pay him a lower rate than that which the scheme provides for a single person.' (Cmnd.6550, 1944, p.22)

Of course it is equitable that a married woman should be paid less than a single person - it is hard to see the logic in this type of reasoning. The proscriptive effect of financial hardship if a woman abrogates her economic dependence and asserts her right to support herself helps to ensure that the economic dependence within the bourgeois family is maintained.

Beveridge's recommendations as regards the National Insurance contributions of married women were based on the idea that,

'on marriage every woman begins a new life in relation to social insurance...she does not carry on rights to unemployment or disability benefit in respect of contributions before marriage; she must acquire those rights, if at all, by fresh contributions after marriage.' (Beveridge, 1942, p.50)

The government, in view of the fact that many married women worked, was not so rigid in its proposals. It gave women the right to continue making contributions although they would receive lower rates of unemployment and sickness benefit than a man. Thus the government legislation only differed from Beveridge's proposals in so far as a woman did not have to re-start her National Insurance record on marriage.

'It is not, however, proposed that the woman who chooses on marriage to be insured in her own right should always start a fresh insurance life. Subject to the special conditions referred to in paragraphs 112 to 114 she will retain her

pre-marriage record.³ (Cmnd. 6550, 1944, p.27)

The government allowed this so that a woman could qualify for pension in her own right, however we have already seen the difficulties faced by women in achieving the necessary number of National Insurance contributions in order to qualify. With the recent Pensions Act some of the more glaring disparities between the treatment of men and women have been eliminated, however women are still held to be the ones responsible for the home and family and men are still the breadwinners. Thus the ideological relations underpinning the operation of the law relating to National Insurance remain but the forms that they take have changed. In the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 the economic dependency of a woman on her husband has not been erased, but now there is no special married women's rate of contribution and the years spent at home looking after children no longer reduce a person's pension.

3 'Two special conditions will be imposed. First, in order to retain her right to pay class 4 contributions and, if gainfully occupied, her qualification for sickness or unemployment benefit, a married woman must have at least 45 contributions paid or excused in each contribution year. Second, a married woman will not be entitled to a pension by virtue of her own insurance unless the total number of contributions paid or excused in any Class since her marriage represents not less than half of the number of weeks since marriage.

'If a woman who has dropped out of insurance re-enters gainful occupation and chooses to be insured again, she can re-qualify for sickness and unemployment benefit by 52 weeks of insurance and the payment of 26 contributions. This will also restore to her the right to continue insurance for retirement pension by payment of Class IV contributions if she ceases gainful occupation.

'A woman who is already married and insured on the day the scheme comes into operation will be able to choose insurance or exemption, but a married woman who was not insured immediately before the start of the scheme will be able to enter insurance only if she takes up gainful occupation. If she ceases gainful occupation after a substantial period of insurance she will be allowed to insure in Class IV to preserve her pension rights.' (Cmnd. 6550, 1944, p.27)

'...a man or woman who has at least 20 years in employment, paying full contributions after the new scheme starts, will get a full pension under the new scheme, even if they have spent a number of years at home with a family. The 20 years in employment don't have to be consecutive: you can count separate, shorter periods.' (Hewitt, 1975, p.49)

This is a big advance as it means that women no longer forfeit their pension rights by having to leave their work when they have children and so not having a long, consecutive period of paying contributions. However, as H. Land points out,

'...the recognition of home responsibilities as being a valid reason for being out of paid employment will include women and single men. However, although at the time of writing the regulations had not been published it seems likely that the married man who chooses to stay at home and look after the children while his wife works will not be credited with contributions in these circumstances. As a Minister of State to the Department of Health and Social Security said in 1975 "What we are concerned with in National Insurance terms is not to reflect role duplication, but merely to provide for the genuine case of involuntary role reversal." (my italics)' (Land, D.H.S.S., 1976, p.45)

Clearly it is still considered that the man ought to go out to work and the woman ought to stay at home and only when this situation is impossible to maintain will pension rights be granted. Thus voluntary 'role reversal' is not acceptable in terms of the ideology governing the Social Security laws, it is still considered a woman's job to look after the kids and clearly the new provisions are framed so as to cater for men who are one parent families and therefore cannot go out to work. This is clear from the changes introduced by the Social Security Benefit Act, 1975 which recognised that men were required to look after children sometimes. However, as in the Social Security Pensions Act, it is only men who are single parents who are recognised as having any responsibility towards children. Married men cannot claim supplementary benefit without registering for employment.

'The Commission do not require single parents, women or men,

to register for employment as a condition of receiving benefit, so that they are free to care for their young children...' (D.H.S.S., 1976, p.4)

Thus, under 'normal' conditions women are responsible for the children and their husbands go out to work, it is only in 'abnormal' circumstances that men can be considered as having 'domestic responsibilities'.

Under the new pension scheme a married woman is entitled to the same pension and the same unemployment and sickness benefits as a single woman on the basis of her National Insurance contributions. A married woman who has not been working gets a pension on the basis of her husband's contributions which is lower than it would be if she had earned a full pension on her own contributions. It is interesting to note that even though the pensions system has been altered in this way the ideology of a man going out to work and his wife staying at home still finds representation at the level of the government's discourse. In discussing the new scheme they say that it gives,

'every employee the opportunity to build, on the foundation of the State Scheme, an earnings related pension for himself, or his wife, through an occupational pensions scheme or, failing that, a State reserve scheme.' (Land, 1976, p.124)

Thus workers are considered to be men, women are housewives as this next statement reveals,

'many wives and widows work for only a part, and often only a small part, of their adult lives.' (Land, 1976, p.124)

Perhaps the area where the ideology governing the Social Security laws and the social relations which they uphold stands out in sharpest relief is in the official statements concerning the cohabitation ruling. An examination of this literature reveals the ideological relations governing the economic relation

between husband and wife in marriage as well as the positively proscriptive rulings which uphold this relation.

In the Supplementary Benefits handbook where general conditions of entitlement are discussed it is abundantly clear that a wife is in Social Security law and practice economically dependent on her husband and her role in society is not to go out to work, as is her husband's, but to stay at home and rear a family.

'Payments made to a husband living with his wife take account of her requirements as well as his own...'
(D.H.S.S., 1972, p.5)

Of course it is the husband who, as the breadwinner and economic head of the household, collects any benefit payable. There is no notion of shared responsibilities with either husband or wife entitled to claim, in Social Security law the husband is the head of the household and this legal ideology reproduces the ideological relations of which it is a form. That the woman's role in society is not primarily to work outside the home is made clear in the following statement:

'Any claimant below pensionable age who is able to work is normally required to register at an Employment Exchange as a condition of receiving a supplementary allowance but a wife living with her husband is not required to register for work.' (D.H.S.S., 1972, p.5)

The relation between husband and wife within marriage is clearly seen in terms of the bourgeois family and every case is treated as if it conformed to this pattern. Thus even if a husband and wife living together make financial arrangements whereby they are independent financially or mutually dependent they are treated always as if the wife is dependent on the husband, and this means that, to a certain extent, this economic dependence is real.

'Under the Act the resources and requirements of a husband and wife in the same household, together with those of any dependent children living with them, are each added and treated as the husband's...Where a husband and wife are members of the same household the husband is the claimant and the supplementary allowance or pension covering the household is payable to him..' (my emphasis) (D.H.S.S., 1972, p.8)

The position of women within the bourgeois family is made even clearer when compared with the treatment of young people living at home with their parents and claiming supplementary benefit. The resources of his/her parents do not enter into the assessment of his/her entitlement. Thus a wife is considered to be totally financially dependent on her husband, whereas a 16 year old girl living with her parents is treated as being economically independent. Clearly the division of labour which constitutes the ideological relations within the bourgeois family renders the married woman totally dependent on her husband because her job is not to go out to work but to stay at home and fulfil her so-called domestic duties. The handbook goes on to state that,

'a man and woman "cohabiting as man and wife" shall be treated in the same way, "unless there are exceptional circumstances"' (D.H.S.S., 1972, p.9)

If a couple is 'cohabiting' there is no legal requirement for the man to support the woman as there is in marriage. Thus the treatment of the woman as if she were economically dependent on the man is even more blatantly at odds with what might be the reality of the situation. However the treatment of a couple in this way produces a situation of economic dependence for the woman and this is explicitly what Social Security law is formulated to do. The handbook puts it in the following way:

'What is not always understood is that, even if a couple do not regard themselves as husband and wife the Commission has a duty to decide whether, for the purposes of entitlement to supplementary benefit, they must be treated as if they were.' (D.H.S.S. 1972, p.9)

They continue:

'The Act does not define cohabitation. What the Commission has to decide is whether the relationship between the man and the woman is such that they must be regarded as living as man and wife in the ordinary sense of the term. There is no simple way of deciding the issue. The existence of a sexual relationship is not in itself decisive and certainly occasional sleeping together does not constitute cohabitation. The fact that a man is contributing to a woman's financial support does not necessarily mean that she is cohabiting with him. On the other hand, if he does not support her financially that is not itself conclusive evidence against cohabitation.' (D.H.S.S., 1972, p.9)

This wholly negative definition, or rather lack of definition, of cohabitation does not deter the Commission from judging whether a couple is cohabiting or not. As we shall see later, although financial support or lack of it or a sexual relationship or lack of it, are not in themselves sufficient to assume that a man and a woman are 'cohabiting', if, in the eyes of the Commission, a couple is cohabiting, and it is hard to see how they decide this given the nebulous 'definition' above, financial pressure is applied to force the couple to conform to the bourgeois family. Thus Social Security practice reproduces bourgeois ideological relations and forces conformity to these relations through legal and financial pressure. In this way the legal ideology and practices reproduce the sexual division of labour within the family and, therefore, reproduce the bourgeois family.

In the two booklets produced by the Department of Health and Social Security to clarify the cohabitation ruling the ideology underlying their judgements is clear. It also clarifies the ideological relations which constitute bourgeois marriage. One of the main arguments used by the Commission in favour of the retention of the cohabitation ruling is that it would not be fair to treat cohabiting couples in a different way from married couples. This may be an entirely equitable principle but what is

never questioned is the way that a married couple is treated. A wife's economic dependence on her husband is regarded as the most desirable state of affairs and something which is immutable.

It is relatively easy for the Commission to refute the arguments against treating a 'cohabiting' couple in the same way as a married couple, and in focussing on the request for different treatment they beg the question which is central to the whole debate. This is that in terms of bourgeois marriage the woman is economically dependent on the husband and this relation is upheld by Social Security law. It is this relation which is thrown into stark relief when cohabitation is discussed because the same mists of ideology and sentiment do not cloud the issue as they do when discussing benefit paid to married women. Because of legal requirements on husbands to maintain their wives it is easier to accept that women are dependent on their husbands. But when cohabitation is discussed, there being no such requirement, the relationship is uncovered in all its nakedness.

The Commission points out that,

'It has been argued that a cohabitation provision is in itself wrong; and that since cohabitation has no legal status a couple who are cohabiting should not be dealt with in the same way as a couple who are married. Neither under the Ministry of Social Security Act, nor at common law, has a man any legal liability to maintain a woman to whom he is not married, nor her children, unless he has been adjudged to be the father. He should not therefore be expected to support them in the context of the Supplementary Benefits scheme.' (D.H.S.S., 1971, p.2)

However, they dismiss this by arguing that a cohabiting couple should not be treated more favourably than a married one. Their concern to maintain the bourgeois family comes across in the following statement:

'We express no opinion about whether this /paying a woman living with a man supplementary benefit in her own right/

would be an encouragement to immorality. But it could certainly be attacked as a discouragement to marriage...And it would remove some of the pressures on a man to support his own children.' (D.H.S.S., 1971, p.3)

Obviously one of the effects of a ruling such as the cohabitation ruling is to preserve the bourgeois family to which cohabitation is seen as a threat. Hence the measures to make a cohabiting couple conform to the pattern of bourgeois marriage even though they are not legally husband and wife.

At the same time as arguing for the treatment of cohabiting couples to be the same as married couples based on the assumed economic dependence of wife on husband, they acknowledge that this is not even necessarily the case between married couples, thus seemingly undermining their own assumptions.

'..if the requirements of a cohabiting couple were treated separately, the assessment of resources would present the greatest possible difficulty, for the financial arrangements between cohabiting couples, just as between many married couples, vary widely from the situation where the man gives the woman a fixed and regular allowance with a clear understanding as to what she is expected to provide out of it to that where his contribution is irregular, infrequent and inadequate.' (D.H.S.S., 1971, p.3)

It is hard to understand the Commission's concern. When separate individuals occupy the same household, as for example, when several students share a house, there are no insurmountable difficulties in assessing the benefit to be paid to each one. Nor would there be any difficulties in assessing a man and a woman's benefit where they shared the same house. What really underlies the Commission's reluctance to abandon the cohabitation ruling is that such a move would undermine the ideological relations at present pertaining within the family and there would be no legal power to force conformity to the pattern of the bourgeois family. The Commission points this out in no uncertain terms:

'The question is sometimes raised of financial support in cases of cohabitation where maintenance is disputed. It has been suggested that it is morally wrong to infer that because a man and woman are living together as man and wife, the man is in fact supporting the woman and her children especially where these are from a former union. But to leave the choice to pay or not to pay to the man, and to make no effort to get him to maintain the woman would be inconsistent with the Act and repugnant to the general view of family respect. The Commission have therefore decided that it will continue to be assumed that the man in a cohabiting couple is supporting the woman and her children.' (D.H.S.S., 1971, p.10)

In a later document, *Living Together as Husband and Wife*, produced in 1976 by the D.H.S.S., the apparently more liberal approach still represents the ideology of the family and prescribes certain patterns of behaviour to which couples, married or otherwise, must conform. The first argument that they advance to justify the cohabitation ruling is that the cost of allowing women who were living with men to claim would be too high. This reveals another effect of assuming women to be economically dependent on men. When women are working they constitute a cheap sector of the labour force, and when they are out of work they cost the state nothing because, since it is assumed that they are economically dependent on their husbands, they are not entitled to supplementary benefits in their own right. Women are thus cheap when they are in work and cheap when they are out of work. Another effect of their lack of entitlement to supplementary benefits is that the unemployment figures do not reflect the number of unemployed married women, they do not sign on because they get no benefits for so doing. The difference this makes to the unemployment figures is somewhere in the region of underestimating unemployment amongst married women by 50%. (Werneke, 1978, p.39)

In this later pamphlet the Supplementary Benefits Commission

actually consider the ideology of a woman's dependence on her husband.

'Some people would even question whether it is any longer right for a married woman to be expected to depend on her husband and to be unable to claim supplementary benefit in her own right. The trend towards equality between the sexes and the sharing and even exchange of roles in the marriage partnership have already, to some extent, changed the traditional role of husband as the sole breadwinner. But if the resources of husband and wife were not to be aggregated, and each had a right to claim benefit independently, the Commission would be paying allowances to almost all wives who are unable to work or have the care of children, regardless of the husband's income.' (D.H.S.S., 1976, p.5)

Once again the Commission rejects the argument on grounds of cost and argues for the continuing treatment of husband and wife as an 'economic unit' with the man as the bread winner.

Interestingly the Commission points out the effects of the cohabitation rule in relation to other areas of Social Security law such as pensions:

'...a woman who is not married to the man she is living with does not have the same privileges as a married woman. Marriage confers legal rights of maintenance and inheritance which cohabitation does not. Certain rights under the Social Security system, notably widowhood benefits, are restricted to the married.' (D.H.S.S., 1976, p.6)

So a woman is treated as a wife when she is cohabiting, which means that she costs less to the Social Security system, but if the man with whom she is living dies she is not treated as a wife because it is cheaper to consider her differently and as not married to him. Thus there is economic pressure built into the practices of the Social Security system to make couples conform to the pattern of the bourgeois family. This family unit consists of, or ought to consist of, a woman dependent on a man who supports her financially in return for certain tasks, i.e., housework and childrearing. This sexual division of labour defines the bourgeois family and the ideological relations within

it are reproduced through the practice of Social Security law which has certain coercive effects on couples. For instance, if a man and woman are living together but are financially independent they are forced to conform to the pattern of bourgeois family relations if they need to claim supplementary benefits. The Commission recognises this and its only reply is that it is the law.

'The most difficult cases are those where the claimant acknowledges that she is living with a man but does not accept that their relationship is like that of a husband and wife. They are the source of most of the complaints about the operation of the benefits rule. Clearly some women, and a growing number, contest the application of the rule because they reject it in principle. While respecting their opinion (though for the reasons given earlier we do not share it) the Commission can only apply the law.' (D.H.S.S., 1976, p.18)

Clearly the Social Security and National Insurance laws are firmly based on the ideology of a woman's place being in the home. In terms of these laws women are economically dependent on their husbands even though for a large part of their lives they go out to work. They are regarded as 'temporary' members of the work force and their major role is to bear and rear children in the home. Proscriptive practices exist which force women to conform to this pattern even though they do not wish to. Thus this ideology exists in law and in legal practices, it does not only occupy the realm of 'ideas'. Thus 'attitudes' within the work force, such as the idea that married women only work for pin money because their husbands are the breadwinners, are not plucked from the sky, they describe a certain reality. And this reality helps to lend credence to those arguments which hold that women should not really go out to work, their true role is at home, which buttress divisions between men and women not only within the

family or within legal ideology, but at all levels of the social formation.

Thus, as I argued above (Ch.4), ideologies exist in the form of material practices by means of which they are reproduced, and they have a clear class character in class societies. The class character of the ideology of a woman's place within the British social formation is beginning to come clear, social security practices reproduce divisions between men and women and contribute to the reproduction of the sexual division of labour within the work force. This division of labour helps to ensure that the interests of male and female workers are kept separate and are seen as being in competition with one another. As will be seen below, (Ch.7), the social role expected of women and that women indeed fulfil, is important for the formulation of government policy on women workers and therefore on the distribution of women in the work force. It also affects practices within the trade union movement (Chs.8 & 9) which maintain divisions between male and female workers and therefore weaken the economic struggles of the working class.

Protective legislation

The class nature of the ideology of a woman's place is made clearer in my examination of protective legislation. I shall, initially, look at historical documents and present day positions on this legislation to demonstrate its ideological basis and then proceed to an analysis of the effects of practices flowing from this legislation revealing the divisions they produce within the working class.

The protective legislation that is today under review in Britain dates back to the beginning of this century. The factory and Workshop Act 1901,

'among other things, provided for a 10-hour day for textile factories and a 10½-hour day for non-textile factories with a maximum possible working week of 55½ and 60 hours respectively (the daily period of employment being 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. or 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.), reduced the maximum working spell for women and young persons in textile factories to 4½ hours (it remained at 5 hours in non-textile factories), introduced elaborate provisions covering overtime employment and prohibited the employment of children under 12 years of age...The 1901 Act in fact laid down to a large extent the pattern of the present day legislation.' (Hours of Employment of Women and Young persons employed in Factories: A report. H.M.S.O., 1969, p.35)

The employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920 prohibited night work for women and The Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936 prohibited night work for women in industrial undertakings, this replaced the previous provisions in the 1920 Act. Acts passed in 1936 and 1937 gave powers to the Minister to allow certain exemptions to the regulations but it was during the second world war that this power was made all-embracing.

'During the second world war the Minister of Labour was empowered under Defence Regulations to grant exemptions from the requirements of the Factories Acts where the national interest demanded it. These powers were made permanent by section 23 of the Factories Act 1959 and extended so that under that section the Minister was also given power to grant exemption from the provisions of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920 and The Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936.' (H.M.S.O., 1969, p.35)

The main areas of protective legislation are that for women,

'nightwork is prohibited, early starts and late finishes to work are restricted, and maximum hours for a single spell of work for a day and the week are set, and women's hours of work have to be registered as does their formal overtime under the Factories Act. In addition, women are prohibited from working with lead or with radiation; they may not work underground at mines, except in certain cases, and may not operate lifts at mines; and limits for lifting weights are set in 3 female dominated industries.' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.2)

The ideology which supports and justifies the existence of such protective legislation comes out clearly in an ILO document reviewing protective legislation.⁴

'...the social position of woman is very different from that of other workers. By custom and tradition she is responsible for the management of the home; in addition to her occupational task there are a multitude of domestic tasks which she assumes: housekeeping, the care of children and the repair of clothing for members of the family. A first consequence of this is that the working woman would inevitably be overworked and would ruin her health if certain measures of social protection were not taken;...' (ILO, 1932, p.1)

The importance of protecting women as mothers central to the family is stressed when discussing the regulation of hours of work, such regulation,

'is certainly of special interest in the case of women workers, because when they leave the factory or shop in which they perform their occupational tasks, most of them find other work waiting for them as housekeepers and mothers of families. Worn out by this double or triple function, the worker...has great difficulty in fulfilling all her domestic duties. In her own interest and in that of the family of which she is the centre, and of the children whom she has to educate, it is of the utmost importance that some limit should be set to these tasks which alone can be influenced by the public authorities, namely, her occupational duties.' (ILO, 1932, p.94)

Thus the prime purpose of protecting women workers from excessively long hours of work is seen in terms of preserving the family and woman's key role within it. This concern for the bourgeois family and woman's place within it also motivated the earlier reformers:

'The employment of large numbers of women in factories, together with the herding of a growing population into overcrowded towns, aroused Victorian public concern and the reforming zeal of Evangelical philanthropists like Lord Shaftesbury. It was because of women's special function as producers of the next generation of workers that they

2 Women's Work under Labour Law. A survey of Protective Legislation. Geneva, 1932.

received so much attention from the parliamentary commissioners inquiring into factory conditions. A sense of shock prevailed in the 1830's and 1840's, a period of intense class struggle, at what was called the 'condition of England.' This was especially directed towards the apparent destruction of that bastion of discipline and control, the working class family. Shaftesbury believed that if the factory system was allowed to go unchecked "domestic life and domestic discipline must soon be at an end." (Campbell and Craig, pp.5-6)

The importance of women as child-bearers and producers of the next generation is the rationale behind the existence of certain of the protective laws. One is tempted to ask why men's reproductive capacities are not protected with equal zeal. The ILO survey states that,

'It is clear that the aim of most of the legislative measures concerning the employment of women will be maternity protection. Their purpose is to maintain intact the vitality of the woman worker so as to enable her to fulfil this function normally, and to help her carry out the tasks resulting from maternity in succeeding years, such as the care of her children, their education etc.' (ILO, 1932, p.18)

Clearly it is not merely the reproductive potential biologically speaking of women that is being put forward as a reason for special protection, but once again their role as mother and their place within the family. The report continues:

'By strictly limiting the hours of work for women, by sparing them night work, which is so exhausting and trying, and by preventing their physical organs from being deformed by carrying too heavy weights or poisoned by dangerous substances the legislator is really endeavouring to preserve the maternal function and to ensure the well-being of future generations.' (ILO, 1932, p.18)

It is odd that women should, in the name of their 'maternal function', be preserved from such unpleasant and dangerous work as listed above and that men are entitled to no such protection. Clearly the ideology of a woman's place and her function within the family is what produces this differential treatment and it was a strong motive force in the struggle for protective legislation. There was opposition to the introduction of protective

legislation by leading women trade unionists at the time, many of whom stressed the importance of trade union organisation of women workers rather than, 'paternalistic state action'. Emma Paterson, one of the founders of the Women's Protective and Provident League in 1874-5, suspected that male trade unionists only supported the introduction of protective legislation because they thought that it would limit the occupations open to women and so reduce competition for the available jobs. (Lewenhak, 1977, p.72) Rather than restricting such protection to women it could also have been won for men which would have avoided reproducing the sexual divisions within the work force. Thus a divisive ideology forms the basis for protective legislation and although the passing of such legislation was an achievement for the working class it has also been used as a means of maintaining the sexual divisions within the work force. Here the double edged nature of bourgeois legislation is evident and the effects of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home are obvious. In 1873, when protective legislation first became an issue in the trade union movement, Emma Paterson pointed out the danger of relying on legislation for protection. In an article in Labour Review in April 1874 she opposed the attempt by male trade unions to limit the hours of work of women and children in factories and workshops. She argued that if the improvement of women's working conditions was achieved,

'by legislative enactments instead of by the combined action of the workers themselves, the result may merely be the reduction of wages, already insufficient, and sometimes complete exclusion from work...' (Lewenhak, 1977, p.69)

Her view was that trade union organisation was a better way of achieving improved working conditions than legislation. Her fears

of the effects of protective legislation were justified as has been shown by subsequent developments.

The ILO survey tackles the problem of general prohibition of night work and concludes that a general law covering all workers is more desirable than laws relating to sections of workers only. They comment that such a system,

'reduces to the minimum the disadvantage which special legislation is sometimes alleged to have of restricting the possibilities of employment for women.' (ILO, 1932, p.117)

However despite the ILO's awareness of the effects of protective legislation in terms of reproducing the sexual division of labour within the work force, no member country seems to have acted on this.

The justifications for protective legislation that have emerged from recent debates are clearly expressions of the ideology evident in the ILO survey. For instance, at the 1969 trades union congress Mrs. L.A. Matthews, delegate for the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, pointed out that,

'...if women are to be employed in industry, and more particularly women with domestic responsibilities, then the industries and workshops in which they work will have to adjust their hours and conditions to suit the needs of the women, and any attempt to worsen protective legislation which has been established over a long period of struggle by the trade union movement will be opposed.' (TUC report, 1969, p.514)

Taken as it stands this statement seems to be acceptable. But if it is put in the context of a bourgeois social formation where the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie is waged at every level the issue does not appear to be so simple. Within capitalist production any special treatment of a sector of the work force or any special conditions have to be defended or they will be used against the class interests of

the proletariat by the bourgeoisie.⁵ An ideological division within the working class between men and women is translated into a legal distinction and presented as restrictions on the hours or work, etc., of women as opposed to men. Thus, since women are prevented from doing such things as night work it can result in them not being employed, or employed at lower rates of pay than male workers.⁶ Clearly this type of distinction operates in the interests of the capitalist class.

Historically women workers involved in industries with bad working conditions were often opposed to the introduction of protective legislation because they would lose their jobs.

'...there was an outcry amongst women workers at being debarred

5 This situation is underlined by the following comment: 'Today only a minority of women are covered by protective legislation and many of these are exempted. The piece-meal nature of protection has been a characteristic since its inception in the 1840's. Women as a totality are not, and never have been, protected. This, together with the flexibility of what does exist, reveals that legislation first and foremost serves the needs of capital. It functions to prevent 'extreme exploitation' and to preserve women's role in society. In the latter respect it has an important ideological function, with a great deal of support, historically and at the present time, from trade unionists both male and female. The unions have aligned with the State in perpetuating a family ideology which uses the sexual division of labour to mask class interests.' (Campbell and Craig, p.13)

6 An ILO study reveals that the introduction of 3-shift systems on a large scale in some countries is leading to women losing their jobs because they are prevented from working such systems by protective legislation. '...3-shift working is tending to become more widespread mainly for economic reasons, and this is gradually leading to a predominance of men in the labour force. This has already been observed in certain countries, particularly in the textile industry.' (Maurice, 1975, p.8)

from jobs, especially those they were already in, however hard, ill-paid and dangerous they were. The Suffragists were able to organise a deputation to Parliament of pit-brow women against the mines being closed to them. They were able to organise a deputation of chain-makers to the Home Secretary in 1887,....against prohibiting the use of 5lb. hammers by women on health grounds.' (Ramelson, 1972, p.107)

To fight for protective legislation for women only meant that men continued to work under appalling conditions, and having introduced legislation to protect 'the weaker sex' further struggle for improved conditions was not immediately taken up. This illustrates the class nature of the ideology of a woman's place, although women workers were protected from bad working conditions by legislation there was no such protection for male workers. This meant that the capitalist class could continue to employ male workers without improving their working conditions thus minimising their labour costs. It also meant that women often had to take up less well paid jobs because the ones from which they were barred were the ones with the higher wage rates. Thus these ideological social relations prevented the working class from struggling for improved working conditions for men and women alike and instead divided women from men through affording them protective legislation.

Beatrice Webb argued that,

'women, since they are in a particularly weak position, need protection. This condition is such that laws are needed to prevent them in their thousands from entering into the most exploitative of contracts.' (Campbell and Craig, p.11)

Campbell and Craig comment that:

'...this view still leaves woman's domestic role unchallenged. In a sense, protective legislation helps to 'free' married women to cope with work in the home and in the factory, without being overworked to extremes.' (Campbell and Craig, p.11)

Clearly the legal instance in this case is upholding the ideological relations which constitute the bourgeois family and

contributing to the reproduction of the sexual division of labour within this ISA.

The divisive effects of protective legislation are not recognised by the trade union movement which still argues for the retention of protective legislation on the basis of woman's domestic role. In a Government report the TUC's position on protective legislation is summarised:

'The main argument put forward by the TUC representatives for keeping some restrictions is that because a large proportion of working women are married with not only house and husband but also often children to look after, they have in effect a multiplicity of jobs. Thus the pressures to which they are subject are likely to cause them to overwork against their better judgement. This may not only damage their health and increase the risk of accidents, but have serious effects on the well-being of the family. In the interest of society generally, it is argued, the state must intervene to protect women against the combined effect of those social and economic pressures.' (HMSO, 1969, p.7)

Clearly the ideology of the family and woman's role is not questioned here by the TUC; on the contrary it is used to justify protective legislation, and protective legislation in turn acts upon the work force in such a way as to maintain and reproduce these very ideological relations. The importance of woman's domestic role in the eyes of the TUC comes across in this comment:

'Women on night work still have to do their domestic work. It is argued that if they do this during the day they are likely to become overtired with a consequent risk of increased accidents. On the other hand, neglect of their domestic responsibilities may have serious social consequences in regard to family life, juvenile delinquency, etc.' (HMSO, 1969, p.7)

The TUC in arguing for the retention of protective legislation and justifying it in ideological terms is arguing for the retention of one of the means by which the forms of existence of the sexual division of labour within the work force are reproduced. On the other hand, the CBI does not mention woman's role within

the family in its arguments to abolish protective legislation. But the continuing existence of these ideological relations, with or without protective legislation, would of necessity reproduce sexual divisions of labour within the work force, although the forms that these divisions would take might be different if protective legislation did not exist.

'The CBI and nationalised industries representatives' view is that as regards conditions of employment women should receive the same treatment as men. They see no reason why women should not be allowed to decide for themselves what is good for them and, like men, have the freedom to determine by agreement with their employers, against the background of the collective bargaining system, what their hours of work should be.' (HMSO, 1969, p.6)

Again this statement taken out of the context of the realities of existence for women and men seems to be unquestionable. However, the choice which workers, male or female, have about the jobs they do is largely imaginary. The development of imperialism dictates the types of jobs that are available, and when economic necessity is the prime motivation for work and not any intrinsic interest of the job itself, then the job with the highest pay will be the one that is 'chosen'. The highest paying jobs usually involve shift work, so if women wanted to earn a decent wage they would be forced to take jobs involving shift work with all the consequences that this would have socially. At the present time 60% of the engineering industry is working in shifts and as Betty Lockwood points out:

'It is easy to say that most nightworkers choose to be so. But if the forecast 70% of the working population were required to work at night, the element of choice would be more apparent than real.' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.5)

Shift work has been found to have harmful social effects under the present laws governing it which restricts shift working by women though not by men. A study of the effects of shift work

on family life analysed

'the different roles and obligations of the worker as a social being, and more particularly as a husband and father. At the conclusion of their analysis, the authors /Mott, Mann, McLoughlin and Warwick/ state that shift work is a factor that does interfere with the reciprocal roles of husband and wife, and with their role as parents...The complaints most frequently made by the workers or their wives relate to mutual support of husband and wife, relations with the children, opportunities for normal family life, and disturbances in marital relationships and sexual life,...' (Maurice, 1975, p.51)

Maurice summarises the findings of various studies carried out on the social effects of shift working and concludes that,

'Most inquiries have arrived at conclusions that are more or less similar: shift work, especially when it involves night work or work on three rotating shifts, undoubtedly disturbs family life, whether in relation to the organisation of domestic life, relations within the family, marital relations or the role of the father in the education of the children.' (Maurice, 1975, p.52)

These disturbances occur when it is the man who is working shifts. Given the present role of women within the family the social consequences of women working shifts would be disastrous and in arguing from this premise the conclusions of the TUC are correct. However, these positions all take as their starting point the present ideological relations governing the position of women within the bourgeois family. The ideological relations remain intact both in terms of the arguments presented by the TUC in favour of the retention of protective legislation and, implicitly, in the arguments of the CBI. If protective legislation was abolished, as the CBI would like, then women would either take up jobs which involved shiftwork with all the social consequences outlined above, or if a woman decided that the needs of her family came first, she would be relegated, as at present, to the lower paid jobs. Thus the sexual division of labour within the labour force would still be maintained because of the continued

existence of woman's role within the family and material practices at other levels of the social formation which would continue to reproduce these ideological social relations.

The arguments put forward by the representatives of the capitalist class for repeal of protective legislation are all framed, not surprisingly, in terms of return on capital investment, higher productivity, and, of course, higher profits.

'...with the constant introduction of expensive new equipment shift working will no doubt continue to increase so as to maximise the economic return from the capital investment involved and indeed before committing capital to the purchase of such machinery employers want to be assured that shift working will be possible, so as to ensure an adequate return.' (HMSO, 1969, p.5)

The interest of the capitalist class in abolishing protective legislation clearly relates to the fact that women workers are often married, working part-time with little or no job security, and are 'easily manipulable by management which sees them as a flexible and readily available source of labour.' (Craig and Campbell, p.14) They go on to point out:

'As processes have become deskilled and automated, employers have historically preferred the cheap and flexible labour of women.' (Campbell and Craig, p.14)

As we have seen above there is a tendency to increase shift and night working to increase profits. As Marx pointed out in

Capital:

'To appropriate labour during all the 24 hours of the day is, therefore, the inherent tendency of capitalist production.' (Marx, 1974, I: p.245)

'The shift system is...more efficient than the overtime system because it ensures the machines are worked 24 hours a day and are thus more competitive. Shiftwork rates are cheaper since overtime rates can be bypassed. Needless to say, women shift workers are cheaper still.' (Campbell and Criag, p.14)

To substantiate this argument an example is given of an engineering

factory in Glasgow where the women workers were given the 'choice' of either agreeing to work on a rotating 3-shift system or accept redundancies. The women opted for the shift system, an exemption order was granted and the company's profits rose 'for the first time in many years.' (Campbell and Craig, p.14)

It is questionable whether shift work should be increased at all, for men or women, given its undesirable effects socially and in terms of the health of workers.⁷ It can be argued that the present protection enjoyed by women workers should be extended to include men, thus removing one form of the sexual division of labour by 'equalising' up rather than down. A T&GWU shop steward quoted by Campbell's and Craig's study, Muriel Browning said,

'We see it as very important to get the male work force backing us on this issue. We should explain to them that shift working only benefits the bosses... Nightwork in factories meets only the needs of profits... There's nothing

7 'Because our bodies operate on a 24 hour cycle, as a result of the regular alternation of day and night, workers on shift-work experience several detrimental physical effects, which cannot be rectified. Our body temperature is higher during the day and lowest at night and it has been demonstrated that this rhythm does not invert even if a worker is on a permanent night shift.

The effects of shift work are similar to the state of 'jet-lag' caused by crossing time-zones. Large companies insist that their executives take at least 24 hours rest after international flights so that they do not make too many costly errors in business meetings.

Sleep is a further problem. Numerous studies have pointed out that shiftworkers do not get an adequate amount of sleep; they often sleep one to two hours less than day workers. This is mainly due to noise (traffic, children) and to the body's excretion system operating on the basis of the natural cycle of human activity. This means that shiftworkers can be awakened two or three times to go to the toilet. Lack of sleep over a long period usually results in headaches, nervousness and dulling of alertness.

Shiftwork also affects the appetite. Many shiftworkers find it impossible to eat a large meal at night. This is especially the case for rotational shift systems where the worker's whole routine has to be changed either each week or fortnightly. The resulting effect of irregular and insufficient meals is that shiftworkers are eight times more prone to peptic ulcers than those not working shifts.' (Campbell and Craig, pp.1-2)

progressive about insisting that yet another section of workers accept the norms which men have allowed to be established over the years to their own disadvantage. I hope this will start men considering doing away with anti-social working hours.' (Campbell and Craig, p.18)

That the existence of protective legislation in this sphere does exclude women from certain jobs is pointed out by E. Tebbs.

The paper making industry,

'requires continuous process working in order to produce the end-product. If the mill is closed, on re-starting at 8 a.m. it will be 11 a.m. before good-quality paper is produced. So it becomes patently clear that only by continuous processing can the end-product, i.e. paper, be made.

Women are prevented from obtaining the craft skills in paper-making, due to the fact that shift work, including night work, is a pre-requisite for the job, and as the 1961 Factories Act states that women are generally not allowed to work at night in factories, it is logical for the employer to refuse women the opportunity of training for such skilled work. The conclusion I drew from this was that by "protecting" women from night work, the Act virtually precluded women from many skilled jobs in continuous process industries...thus preventing women from obtaining full equality.' (Tebbs. The Factories Acts and Women's Employment, p.1)

Here again the protective legislation is being used to exclude women from certain 'men's' jobs. The fact that exemption orders can be obtained relatively easily, which would permit women to work nights is ignored, conveniently, by management and (probably) the unions involved. The argument put forward in favour of removing protective legislation once again seems to be based on firm principles, but as we have seen above, to permit women to be employed on shift work would enable the employers to use them as a cheap, flexible and easily manipulable sector of the work force. And because of the differences which exist due to the sexual division of labour within the family the apparent equality gained by removing protective legislation would be based on a situation of differences and inequalities and would therefore

reproduce these inequalities and divisions in different forms.

As Campbell's and Craig's study points out:

'A shorter working week and a ban on anti-social shifts are progressive and should be universal demands. However as things stand, a proportion of women have achieved this 'stage' while men have not. Historically, men always more strongly unionised than women have negotiated their conditions, while women have been protected by law. The waiving of protection today would mean that many women would be accepting working conditions negotiated by men. The status quo with protection solely for women means that men lose out on standards. Audrey Wise referred to a discussion on protective legislation which she attended: "I was being told by a male trade unionist the usual things... 'wont't accept responsibility' and 'the economy demands it' and 'what about exports - we'll price ourselves out of the market'...and up got a woman...and said 'If the economy wants me to work night shift, then I want a different economy.'" (Campbell and Craig, p.19)

This points to the fact that many arguments for or against protective legislation are based not only on the ideology of a woman's domestic role and the need to maintain the bourgeois family, but also on the existence of the capitalist production process and the incessant drive of capital towards increased expansion and increased exploitation of the work force. The abolition of protective legislation would remove some of the limits placed on the exploitation of labour by capital; it would not remove the socio-sexual divisions that exist within the work force nor would it ensure that women attained equality of opportunity or any other equality within the work place.

Thus the position of the TUC on protective legislation flows from the role of trade unions within a bourgeois social formation.

As Lenin points out:

'The economic struggle is the collective struggle of the workers against their employers for better terms in the sale of their labour-power, for better living and working conditions.' (Lenin, 1961, C.W. vol.5: p.404)

This 'collective struggle' is carried out within the framework of capitalist production and indeed takes the existence of capitalist

relations of production as its starting point; it in no way challenges the capitalist system. Thus, for trade unions to argue for the retention of protective legislation using women's position within the family to justify its existence is consistent with their role within capitalism. They defend the limits that have been placed on the exploitation of labour by capital, but at the same time, because these limits operate within bourgeois divisions of labour, ensure the continued reproduction of these divisions.

Protective legislation does not, in fact, cover all spheres of employment of women.

'The only other spheres of employment, apart from that covered by the Factories Act, in which women's hours are statutorily regulated are shops and mines and quarries. Thus while a woman cannot normally be employed after 8 p.m. in a factory, if she becomes a nurse, a bus conductress or a waitress she can be employed until any hour of the night or, indeed, all night.' (HMSO, 1969, p.8)

The CBI argues on this basis that women's hours in factories ought not to be controlled either and the TUC argues that:

'if there is any illogicality the way to remove it...is to extend the protection to other spheres of employment, not take it away from those who have it.' (HMSO, 1969, p.9)

The anomalies also exist even in industries that are covered by the Factories Acts. Mr. S. Gretton of the Bakers' Union pointed out:

'The Bakers' Union throughout its 121 year history has consistently held the view that permanent night work is not in the interests of its members. The policy that has been followed has resulted in the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act, 1954. This legislation covers the male workers in the industry, the female workers being covered by the Factories Act. It is possible for the Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity to issue permits under the Factories Act that allow an employer to have females working on permanent night work. Thus females in our industry are subject to conditions to which the men are not under a trade union agreement.

I regret to say that 2 such permits have been issued, and

I regret much more that it was a Labour Minister, and a woman at that, who issued these 2 permits,' (TUC report, 1970, p.725)

Thus although protective legislation exists it does not cover all areas of female employment and even where it does it can be circumvented. So the protection that it actually affords women workers in practice is questionable. What it does is to provide a pretext for paying women lower rates of pay than men and, in other cases, not employing women at all. This is shown clearly by Betty Lockwood⁸ in a speech delivered to The Society of Occupational Medicine :

'For the Equal Opportunities Commission however, shiftwork and overtime in addition represent one of the prime methods of maintaining a large differential between men's and women's pay.' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.5)

This is done in a variety of ways, firstly by keeping women out of certain jobs using the existence of protective legislation as a justification for these discriminatory practices.

'...management on occasions is manipulating the protective legislation to oust women from jobs, or to stop them getting jobs, or to keep them on low pay without any legal remedy... Two nationalised industries have argued that the Factory Act should be changed, to allow girls as well as boys the opportunity to train at night when it is necessary. However, firstly, training at night is provided only when they become adults; secondly, it would appear that an exemption could then be obtained for women; and thirdly both industries refuse to apply for exemptions.' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.6)

She goes on to quote another example where women are not allowed to work more than 38 or 40 hours a week and the overtime on their jobs is given to the men to do instead. This is despite the fact that women can work up to 48 hours a week and could work up to 54 if an exemption order was applied for. Thus the existence of

8 Chairman (sic) of the Equal Opportunities Commission

protective legislation is used as a pretext to keep women's wages lower than men's and so maintain them as cheap labour.

In a report in the Guardian (4/8/77) it was pointed out that:

'In many countries women are denied the right to overtime which, the I.L.O. said, restricts "their chances of recruitment and promotion."' (Guardian, 4/8/77)

Betty Lockwood notes that it may be,

'the policies of the employer, sometimes with the union's agreement, that makes protective legislation a barrier, rather than the legislation itself.' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.7)

The I.L.O. report endorses this view:

'Many of the laws aimed at protecting women workers against the hazards of "unhealthy, dangerous, arduous or immoral jobs" are outdated and have instead become pretexts for discrimination...The U.N. agency said that present laws, although aimed at protecting women, often deny them equal chances to find and keep a job.' (Guardian, 4/8/77)

It is the very existence of such legislation which allows such practices to develop, and these practices perpetuate the sexual division of labour within the labour force and increase the men's wages at the expense of the women. This also has the effect of dividing the working class because then it is in the men's interests to prevent the women doing more overtime and the women would have to fight the men as well as the employers to be able to do so; thus one of the effects of protective legislation is to maintain women as a cheap sector of the work force.

Betty Lockwood gives examples of the way protective legislation has been used as a basis for developing pay structures which keep women's wages lower than men's.

'(a) overtime rates are often graduated, and higher rates of pay are given as more hours of overtime are worked, in many collective agreements and Wages Council Orders. But the highest overtime rates are only reached at the point where, under the Factories Act, women cannot do any more work' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.8)

Clearly the trade unions involved are also responsible for the maintenance of wage differentials between men and women, this is an example of other practices embodying the ideology of a woman's place which are looked at below (Ch.9). However this acts in the interests of the employers only in the long run even though the apparent result may be higher pay for the men. The existence of low pay for one sector of the work force acts so as to keep down other rates of pay, and low rates of pay for women are no exception. So what the male trade unionists are doing is, to use a time-worn phrase, cutting off their nose to spite their face!

Betty Lockwood continues:

'There have been instances, of doubtful legality, where women have not been paid during their meal breaks because they are compulsory, while men have been paid for their breaks, (even where these are also subject to other Factories Act regulations).' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.8)

Thus any differential treatment required is used by the employers as an excuse to pay less to the women workers, and this is tolerated or even encouraged by the male dominated trade unions because they too are subject to the ideology of a woman's place and reproduce the social relations through their practices even though it is not in their own long-term interests.

Yet another example is to be found in the knitting industry where,

'women work on the machines which are stopped during the compulsory breaks, which the women must all take together. Meanwhile, men mind other men's machines during their breaks and thus receive considerably enhanced pay.' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.9)

The division of work into "heavy" and "light" work is also 'generally a method of paying men more money.' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.10) There are also effects on the pay of men

and women workers in jobs which are injurious to health:

'...in one industrial tribunal case, men were specifically put on work with chemicals causing allergies, at a higher rate of pay, but not the women. Every now and then the men had to do the women's work to recover from the ill effects.

So, on heavy and uncongenial jobs, it would seem that neither men nor women are adequately protected: that in terms of health and safety women are probably better off, but in terms of money, men are. Here men need more protection, which should, in itself, close the pay gap by removing the reasons for discrimination.' (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1977, p.10)

Thus although protective legislation was struggled for by, and represents a gain for, the working class it operates as a pretext for keeping women's wages low and excluding them from certain jobs. The ideology on which the legislation is based and of which it is a representation operates so as to maintain the sexual divisions within the working class and to maintain women as a cheap sector of the work force.

In this chapter I have tried to show how legislation based on the ideological relations which restrict women to the home actively reproduces the sexual division of labour both within the work force and within the bourgeois family. Social Security legislation clearly defines women as primarily housewives who are dependent, economically, on their husbands, and who are the ones with the responsibility of looking after the home and family. The legal practices which flow from such legislation reproduce the sexual division of labour within the bourgeois family. Women are not expected to register for work if they have young children to look after but, if they are not living with a man, are entitled to supplementary benefits because they are fulfilling their social role. Only in exceptional circumstances are men permitted to stay at home to look after their children and qualify for benefits

without registering for work. A couple who are cohabiting are treated as a married couple, their resources are aggregated and treated as the man's. Thus the man is the economic head of the household in terms of this law even if the couple do not wish to conform to this relation. It has also been shown that unemployment among married women is hidden because of their lack of entitlement to supplementary benefit in their own right. Men, as head of the household, register as unemployed if they are out of work and receive benefits both for themselves and for their wives, if they are married. Women tend not to because it is not worth their while. Thus unemployed married women 'disappear' from the ranks of the unemployed back into their homes.

I have looked at social security legislation because in documents relating to it the ideology of a woman's place is unambiguously formulated and the social role of women is clearly defined, and in its practical application the role of women, and men, within the bourgeois family and the work force is actively reproduced. The maintenance of the sexual division of labour within the bourgeois family actively contributes towards the distribution of women within the work force. For instance, the fact that within the family women are the ones who have responsibility for child rearing means that when their children are young they have to stay at home or find a child minder or day nursery to look after them. Once their children are at school they have to find work to fit in with school hours. This greatly restricts a woman's choice of work and, as will be seen below, goes a long way towards explaining the very high proportion of women working part-time. It also means that women workers have to rely on their employers to be sympathetic to their need to have

time off to look after their children when they are sick, during the school holidays, etc., and this means that they are in a very weak position to fight for improvements in their pay or working conditions. Thus material practices within the bourgeois family affect the distribution of women within the work force and, since social security legislation clearly upholds the existing sexual division of labour within the family, it also contributes to the maintenance of sexual divisions within the work force.

In my examination of protective legislation the same ideological relations form the basis for the development of laws and practices. Protective legislation was fought for by the trade union movement, however the granting of protective legislation to women and the subsequent exclusion of women from certain jobs has divided women workers from men workers. Protective legislation is based on the ideological relations of the family and is formulated so as to protect women's "maternal function" and so as to preserve certain jobs for men. The ideology underlying the struggle for protective legislation was clearly that it is a man's duty to work and a woman's duty to stay at home and rear her husband's children. The effect of this legislation has been to exclude women from certain jobs, such as mining and quarrying, and prevent them, in the absence of exemption orders, from doing shiftwork and excessive overtime. These latter measures have resulted in the exclusion of women from certain sectors of the work force. The legislation in practice has meant that women have been excluded from certain jobs which have become 'men's' jobs, and it has stood instead of trade union organisation to protect women's rights. Thus the sexual division of labour within the work force is reproduced by the practices stemming from protective legislation.

The class nature of the ideology of a woman's place is beginning to come clear. Practices, reproducing ideological divisions within the working class both within the work force and within the family, ensure that the interests of male workers are divided from female workers and that these divisions continue to be reproduced. It is also clear that although protective legislation, as it exists now, reproduces divisions between men and women, any abolition of protective legislation which did not change the ideological social relations at other levels of the social formation, would not eliminate these divisions. Indeed, women would continue to provide a pool of cheap easily manipulable labour because they would still be the ones assigned responsibility for the home and family. Thus practices, within the family ISA and within the legal instance, reproduce the ideology of a woman's place and divide the working class along sexual lines.

Chapter 7

Government policy and women workers ✓

In this chapter I am going to examine government policy since the second world war in relation to women workers. For over two decades since 1945 there was an expanding labour force in Britain and a situation of full employment pertained. Women had worked in industry in large numbers during the war but on the cessation of hostilities many of the younger women gave up work to rear families. The need to find new sources of labour to exploit forced the government to adopt policies which would attract potential workers into the work force, and the only sizeable pool of potential workers that existed was provided by married women. What follows is an analysis of government policy since the war towards married women. In it I shall attempt to show that married women are regarded as an important source of reserve labour by the ruling class. I shall also show that although policies were developed to encourage women to enter the work force they were in no way aimed at changing their role within the family. On the contrary, the policies in practice ensure that the bourgeois family and woman's role within it are maintained while at the same time the labour force is augmented by married women. Thus the proliferation of part-time work for women and the opportunities for the exploitation of cheap female labour by employers has arisen, partly from government policies on women workers. It will be shown that these policies are firmly rooted in the ideology of a woman's place even though they are aimed at encouraging married women to enter

the work force, and that in practice they have affected the distribution of women in the work force and also reproduced the ideological divisions within it.

I shall also look briefly at tax laws to show how they are related to the need for married women to work and to underline the fact that women are regarded as secondary, and temporary, workers in the work force and their prime social duty is always seen as being in the home.

Immediately after the war women were needed in the work force because of an overall shortage of labour, but despite the rapid increase in the numbers of women going out to work and their important role in the labour force married women were not and are still not seen as permanent members of the work force in the same way as are men. In discussions of the expected manpower shortages which had been a feature of all the post-war years married women were still regarded as a source of labour which was of a temporary nature and had to be encouraged to enter the work force as and when the vagaries of the capitalist production cycle required.

'There are also some (among old people and married women, for example) who might be willing to enter or remain in the working population in certain circumstances.' (The National Plan, 1965. P.37).

Underlying this statement is the assumption that married women are not a permanent part of the work force, their job lies elsewhere.

As well as distinguishing between male and female workers in general, government policies make a distinction between single and married female workers. The former are seen as workers and as potential married women but the latter are

always seen in terms of their role within the family, this takes precedence over everything else.

An examination of the economic surveys and forecasts carried out by the government since the war clearly reveals that married women are a very important part of the reserve labour force.¹ Because their prime job is that of wife and

1 '...it is capitalistic accumulation that constantly produces in the direct ratio of its own energy and extent, a relatively redundant population of labourers, i.e. a population of greater extent than suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital and therefore a surplus-population.

'Considering the social capital in its totality, the movement of its accumulation now causes periodical changes, affecting it more or less as a whole, now distributes its various phases simultaneously over the different spheres of production....in all spheres, the increase of the variable part of capital, and therefore of the number of labourers employed by it, is always connected with violent fluctuations and transitory production of surplus-population, whether this takes the more striking form of the repulsion of labourers already employed, or the less evident but not less real form of the more difficult absorption of the additional labouring population through the usual channels.' (Marx 1974, I: pp. 590-1).

Women constitute part of this relative surplus population and through the ideological relations which tie them to the home their existence as such is masked. It is because of their 'maternal' functions that they stay at home, not because the capitalist production process requires, for its very existence, a relative surplus population - or so the story goes.

'...if a surplus labouring population is a necessary product of accumulation or of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus population becomes, conversely, the lever of capitalistic accumulation, nay, a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production. It forms a disposable industrial reserve army, that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost. Independently of the limits of the actual increase of population, it creates, for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital, a mass of human material always ready for exploitation.' (Marx 1974, I: p.592). For a more detailed examination of this phenomenon see chapter 8.

mother they do not need to go out to work, and indeed do not register as unemployed when they don't as is noted in the 1965

Plan:

'...in all regions there are some people, especially among older people and married women, who may not be registered as unemployed but would welcome the opportunity of a job.' (The National Plan, 1965. P.38).

Thus when they are not going out to work they do not swell the unemployment figures because they are performing their 'main' job within the family, but in times of labour shortage the government relies on married women to enter the work force and fill the gaps that the men and single women cannot fill. As will be seen, the means that government policy envisages and recommends to achieve a high participation by married women in the labour force does not undermine their prime role in the family, on the contrary the practices at work and government policy all act so as to maintain and reproduce these ideological social relations. Another effect of this, as will be seen later, is to maintain women in the low paid and badly organised sectors of the work force so reproducing the divisions between male and female workers and ensuring a supply of cheap and easily manipulable labour. These effects are not, of course, premeditated in any conspiratorial way but are the divisive effects of bourgeois ideology and constitute part of the relations of power and domination which maintain the bourgeoisie as the ruling class.

The White Paper on Employment Policy which the Government published in 1944 has as one of its main aims 'the maintenance of a high and stable level of employment after the war' (Cmd. 6527, 1944. P.1). Even at that stage such a policy appeared

feasible because of the demand for goods and services. The paper states:

'Though there will be risk of unemployment due to the dislocation involved in the gradual change from war to peace, the total man-power available will be insufficient to satisfy the total demand for goods and services.' (Cmnd 6527, 1944. P.1).

The changeover from wartime production to peacetime conditions was envisaged as bringing about a certain dislocation in the labour market and the necessity of moving many workers employed in munitions etc., into different industries, both to make way for the returning members of the Armed Forces and as a consequence of the different requirements of peacetime production.

'At the present time we have about 23 million men and women in the Armed Forces and in gainful employment - an increase of $4\frac{1}{2}$ million since 1939. There has been an enormous transfer of man-power to the Armed Forces, Civil Defence and the munitions industries, and, within industry a very large change-over from civilian production and services to more direct war needs....During the transition from war to peace these movements will be reversed. There will be both a reduction in the total manpower employed and a substantial movement from the Forces and war work to civilian production and services...' (Cmnd 6527, 1944 P.6).

In this statement there is no mention of women workers at all despite the very large numbers that were employed on war work. It was assumed, and correctly, that the required reduction in the numbers in the labour force would be achieved by women returning to their homes and giving up their jobs to the men being discharged from the Armed Forces.

'In June, 1943, the peak year for the employment of women in Great Britain, approximately $7\frac{3}{4}$ million women between the ages of 14-59 were occupied in civil life or in the armed forces. Since 1943 the number of women in employment has decreased steadily. In June, 1947, just

over 6 million women were occupied, a decrease of $1\frac{3}{4}$ million.' (Thomas, 1948. P.6).

The decrease in women workers, according to the survey just quoted, came from single women leaving industry to get married and young married women leaving in order to return to the home and have families. Many older married women in fact stayed in the labour force after the war which meant that

'the average age of women in employment in 1947 was much higher than the average age of women in employment in 1943'. (Thomas, 1948. P.7).

The type of jobs that were left by women workers is also analysed by the survey.

'It has already been shown that half the women who were unoccupied at the time of the inquiry had been employed at some time between 1939 and June, 1947. An analysis of the industries in which they were engaged can be made....the unoccupied women had been employed in Light Engineering, in Other Manufactures and by the National Government.' (Thomas, 1948. P.14).

Thus a large proportion of the women who had returned home after the war had been engaged on specifically war work often in jobs which were considered 'men's' jobs. They had left industry at the end of the war. By comparison those women who had continued working were employed in the more traditional 'female' jobs such as Clothing, Boots and Shoes and Personal Services.

The Economic Survey for 1947 also comments on the reduced numbers of women working since the war,

'The total employed population at the end of 1946 was some 2 millions less than in June 1945, partly because women had left industry, partly because many demobilised men and women were still on release leave and partly because there were more unemployed. But the total was still over 1 million greater than in June 1939, mainly because of the big fall in unemployment' (Economic Survey, 1947. P.9).

However the loss of women from industries where they were needed

as well as from those where they had been replaced by men contributed to the acute labour shortage that the government was now facing. It was imperative to increase the labour force and to alter its structure and distribution, many older industries were desperately short of labour while certain regions of the country contained pockets of relatively high unemployment. In order for government objectives for production to be reached

'a larger labour force than can be expected to be available unless special measures are taken to increase it.' (Economic Survey, 1947. P.27).

was required.² Thus the government introduced certain measures to increase the labour force and one of the sources of labour that they wanted to tap was women. Hence one of the 'special measures' was an appeal to women to 'enter industry'.

'The prospective labour force of 18,300,000 men and women at December 1947 falls substantially short of what is needed to reach the national objectives. The Government therefore appeals to women who are in the position to do so to enter industry. By doing so they will actively help in the national effort.' (Economic Survey, 1947.P.27).

The survey goes on to list the devices to be used to enable women to fulfil their domestic roles and contribute to the 'national effort' outside the home. The manufacturing industries, such as textiles, where women have traditionally formed a large proportion of the work force were very short of labour. The Government stressed that women should enter the

2 'The labour force in civil employment at the end of 1946 was 18,122,000. Unless special measures are taken to increase it, this force is unlikely to exceed 18,300,000 in 1947. It will reach this level at about the middle of the year. In terms of total man-power, the gains to civil employment from subsequent demobilisation will be offset by the raising of the school-leaving age and other losses to the labour force.' (Economic Survey, 1947. P.27).

'under-manned (sic) industries such as textiles. To encourage this, these industries will need to adjust their conditions of work to suit, as far as possible, the convenience of women with household responsibilities and to accept, as they did in the war, the services of women on a part-time basis.' (Economic Survey, 1947. P.28).

Thus we find the government, faced with a situation of a shortage of labour, encouraging women to go out to work and employers to provide part-time work for these women so that they can still run a home and bring up a family as well. Provision of child care facilities is not one of the special measures proposed to release women for industrial employment, such provision would imply that women were to become a permanent part of the work force with the same expectations and responsibilities as male workers. Government employment policy clearly regards married women as a very important source of reserve labour which has to be tapped at certain periods in Britain's development without in any way interfering with the domestic role of women within the family.

It is interesting to note that the other social groups seen as suppliers of the necessary labour were old people and foreign workers.

'The Government also appeals to those who can do so to contribute to the national task by staying on at their work instead of retiring... The need to increase the working population is not temporary, it is a permanent feature of our national life.

'Foreign labour can make a useful contribution to our needs. The old arguments against foreign labour are no longer valid. There is no danger for years to come that foreign labour will rob British workers of their jobs.' (Economic Survey, 1947. P.28).

It is important to note that in the recent economic crisis it is precisely these categories of worker which have been the ones to

be blamed for the high unemployment, and married women and people near retiring age have been pointed to as the ones for whom a job is not essential and who are expendable sections of the work force - this will be returned to later but here I just wish to underline the importance (to the bourgeoisie) of maintaining woman's role within the family. It means that although women always have and always will work outside the home they are not regarded as having a right to work or a duty to work in the same way that men are, jobs are seen as essential for men for not for women. Thus women unemployed become invisible, they have their job in the home and therefore they don't need to go out to work and are not expected to by the various legal and ideological apparatuses which define their position within the family. On the other hand an unemployed man is not fulfilling his duty to his wife and family or to society at large and high male unemployment rates present a problem to government.

On 1st June 1947 an official appeal was made to women.

'Women now form the only large reserve of labour left, and to them the Government are accordingly making a special appeal.

'The Government have opened a campaign for the recruitment of women in those districts where the shortage of labour is most acute. The campaign was inaugurated by the Minister of Labour and National Service in a broadcast talk...' (Ministry of Labour Gazette, 1947. P.183).

This talk was summarised in the Ministry of Labour Gazette and the temporary nature of the labour shortage and the need for high female participation in the work force was stressed.

'First, he was not asking women to do jobs usually done by men, as had been the case during the war. Second, the labour shortage was temporary, and women were being asked to take a

job only for whatever length of time they could spare, whether full-time or part-time. Third, he was not appealing to women with very young children, although for those who wanted to volunteer, and who had children a little older, there were in many places day nurseries and creches. Fourth, the appeal was not addressed to those whose domestic responsibilities were so great that they could not do an outside job.' (Ministry of Labour Gazette, June 1947. P.183).

Clearly work outside the home was not to interfere with woman's prime role as wife and mother and this was to take preference in all cases. However the labour shortage was so acute that child care facilities, which had been widely available during the war, would be available in certain cases. The report goes on to mention that,

'National publicity for the campaign, through references and advertisements in the national newspapers, broadcasts, film trailers, etc., aims at educating the public into a realisation of the need for manning the important basic industries.' (Ministry of Labour Gazette, 1947. P.183).

It is also significant that the rigid division of jobs into men's work and women's work was to be maintained and it was seen as desirable that this should be so. This strict sexual division of the labour market meant that women continued to be excluded from jobs traditionally held by men such as engineering. Instead they entered the newly developing tertiary sectors of industry, as well as the traditional women's sectors, where there was no established sexual division of labour and also no strong union organisation which often entailed exclusion of women from certain jobs through agreements between male dominated trade unions and employers. Where trade union organisation was strong there was often opposition to provision of part-time jobs, this opposition existed so as to protect the jobs of full-timers

and not to undercut wage rates etc., but it had the effect of excluding women workers from certain sectors of industry and therefore reproducing the sexual division of labour.

The areas of industry which were traditionally male occupations such as coal mining, shipbuilding etc., remained critically short of labour and these were areas of the labour market which women workers did not enter. In some of the traditional female manufacturing industries there was also an acute shortage of labour³ and the government aimed to encourage women workers to enter these industries by providing not only part-time work but social facilities such as canteens and nurseries.

'The Government has already embarked on a large-scale campaign, particularly in the cotton industry, to stimulate recruitment. Efforts are being made to improve amenities in the mills by a freer issue of licences for canteens, day nurseries etc.' (Economic Survey, 1948. P.33).

Clearly it was women workers that were wanted in the textile industry and this presented the Government with problems because of women's domestic responsibilities and because of the secondary nature of any job that they take up outside the home. Provision of canteens, nurseries etc., was an attempt to overcome the barriers faced by women who want to go out to work and these sorts of measures tend to remove the responsibility

3 'Since the September targets were fixed, the shortage of steel...has required a considerable reduction in our forecast of exports of vehicles, machinery and other metal goods. To offset as much as possible of this loss, a detailed examination has recently been made of the possibility of increasing textile exports even beyond the September target level for end-1948...The most immediate need is to increase and redeploy the labour force. Though maintenance and the provision of certain types of new plant call for substantial expenditure, provision for this has been made in the capital development programmes...Both in cotton and wool marked increases in output can be obtained from improved productivity through better deployment of labour and a levelling up of efficiency towards that achieved by the best firms...When every allowance is made for greater efficiency, a large increase of numbers will also be necessary.' (Economic Survey, 1948. P.32).

of child rearing etc., from the family. However, as has been said above and was stressed by the Minister of Labour, such measures were only temporary. The special difficulties of attracting women workers is mentioned further on in the survey and again the rigid sexual division of labour operating within the work force is evident:

'In order to reach the man-power targets laid down for agriculture, coal-mining and textiles, there will have to be a considerable movement of workers from one industry to another. Such transfers raise serious difficulties of accommodation where geographical as well as individual mobility is involved, and these difficulties are greatly enhanced when (as in the case of textiles) women rather than men are required.' (Economic Survey, 1948. P.43).

In the appeal to women the previous year it was stated that,

'so far as possible, it is the Government's desire that women should go to jobs within reach of their homes; but, if necessary and to the extent to which accommodation is available, facilities can be given for transfers from one part of the country to another.' (Ministry of Labour Gazette, 1947. P.183).

Clearly the fabric of family life was to be preserved while women were needed, 'temporarily', in the work force. In fact the recommended provision of part-time work for women which was the preferred way of inducing married women to re-enter the work force, ensures that women are seen as temporary members of the work force and are treated as such by employers and trade unions alike, the implications of this are dealt with below.

The Economic Survey the following year (1948) comments on the success of the Government's recruitment campaign amongst women:

'When the Economic Survey for 1947 was written,

it was expected that the total working population would fall substantially during the year. In the event the working population on balance changed little; it fell steadily in the first nine months of the year but the campaign to bring additional women into industry, together with the Control of Engagement Order in October, resulted in a considerable recovery during the autumn.' (Economic Survey, 1948. P.58).

In the same year a government social survey⁴ was commissioned to examine the 'problems of recruiting women to Industry' in which women's attitudes to work were examined as well as the measures which would encourage more women to enter the work force. The apparent 'spontaneity' of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home is strongly evident in the findings of the survey.

'It would appear that, on the whole, women are against the employment of women in general or are dubious about it because of the idea that a woman's place is in the home and her first duty is toward that home...An appeal to women to work has, therefore, to take into account this attitude, a deep-seated one, as well as the real difficulties which unoccupied women face when they consider taking up work.' (Thomas, 1948. P.18).

Thus government policy, i.e., that of creating conditions whereby women can carry out their domestic duties and participate in the work-force, is based on the same ideology as that 'spontaneously' held by the women themselves who regard a woman's first duty as being to her home and family. However, the Social survey recommended that this attitude could be changed through provision of facilities such as nurseries, laundries etc.

'By helping them to overcome their difficulties, therefore, by attention to nurseries, shopping, laundering and home-helps, by showing that a working woman need not neglect her home, it may be possible to effect a radical alteration in attitudes as well as in the numbers prepared to work.' (Thomas, 1948. P.18).

4 Women and Industry: G. Thomas, March 1948.

The provision of part-time work was also recommended and it was estimated that there was a

'total of 900,000 women who might be persuaded to take up work if part-time, as well as full-time jobs, were available and if a sufficient number of nurseries could be provided.' (Thomas 1948. P.4).

Clearly the government took up certain of these recommendations and not others. It did not expand the provision of day nursery facilities - except in cases such as the textile industry where the situation was desperate - but recommended provision of part-time work for women and special provisions so as to enable them to go on meeting their domestic commitments. The case of the textile industry is interesting and highlights the fact that women were a supply of cheap labour.

'The Textiles and Clothing Industries have for long employed a high proportion of women, and the localisation and specialisation of many of them has meant that in the areas in which they are placed a tradition of work for both married and single women has grown up; a tradition reinforced in the case of cotton, at least, by the low wages paid to men.' (Thomas 1944. P.16).

These low wages meant that women had to be found to work in the textile industries, not because it was considered 'women's work' but because no men would work in it for the rates of pay which the women worked for. Thus to induce men to take up this work would have meant a sharp increase in labour costs, it was cheaper to continue employing women on this traditional women's work despite the difficulties of recruiting an adequate number. Another recommendation of the 1948 Survey to induce women to go out to work was that women's wages should be raised in industries where they were badly needed. Money was one of the major reasons women gave for going out to work - not surprisingly -

and the survey suggests that,

'...it is possible that the present level of women's wages is not high enough to give them an incentive to overcome these difficulties. [The difficulties of going out to work and coping with their domestic responsibilities]. It follows that wage levels in particular industries and areas where women are badly needed by industry might be examined and some estimate made of increases that might be necessary to attract married women to industry ...' (Thomas, 1948. P.4).

This is another recommendation that was not acted upon by the Government. Clearly the measures which would make it easier for women to enter the work force while at the same time maintaining their role within the home were the ones that the government took up, such things as the provision of part-time work and flexible shopping hours. The measures which would involve government expenditure and a transformation of women's role within the family, such as provision of day nursery facilities, or would undermine the existence of a cheap sector of the labour force, such as the recommendation of increased wages, were not acted upon. Thus the role of women within the home and their role as a cheap and unorganised sector of the work force were maintained through the action of government policy. This position, of helping women fulfil their 'prime' role as wife and mother, was based on the wishes of the women themselves, whose ideology appears spontaneous and therefore natural but is in reality a result of the ideological relations and practices within which they live.

During the next three years unemployment continued to be low but the acute labour shortage of the immediate post-war years did not continue. The Economic surveys for these years reflect this situation in that they stress the need for a

redistribution of the work force rather than an absolute increase in numbers to cope with the changing structure of the British economy and different regional requirements.

In 1951 rearmament was begun because of the so-called Soviet threat and the need for the British bourgeoisie to defend itself from foreign (i.e. 'communist') attack. This, in turn, meant that the labour force was once again required to increase to fulfil the production targets necessitated by the decision to rearm, and again we find recommendations being made as to the employment of married women. They had left the labour force in large numbers after the war and their participation in the work force was still much lower than during the war years. The Economic Survey for 1951 reviews the development of the labour force since the war:

'During the war the total working population (in the sense of all those at work or offering themselves for work) was considerably increased. In the struggle for national survival many older persons, who would otherwise have retired, stayed on, and many women left their homes for work in factories and on the land. When war came to an end, the old pattern was partly restored, though many more women remained in industry in the new conditions of full employment. Between June 1945 and June 1948 the male working population declined by over 300,000 and the female by 1,000,000... Since then there has been a very gradual rise amounting to about 1½%.

'The total will probably continue to grow during the next year or so, but there is no prospect that it can be forced to grow much faster than it has recently, short of pressures or compulsions entirely unacceptable in peacetime. Nevertheless, something can be done to encourage more people to go to work, particularly those who are unable to work the normal factory day. Hours of work can in suitable cases be adjusted to allow more women with domestic duties to work in industry.'
(Economic Survey, 1951. P.9).

Clearly an increase in the labour force necessitated by the

development of the economy must not be implemented in such a way as to change the ideological relations constituting the family. Thus government policy towards married women workers continued to be formulated so as to preserve their role within the family while at the same time enabling them to participate in the work force and relieve the labour shortage. In this way the bourgeois ideological practices which divide the working class along sexual lines were maintained and reproduced. Central to these policies was the preservation of the bourgeois family as the child rearing unit of bourgeois society with all that this implies for the place of women within this Ideological state apparatus. Thus, even though women work outside the home they are not 'workers' as are men but are 'housewives' first and foremost and are treated as such at all levels of the British social formation. The ideological practices, of which government policy on employment is one example, ensure that these socio-sexual divisions are reproduced despite tendencies and ideologies which oppose the dominant ideology of a woman's place being in the home. Some of these emphasise the importance of women workers to the British economy as evidence that contradicts the notion that a woman's first responsibility is to the home. However there is no contradiction between the two statements, women are an essential part of the British labour force, both in absolute terms insofar as large numbers of women work, and also in so far as they constitute an important reserve pool of labour, a cheap section of the labour force etc., but they also fulfil their duties as wife and mother within the family ideological state apparatus and government policies are aimed at maintaining this function as the prime social duty of women.

The combined effects of the post-war labour shortage and government policies towards women workers was studied in a particular factory in Bermondsey, Peek Freans. In Married Women Working (Jephcott, Seear, Smith, 1962) it is noted that Peek Freans

'until the war, had set its face against the married woman employee, to the point of recruiting only single girls and of dismissing them on marriage. Labour shortage in the war years, continuing into the 1950's had forced a drastic revision, not only of the firm's recruiting policy, but also of its overall organisation of woman-power...the dwindling number of Peek Frean's full-time women workers (now married as well as single) had to be supplemented by women prepared to work part-time only. Their insistence on part-time work was a signal that, in the wife's eyes, work took second place to home.' (Jephcott et al, 1962. P.27).

The proportion of married women in the Peek Frean labour force increased until

'by the middle fifties 82% of Peek Frean's factory women employees were married, and of all operatives 46% were women engaged on a part-time basis.' (Jephcott et al, 1962. P.67).

Thus the combination of acute labour shortages and government recommendations on the provision of part-time working had resulted, in this case, in a transformation of the work force and work patterns. However this organisation of women working does not challenge the ideology of a woman's place being in the home but is in fact dependent upon it. This is shown by the attempts of the firm to fit in with their employees' domestic commitments.

'The firm offered a choice of hours to attempt to meet the varying domestic circumstances of married women who were only prepared to work part-time.' (Jephcott et al, 1962. P.67).

This study also reveals the 'temporary' status of married women workers:

'If it was true that very little chance existed that married women - and especially those working part-time - would ever become long-term employees, then management would have little incentive to regard them as an investment and it would probably choose to employ them only for jobs in which a frequent turnover was relatively unimportant.'
(Jephcott et al, 1962. P.69).

The authors point out that this prophecy could be self-fulfilling in so far as the job might be unsatisfactory precisely because of the attitude of management and that the women would have little incentive to remain in such a job. But it also underlines the fact that the maintenance of woman's role within the family means that it is very difficult for women to have the same commitment to the job as a man or a single woman because of the other demands and duties that have to be met by women within the family.⁵ It also underlines the fact that women workers, particularly married women workers, are regarded as an unstable and therefore 'temporary' sector of the work force. This is not only reinforced by the existence of their role within the home but also through practices within the work place by both unions and management.

In the 1952 Economic Survey the Government again stresses the need to encourage more married women to return to work and even makes recommendations that women be employed on so-called men's work.

'In particular, industry should be prepared to consider in appropriate cases engaging women for work which would normally be done by men.'
(Economic Survey, 1952. P.38).

5 'Working housewives, faced with this accumulation of tasks, often resolve never to leave home again. No wonder it is so difficult to interest married women in social reform. The modern demand for a 40-hour week seems like a joke to the wife and mother who is lucky if hers is only a 70-hour week.' (Mitchell, 1977. P.162).

But in the following survey after a drop in production and a corresponding fall in employment it was reported that,

'Over most of the year the easing of the demand for labour affected women more than men since the recession was most severe in textiles and clothing; by the end of the year however most of the additional unemployment and the main drop in vacancies compared with December 1951 was on the men's side.' (Economic Survey, 1953. P.42).

This cycle of acute labour shortages and then a drop in the demand for labour characterised the post-war years and the Government's policy towards women workers changed accordingly. Lack of work for women never appears as a problem, they can be called out of the home when the requirements of the capitalist production process dictates and when they are no longer needed they can return to the 'domestic duties'. In the 1957 Economic Survey it is noted that,

'The three years preceding 1956 were marked by an expanding working population, an increasing demand for labour, and very low and declining unemployment. In 1956, however, there was some slackening in the demand for labour.'

It goes on,

'The number of women in civil employment fell by 70,000...' (Economic Survey, 1956. P.18).

And the role of married women as a reserve supply of labour is underlined by this observation:

'The reduction in the pressure of demand in 1956 alleviated the shortage of labour, which had become intense in 1955, but did not cause any serious increase in unemployment. The easing in the labour market showed chiefly in the absence of growth in the labour force. There is likely to have been a reduction in the number of married women at work.' (My emphasis. Economic Survey, 1957. P.35).

In the 1959 survey the same phenomenon is commented upon when discussing unemployment figures:

'The rise in the number of people registered as unemployed during 1958 was smaller than the fall in the numbers at work because many of those who left their jobs were married women and elderly people who decided not to seek further employment.'
(Economic Survey, 1959. P.16).

Here the effect of the economic dependence of married women on their husbands in terms of the Social Security laws is clear. The real fluctuations in employment are masked and unemployment figures are kept down. This has important political effects in terms of the support that governments get from the trade union movement and the population in general, high unemployment figures lead to unpopularity for the government of the day. The fluctuations in the number of married women going out to work are again underlined in the Economic Survey for 1960 where, once more, there is an increase.

'The increase of 300,000 in civil employment between the 4th quarters of 1958 and 1959 was accompanied by a fall of 60,000 in the numbers wholly unemployed; the rest came from the natural growth of the population, from a rise in the number of married women going out to work and from the continued run down in the strength of the armed forces.'
(Economic Survey, 1960. P.23).

From this time onward married women constituted an increasing proportion of the work force and part-time working had become a widespread phenomenon particularly in the newly developed service industries which needed to attract women workers as they were the only sizeable pool of labour available.

The 1962 Economic Survey noted that

'The number of women in employment increased substantially, by 201,000, which suggests that many more married women were returning to work.'
(Economic Survey, 1962. P.24).

It also observes that

'...a large part of the growth in employment during

the past two years has consisted of categories of worker (for example immigrants, school leavers and women, including many working part-time) who have gone largely into the service industries, where output is difficult to measure, or whose contribution to production is for various reasons bound to be limited.' (Economic Survey, 1962. P.21).

The 'various reasons' are not specified but clearly one of the reasons that married women's contribution to production is considered 'limited' by government is that their domestic responsibilities take prime place in their scale of priorities and their commitment to work outside the home is therefore supposedly not comparable to that of a male worker.

In the National Plan in 1965 the government was still trying to encourage more women to enter the work force⁶ and announced that they had,

'commissioned a sample enquiry into the present pattern of women's employment and of the conditions under which women not now working outside their homes would be ready to take such work. Further consideration will then be given to ways of making it easier for those married women who wish to do so to take paid employment.' (The National Plan, 1965. P.39).

The National Economic Development Council also expresses the opinion that it should be made easier for married women to go out to work while maintaining woman's domestic role within the family.

'In the last 10 years the working population has grown much faster than the total population between the ages of 15 and 65. The faster rate of growth can be entirely accounted for by the rise in the number of married women in employment. This rise has taken place through changes in social habits and in response to the demand for labour, without any special measures (?) being

⁶ 'Government will examine ways of helping married women and older workers who wish to do so, to take or to remain in paid employment. Employers should take steps to make more use of these additional sources of labour.' (National Plan, 1965. P.19).

taken to encourage it. The official population projections assume that by 1966 the activity rate of married women up to the age of 59 will be about 40%. This figure is substantially below the activity rate of single women in this age group which is 79%. Social considerations are involved and many married women have family responsibilities but it is reasonable to suppose that the activity rate of married women would be higher if special measures were taken to make it easier for married women wishing to do so to enter employment. These measures would have to take into account the desire of many married women, for domestic reasons, to take only part-time work. Such measures might include vocational guidance and training, or refresher courses for those returning to employment; and the arrangement of special shifts or hours by employers to meet the convenience of married women working part-time.' (Growth of the UK Economy 1961-66. N.E.D.C. 1963. P.21).

The effect of maintaining the ideological relations within the family and providing part-time work for women which will fit in with the place assigned to them within this ISA is to ensure that women workers remain a cheap, easily manipulable and badly organised sector of the work force reproducing the sexual divisions which hinder the unity of the working class.

Although the government initiated a survey of women's employment it chose to ignore some of its major findings. The survey

'was carried out by the Government Social Survey on behalf of the Minister of Labour. Its main purpose was to elucidate the reasons why women, particularly married women, enter or do not enter the labour market and to what extent their decision might alter with circumstances. Secondly, it sought to find out how far women in employment are employed to their full capacity, with regard to the hours worked and to their qualifications and training potential.' (Hunt, 1968. P.1).

One of the major findings of the survey was that in order for more women to enter the work force child-care facilities would have to be provided:

'It can be concluded that there will be a greater

need in the future for the provision of facilities for caring for children of working mothers. More mothers are likely to be at work and the grandmothers of the future are also more likely to be at work so that the present pattern of within family care will no longer be possible.' (Hunt, 1968. P.16).

However the Government has not implemented this recommendation with the provision of more day nurseries, in fact the number of day nurseries has steadily decreased since the war despite the increasing numbers of married women entering the work force. Once again this illustrates that married women's work must be fitted in around their domestic responsibilities and this ideology of a woman's role in the home governs all the government's policies on women and work. It also finds representation within the policies of the TUC. At the 1975 Congress one delegate pointed out,

'Point 9 of the TUC charter of aims says: "Unions say employers must accept the need for women to work the hours which will enable them to meet their commitments as mothers or to assist them to care for their elderly dependants." In that statement is implicit the basic premise that so many women are responsible for the care of kids, home, family and dependants, and this together with the lack of any clear policy for giving women control over their own fertility, can lead to an acceptance of traditional attitudes as to women's position in the home. If we do not challenge these attitudes it can lead to the perpetuation of the view that women's position in employment is secondary, it is pin money, it is secondary income, thereby perpetuating the present position.' (TUC report, 1975, P.412. Miss J. Drake. CPSA).

A survey carried out in 1973 and published in the November 1973 Department of Employment Gazette illustrates the increase in part-time working done by women since 1950.

'The number of women in the labour force has increased by more than 1½m over the last 20 years, and an increasing proportion of them are working on a part-time basis. Most of the increase in female employment in the last 10 years has been due to the increase in numbers working part-time,

with relatively little change in the numbers working full-time.' (Department of Employment Gazette, 1973. P.1088).

That industry responded to the labour shortage and expressed government policy by employing women on a part-time basis is reflected in the trends in the manufacturing sector, in this sector,

'female employment declined over this period, [but] the numbers working part-time increased. This points to a fairly large scale shift towards the creation of part-time jobs as industry adapts itself to attract increasing numbers of housewives into the labour force.' (Department of Employment Gazette, 1973. P.1088).

That part-time working is strongly linked to married women is indicated by the fact that over 85% of all part-time female workers in 1966 were married, thus, marriage and the 'domestic duties' that go with it clearly restrict a woman's employment prospects and, conversely, if a woman is not married she is unlikely to take up part-time work. The correlation between responsibilities to children and part-time work is revealed by the following figures:

'...whilst only 37% of working married women with no dependent children work part-time this percentage increases with the number of children to 53% with one child, 62% with two children, and 67% with five or more children. As the number of children increases the number of married women involved decreases, as would be expected, and also the proportion of them who are economically active decreases.' (Department of Employment Gazette, 1973. P.1092).

Clearly the heavier the responsibilities of women in terms of child rearing the less likelihood there is of them entering the work force.

The ideology of a woman's place which underlies the policies and practices towards married women working maintains this sector of the work force as temporary. Even though married

women as a whole form a sizeable proportion of the work force and are a permanent feature of it, the work pattern (i.e. leaving a job on the birth of the first child and then returning usually to part-time work when the youngest child is old enough to start school) forced on individual women ensures that all women (because they are all potential wives and mothers) are regarded as temporary workers. This is reflected in 'Projections of the working population: 1967-81' (Employment and Productivity Gazette March 1969). This article comments that

'many of the increasing numbers of married women in the working population do not work on a regular or on a full-time basis...Consequently...the number of full-time female workers is likely to decrease ...between 1961 and 1966 the percentage of the economically active population shown as working part-time increased...from 24% - 31% for all females, from 40% to 45% for married females.'
(Employment and Productivity Gazette, 1969. P.214).

This article also recognises the usefulness of married women as a reserve of labour.

'The movement into and out of the working population particularly among young persons, married females and older persons, is influenced by the pressure of demand for labour.' (Employment and Productivity Gazette, 1969. P.215).

This 'pressure of demand for labour' which had been experienced in the two decades since the war was clearly drastically altered with the onset of the capitalist crisis in the early '70's. Whereas in the period of labour shortage it was necessary for the government to formulate positive policies to encourage women to enter the work-force, during periods of high unemployment it is not necessary for them to persuade women to return to their homes. I will argue that this is the case because the social relations which underpin the ideology of a woman's place being in the home have remained even though women

have in fact been playing an important role in the economy, so that if they lose their jobs they return to the home. This has been achieved by government policy towards women workers being formulated in terms of these ideological relations. The effect of women working part-time and fulfilling their domestic duties at the same time is touched on in the following passage:

'The inadequacy of child-care arrangements leads on to the question of suitable working hours for wives and mothers. Of the countries studied, only the U.K. has a substantial number of women doing part-time jobs and although there is a sizeable demand for them by women in the other countries, there is also a justifiable fear that unless part-time work can encompass a broad spectrum of activities part-timers will have access only to low-paying, unskilled jobs which may not carry standard insurance coverage or other employee benefits (as is the case with most part-time work at the moment.)' (Werneke, 1978. P.40).

This article analyses the effects of the economic crisis on woman's employment and notes that

'before the onset of the recession women in the workforce were generally in a weaker position than men. It is the purpose of the next section to see whether this situation was exacerbated by the recession and the subsequent weak recovery.' (Werneke, 1978. P.41).

An examination of unemployment figures for Britain reveals that more women than men lost their jobs during 1974-5. This is so despite the fact that

'as many as 50% of women jobseekers are thought to be missing from official unemployment counts.' (Werneke, 1978. P.48).

In the production industries women part-time workers lost their jobs and the numbers of women losing their jobs was far higher than the numbers of men.

'In the distributive and service industries the employment situation of women was much better than in the production sector. Here the number of jobs held by women continued to expand among

both full-time and part-time workers, while employment among men also increased but not as much as among women.' (Werneke, 1978. P.49).

The ideological practices which reproduce and reinforce woman's role in the family and find expression in government policy and the distribution of women in the work force serve to maintain women as a cheap reserve source of labour. The article concludes by saying that

'women workers in the countries examined appear to have felt the impact of the recent business cycle to a greater extent than men.' (Werneke, 1978. P.51).

Some of the effects of a woman's domestic role are pointed to,

'...the seniority system under which those with the shortest service are the first to be laid off has, in many instances, worked against women who, because of family responsibilities, tend to leave and re-enter the work force to a much greater extent than men.' (Werneke, 1978. P.51).

Thus again a woman's domestic duties mean that she is an under-protected worker when she can work, and she can only work when her domestic duties allow her to. Thus the maintenance of her role within the family ensures that during periods of economic crisis women will be laid off, not directly because they are women but because they can only take up part-time work which is unprotected, as will be seen below, or they are not entitled to the same protection and benefits as their fellow male workers because of the break in their working life necessitated if and when they have children. Thus women can be drawn into and out of the work force with relative ease due to the ideological relations which tie them first and foremost to the home.

With the recent economic crisis statements by members of parliament and government policy have again illustrated that

women's first duty is to the home and the world of work is considered to be a man's world. In a recent article in New Society (8 June 1978) a speech made by Patrick Jenkin, opposition spokesman on social services was commented on:

'"The pressure on young wives to go out to work devalue motherhood itself." Parenthood, he said, was a skilled task which should be "restored to the place of honour it deserves". But by parenthood, it seems, he meant motherhood.' (Phillips, 1978, pp.533-4).

And James Callaghan (then Prime Minister) is also concerned to reinforce the role of women within the family.

'"It seems to me that we have got to pay far more attention than we have done in the past as to how industry organises women's role at work, so that her influence as the centre of the family - and the woman is usually at the centre of the family - that influence is not weakened."' (Phillips, 1978. P.534).

And at the fiftieth anniversary of the winning of the vote by the suffragettes he is on record as praising

'the traditional role of women as wives and mothers which he hoped would remain central to family life.' (Times 4/7/78).

This concern about women's role in the family is clear from a report in the Guardian (23/5/78) that a

'committee of senior Ministers responsible for domestic policy is likely to be charged with the task of preparing a detailed policy to bolster the family unit. Mr. Callaghan yesterday emphasised the need to readjust the working conditions and hours of working mothers, to ensure that they are able to spend sufficient time with their children.' (Guardian 23/5/78).

This re-emphasis on the importance of family life and woman's central role within this unit coming at a time of high unemployment is bound to reinforce the ideology of women's traditional role. Many women who have become unemployed during the recent period will be discouraged from registering as unemployed

and therefore reduce the unemployment problem by returning to their rightful place as they did after the war.

Married women's first responsibility is clearly still seen to be to the home and family. In the tax laws operating at present there is a tax incentive for married women to go out to work. The tax treatment of a married couple where both partners work is more favourable than the treatment of one where the wife stays at home. It is argued that a married couple who both work and who are both taxed together have greater expenses than a couple where the wife stays at home - because in the case where the wife goes out to work she needs to pay someone to undertake the domestic duties that would normally be done by her.

'...There are two arguments in favour of the retention of some kind of wife's earned income relief. First, incentive: the needs of the economy require the continued employment of large numbers of married women and the system must be such that they feel it is worth their while going out to work. Second, the additional expenses involved: where both husband and wife work additional expense is often incurred, e.g. on domestic duties otherwise undertaken by the wife, and it is fair to regard their taxable capacity as being less than that of a couple with the same total income, which is earned entirely by the husband.' (Cmnd. 5116, October 1972. P.18).

This is interesting because it recognises the work undertaken by a woman in the home in monetary terms, it is the wife's job to perform such work but when someone else is required to do it then a wage is attached to it, thus a wife's unpaid work in the home is taken into consideration in the tax system. Also this incentive for wives to go out to work in no way undermines the ideology of a wife being dependent on her husband, this is reinforced by other tax measures as can be seen from the following

comments on the introduction of this particular tax incentive:

'One of the official historians of the Second World War...wrote: "As a concession to stimulate the movement of married women into employment the Chancellor in his 1942 budget accepted a proposal originating in the TUC, that the married woman's earned income allowance should be raised from £45 maximum to £80 maximum. At most income levels that mattered for the attraction of married women into war production, husband and wife would henceforth be treated more favourably than if they were single people." (My emphasis) However, it should be noted that incentives for married women to take up paid employment were not made in a way that recognised any reduction in their dependence on their husbands. It was still the tax position of the man, not the woman, which improved upon marriage and he continued to benefit irrespective of his wife's subsequent paid employment.' (Land, D.H.S.S., 1976. P.47).

There is thus a tax incentive for married women to go out to work and this incentive came under attack by Mr. Ivor Clemitson, MP, when unemployment was rising in March 1977. He called for

'tax incentives given to married women at work to be reviewed because of their impact on the employment situation.' (Financial Times March 10, 1977).

Obviously in Mr. Clemitson's eyes married women could easily give up their jobs and return to their rightful duties in the home and such unemployment would not constitute a social problem. However, as a letter to the Financial Times pointed out a few days later:

'The majority of married women go out to work for reasons of economic necessity and large proportions of their incomes contribute towards mortgages, purchases of domestic appliances, car, extra food and holidays. Does Mr. Booth honestly believe that the construction and manufacturing industries would benefit by withdrawing the purchasing power that married women produce?'

She goes on to point out that

'Most married women work 7 full days a week if they have an outside job, and...this is in order to

"live" rather than "exist" on the "average man's wage".' (Financial Times 15/3/77 Mrs R.N. Bond).

This points to one of the effects of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home. Even though women need to go out to work as much as men to keep a family the ideological relations embodied in the practices within the various ISA's, such as the trade union movement and the social security laws, ensure that women remain economically dependent on their husbands, the ones who are responsible for the home and family, and therefore not really entitled to go out to work. And when they do go out to work the practices within the work place and the labour market also reinforce their dependent and secondary role, maintaining them as a low paid and weakly organised sector of the working class.

Government encouragement, or otherwise, of women to work is framed in terms of the ideology of the home and family and woman's place within this I.S.A. The entry of married women into the workforce in Britain has therefore taken place within these ideological relations and has not in any way challenged their existence. These ideological practices have served to maintain and reproduce the sexual divisions within the work force and within the home and at the same time have ensured that women remain an important and cheap source of reserve labour.

Thus practices which reproduce the ideological relations defining the home as woman's place ensure that sexual divisions continue to exist within the working class. As was argued above (Chapter 4) ideological divisions are an essential means by which class rule is maintained. Such divisions ensure the continued hegemony of the ruling class, because there is no

united challenge from other classes in a social formation, and also ensure the continued reproduction of the relations of production. My analysis of government policy has revealed that it reproduces the ideological divisions which are so crucial to the maintenance of the ruling class by upholding the sexual division of labour both within the work force and within the family.

The areas of government policy and legislation with which I have dealt in the last two chapters are clearly based on very specific ideological social relations which exist in the form of practices, both legal and in terms of the policies put into practice by government and employers. These material practices reproduce the sexual division of labour and are based on the existence of certain ideological social relations which assign women to the home. It has thus been demonstrated that a sexual division of labour exists within the British social formation, both in terms of the places that women occupy within the work force and in terms of the division of labour within the bourgeois family, and that it is ideology, through material practices, that determines which places are occupied by women and which by men.

I shall now undertake an examination of these sexual divisions as they exist within the trade union movement in order to demonstrate the way that bourgeois ideological relations divide the working class.

Chapter 8

The role of the Unions

In this chapter I am going to outline the effects that the ideology of a woman's place, as it has existed within the trade union movement, has had on the distribution of women in the work force, and the way that trade union practices have reproduced ideological divisions which have constituted women both as a reserve army of labour and as a cheap and relatively unorganised sector of the work force. I am going to do this through an elaboration of Marx's concept of relative surplus population which will allow us to understand the historical processes which have led to married women becoming part of the relative surplus population in Britain. I shall then outline the exclusive practices of male workers which have been based on the ideology of a woman's place and have divided and weakened the trade union movement.

The trade union movement will be shown to be significant for the distribution of women in the work force both in terms of the jobs women occupy and in terms of their position at the lower paid end of the labour market. Through this examination the class nature of the ideology of a woman's place will be shown and hence its importance in terms of the class struggle.

During the early stages of the industrial revolution and the development of capitalist production processes based on machinery and modern industry enormous upheavals were taking place in the employment of men, women and children. Unemployment was high and rapid changes in technology and production

processes produced correspondingly rapid fluctuations in the number of people employed at any one time. These fluctuations were due both to the introduction of new technology in certain branches of production and to the cyclical nature of capitalist production itself. In discussing the factory system Marx comments:

'The enormous power, inherent in the factory system of expanding by jumps, and the dependence of that system on the markets of the world, necessarily beget feverish production, followed by overfilling of the markets, whereupon contraction of the markets brings on crippling of production. The life of modern industry becomes a series of periods of moderate activity, prosperity, over-production, crisis and stagnation. The uncertainty and instability to which machinery subjects the employment, and consequently the conditions of existence, of the operatives become normal owing to these periodic changes of the industrial cycle.'
(Marx 1974, I: p.425). 1

Chronic unemployment was spread throughout the working class affecting men, women and children with equal severity, and it produced intense competition for the jobs that were available. This competition was felt in the form of violent opposition to the introduction of machinery, e.g., the Luddites,² and as attempts by certain sections of the working class to exclude others from the work force.

1 These periods of crisis and prosperity were particularly noticable in the cotton industry throughout the nineteenth century and Marx gives a description of the phases of the industrial cycle as they affected the work force in Capital. (Marx 1974, I: pp.428-431).

2 'The enormous destruction of machinery that occurred in the English manufacturing districts during the first fifteen years of this century, chiefly caused by the employment of the power loom, and known as the Luddite movement, gave the anti-Jacobin governments of a Sidmouth, a Castlereagh, and the like, a pretext for the most reactionary and forcible measures. It took both time and experience before the work people learnt to distinguish between machinery and its employment by capital, and to direct their attacks not against the material instruments of production, but against the means in which they are used.' (Marx 1974, I: p.404).

This competition for employment is one of the conditions of existence of capitalist relations of production, according to Marx, and unemployment is a permanent feature of the capitalist mode of production; this permanent unemployment he calls 'the industrial reserve army' or 'relative surplus population'.

He elaborates this concept as follows:

'The great beauty of capitalist production consists in this - that it not only constantly reproduces the wage-worker as wage-worker, but produces always, in proportion to the accumulation of capital, a relative-surplus-population of wage workers. Thus the law of supply and demand of labour is kept in the right rut, the oscillation of wages is penned within limits satisfactory to capitalist exploitation, and lastly, the social dependence of the labourer on the capitalist, that indispensable requisite, is secured...' (Marx, 1974, I: p.720).

The capitalist mode of production requires a relative surplus population because the cycle of capitalist production goes through different stages and different numbers of workers are needed at each stage. As quoted above (p.158) capital

'creates, for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital, a mass of material always ready for exploitation.' (Marx, 1974, I: p.592).

Thus on the one hand, the relative surplus population is necessary to provide extra workers when capitalist production requires them, and on the other hand, it performs an important function in keeping down the wages of those who are in work through ensuring competition for any jobs available.³ Marx

3 'The industrial reserve army, during the periods of stagnation and average prosperity, weighs down the active labour-army; during the periods of over-production and paroxysm it holds its pretensions in check. Relative surplus-population is therefore the pivot upon which the law of demand and supply of labour works. It confines the field of action of this law within the limits absolutely convenient to the activity of exploitation and to the domination of capital.' (Marx 1974, I: p.598).

writes that,

'...the general movements of wages are exclusively regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army, and these again correspond to the periodic changes of the industrial cycle. They are, therefore, not determined by the variations of the absolute number of the working population, but by the varying proportions to which the working class is divided into active and reserve army, by the increase or diminution in the relative amount of the surplus-population, by the extent to which it is now absorbed, now set free.'
(Marx 1974, I: p.596).

The competition for work and resulting divisions within the work force between those who have jobs and those who are unemployed ensures that capitalism can continue to exploit the labouring classes at extremely low rates of pay because there are always people desperate for work who will take lower wages in order to fend off starvation.⁴ These divisions ensure that sectors of the working class are fighting and competing amongst themselves and that capitalist production is able to exploit these divisions to the full. Thus a recognition by the working class that divisions such as those between employed and unemployed, male and female, black and white, etc., are an effect of capital, produces the possibility of it organising against

4 'If its [Capital's] accumulation, on the one hand, increases the demand for labour, it increases on the other the supply of labourers by the "setting free" of them, whilst at the same time the pressure of the unemployed compels those that are employed to furnish more labour, and therefore makes the supply of labour, to a certain extent, independent of the supply of labourers.' (Marx 1974, I: p.599).

capital.⁵ However, in the last century many divisions within the working class were used by certain sectors of it as a means of protecting some jobs at the expense of others, with the result that some sectors of the work force, such as women and children, were partially excluded from production; the results of such exclusion are examined below. Divisions within the work force along lines of skilled and unskilled labour, adult versus child labour, or male versus female labour prevented the working class from uniting against capital. Instead it began to organise to represent these sectional interests at each others' expense thus reinforcing the divisions.

The old traditional handicraft industries, often based on the family unit were superceded by the factory system, and men, women and children alike worked in these factories; the relative surplus population was also composed of men, women and children. However, from the end of the eighteenth century onwards a tendency was developing to organise into trade unions and to use the strength thus acquired to exclude sectors of the population from the work force in order to reduce competition

5 The political importance of these divisions to the ruling class is clear from the following statement by Marx: 'As soon, therefore, as the labourers learn the secret, how it comes to pass that in the same measure as they work more, as they produce more wealth for others, and as the productive power of their labour increases, so in the same measure even their function as a means of the self-expansion of capital becomes more and more precarious for them; as soon as they discover that the degree of intensity of the competition among themselves depends wholly on the pressure of the relative surplus-population; as soon as, by Trades' Unions, &c., they try to organise a regular cooperation between employed and unemployed in order to destroy or to weaken the ruinous effects of this natural law of capitalistic production on their class, so soon capital and its sycophant, Political Economy, cry out at the infringement of the "eternal" and so to say "sacred" law of supply and demand. Every combination of employed and unemployed disturbs the "harmonious" action of this law.' (Marx 1974, I: p.599).

for the jobs available. Previously attempts to organise had been concerned with all workers regardless of sex. Now, however, the ideology of a woman's place being in the home and humanist ideologies regarding the desirability of children working were taking root within the working class; hence women and children were gradually emerging as the groups which were to be excluded from the work force. This process of exclusion from the organised working class which took place during the last century has effectively constituted women as a significant sector of the reserve labour force. The ideology which holds that a woman's true sphere of activity is the home has an important stabilising effect for capitalism. Because women are not 'expected' to go out to work female unemployment is not viewed in the same way as male unemployment. The fluctuations of the capitalist production process and the inability of the capitalist mode of production to guarantee full employment are masked, because men can remain employed while women can be pulled in and out of the work force as the capitalist production process goes through its different phases. Since married women become 'invisible' once they are unemployed the real rate of unemployment is not reflected in official statistics nor is it felt by the working class. An unemployed woman is able to stay at home and perform her 'prime' role, an unemployed man however 'should' be out at work. Thus the ideology of a woman's place results in the fluctuations in employment inherent to capitalism becoming less noticeable because it is on the whole women who are affected rather than men. If the reserve labour force was not constituted by married women, and by other sectors of the work force such as 'immigrant' workers, then the inability of capitalism to provide

work for the whole working class would be far more apparent. The practices which excluded women from trade unions and attempted to relegate them to the home during the last century played a crucial role in taking away from women the right or expectation to work. Thus, when there are situations of unemployment women remain at home and when the capitalist production process expands they can be drawn into the labour force. Through the operation of the ideology of a woman's place men have been secured jobs at the expense of women. These divisions have not only constituted women as an important sector of the reserve labour force but have also meant that they provide a pool of unorganised, cheap labour. The practices that have led to this state of affairs are outlined below.

The process of exclusion of women can be traced throughout the struggles for union organisation which took place in the nineteenth century. Lewenhak comments that,

'...in place of the old unity displayed in the 'mixed' unions of men and women Manchester small-ware weavers and spinners in the eighteenth century and in the early nineteenth century protests, more and more the idea of segregation of women into separate organisations was taking hold. Simultaneously with the drive towards a united, national, general union of all trades competition for work and friction were on the increase.' (Lewenhak, 1977. P.38).

The importance of the ideology of a woman's place in this process is underlined by Lewenhak when she notes that,

'The idea of each member of a working class family earning his or her own livelihood was being superseded by that of the responsibility of some male relative for supporting female relatives, children, and parents. The man's wage, therefore, must be as great as that of an entire family.' (Lewenhak, 1977. PP.40-1).

She also comments that,

'... men also aimed at the kind of existence of the class above them in that they saw a non-working wife as a symbol of their higher social and financial status. They were contemptuous of those who 'could not keep their wives,' and wanted the exclusive concentration of wives on home and husband to ensure their greater comfort...'
(Lewenhak 1977. P.41).

Of course the exclusion of women from the organisations of the working class did not result in the desired aim of their total exclusion from the work force. Instead, unprotected by any union, women could be employed at lower rates than men and they had no protection from appalling conditions of work; employers were not slow to take advantage of this situation.

'The London Tailors, who had contrived to stop women working in their trade to a large extent by the early 1830's, were complaining fifteen years later: 'The masters have now learned that tailoring work, under the sweating system, can be done at almost any price; and hence those who are anxious to force their trade by underselling their more honourable neighbours... give the articles out to sweaters to be made by women and girls. By such means the regular tailor is being destroyed... Women and children who before were unemployed in the tailoring trade, now form a large proportion of the operative part of it.'
(Lewenhak, 1977. P.42. Quoting E.P. Thompson and E. Yio: The Unknown Mayhew, 226, from the Morning Post, letter XVI, 11 Dec, 1849).

Thus exclusion of women from the Tailors' Union had resulted not in men keeping their jobs but in women ousting them from a trade which had previously been dominated by men. The ideological divisions within the working class were exploited to the full by capital.

The ideological basis of practices of exclusion was often expressed in terms of the 'docile' nature of women and their consequent inability to stand up successfully to employers. However the notion that women were 'docile' was contradicted time and again by the actions of women workers. Before the

combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 which made organisation into trade unions illegal women and men were struggling to improve their wages and working conditions,⁶ and when the combination acts were in force the struggles of the working class for organisation did not cease. In 1811 women lace workers were trying to organise themselves into a union and

'a parson magistrate in Loughborough complained bitterly against those women who showed "a spirit of combination to dictate to their employers and to raise the price of their wages". These bold women, besides holding meetings, despatched organisers to neighbouring towns to extend their association and raise funds.'
(TUC booklet. 1955. P.34).

Examples such as this clearly refute the belief that women were docile and easier for the employers to exploit than men and shows that it was founded neither on a proper understanding of fellow women workers nor on anything inherent in women's nature. However the practices of excluding women from trade union organisation gave a real foundation to this unsubstantiated prejudice. Because women were not organised they were not able to fight for better pay and working conditions, naturally this meant that the employers could pay them extremely low wages and keep them working excessively long hours with impunity.⁷ The

6 'In many of the union activities and strikes women played their part. They joined the unions where they could and in 1756 the Manchester small-ware Weavers' Association included women among its members, they paid the same dues and received the same strike pay as the men.

The women members were loyal and militant. In 1808, for instance, at a time when weavers' wages averaged only 6/- a week, spasmodic disorders broke out, and the women proved as the authorities declared, "if possible more turbulent and mischievous than the men". (TUC booklet, 1955. P.34).

7 'The manufacturers preferred the cheap, unorganised female labour, which could be used to break the resistance of the men to exploitation.' (TUC booklet 1955. P.22).

exclusion of women from trade unions meant that they were often employed instead of men because they could be got at lower rates of pay whereas the aim of exclusion had been to protect man's jobs. Thus men often found their wages brought down by the pressure of cheap female labour and the first demands for 'the rate for the job' were motivated by the fear of such competition.⁸

The ideology which underlay the exclusion of women from the work force and which produced such deep ideological divisions within the working class was clearly formulated by the TUC and many ideologues of the capitalist class. In 1877 the TUC parliamentary committee⁹ declared that it was,

'the duty of men and husbands to bring about a condition of things when their wives should be in their proper sphere at home instead of being dragged into competition of livelihood with the great and strong men of the world.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.52).

This 'duty' was elaborated by Francis Place who was opposed to women working in industry.

'...in a letter to a cotton plinner in 1835 he wrote: "If then the men refused to work in mills and factories with girls, as they ought to do, as other trades have done in workshops and for those masters who employ women and girls, the young women

8 Lewenhak comments that, '...in 1838...it was the Spinners' aim to prevent the women being "Paid at an under rate of wages if possible."

Men's claims for equal pay for women over the next hundred years were based less on notions of justice for women than on fears of losing work to women who undercut their wages; and even more on a determination to keep women out of their trades in order that they might have all the work available. Men supported the 'rate for the job', when they believed this would give them preference in employment.' (Lewenhak 1977. P.39).

9 In 1871 the Trades Union Congress elected a Parliamentary Committee of '10 members from among the officials of the strongest unions. ...Its particular aim was to organise the trade union 'lobby' in Parliament.' (Lewenhak. 1977. P.57) and it constituted the leadership of the TUC.

who will otherwise be degraded by factory labour will become all that can be desirable as companionable wives and the whole condition of factory workers would soon be improved and the men will obtain competent wages for their maintenance".' (TUC booklet 1955. P.23).

In the Supplementary Report on child labour in Factories it was stated that:

'Nature effects her own purpose wisely and more effectively than could be done by the wisest of men. The low price of female labour makes it the most profitable as well as the most agreeable occupation for a female to superintend her own domestic establishment and her low wages do not tempt her to abandon the care of her own children.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.22).

Now it is 'nature' that has caused women to be paid starvation wages so that they will remain within their rightful sphere, the home, rather than going out to work! Of course even starvation wages whether due to 'nature' or some other cause, did not succeed in keeping women in the home. Lewenhak comments that,

'In a time of intense competition for jobs, women tended not to stay away from work during confinements for more than a few hours, or at most a few days....' (Lewenhak. 1977. P.23).

In the 1840's a marriage bar was proposed which would prevent married women from working. Clearly this proposal rested on the notion that a wife should be supported by her husband and therefore did not need to go out to work to earn her living. In fact legally women were dependent upon their husbands so the ideology which was dividing the working class along sexual lines and being articulated in parliament and at other levels of the social formation had a real basis in the legal position of married women. Men were legally required to support the woman they married and this legal ideology gave credence to the men's claim that they were the breadwinners and had the right to work whereas women, particularly married women, had no such right.

However many women were not supported by men¹⁰ and so, these practices of exclusion, far from confining women to the home, merely prevented them from taking jobs in the well organised sectors of the labour force and from joining trade unions, and thus ensured a supply of unorganised and cheap female labour for exploitation by the capitalist class.

There are many examples of trade unions upholding and reinforcing the ideological relations which define woman's place as being in the home and many of these practices were rationalised in terms of some idealised past when women didn't work outside the home. However in previous centuries, before the advent of the notorious factory system which was supposedly drawing women away from their 'rightful' and 'natural' sphere women had worked outside as well as inside the home.¹¹

10 The women workers of Todmorden when arguing against the idea that all women should be excluded from industry pointed out the fallacy of the assumption that all women were supported by men: 'You are for doing away with our services in manufactories altogether. So much the better, if you had pointed out any more eligible and practical employment for the surplus female labour that will want other channels for a subsistence. If our competition were withdrawn, and short hours substituted, we have no doubt that the effects would be as you have stated "not to lower wages, as the male branch of the family would be enabled to earn as much as the whole had done," but for thousands of females who are employed in manufactories, who have no legitimate claim on any male relative for employment or support, and who have, through a variety of circumstances been early thrown on their own resources for a livelihood, what is to become of them?' (TUC booklet 1955. P.23).

11 Women worked in mining, 'As early as 1322 women were in the mines. One of them - Emma. Daughter of Willeam Culhaxe - lost her life that year as a result of 'Le Damp' in the 'Colepyt' at Morely, Derbyshire...

Women were to be found in metal as well as coal mines, and of them Stinger wrote in 1699, "There is washing and knocking of ores, which are works that many good men's daughters are now glad to do, in many places in this Kingdom, for bread for them and their children". (TUC booklet. 1955. P.9). In the metal industry 'breaking limestone... was a job performed solely by women. It was required of the women limestone workers that they break from ten to fourteen tons a day.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.19). 'In the district of Sedgeley women even wielded the hammer as blacksmiths...' (TUC booklet 1955. P.19).

'...in the middle ages women were compelled to work in the fields. In 1349 a statute of Labourers ordered that women as well as men should give such service when required unless they were over sixty years of age, engaged in some trade or craft, or possessed lands or means of their own.' (TUC booklet, 1955. P.5).

And again:

'The Elizabethan statute of Apprentices in the 16th century empowered Justices of the Peace to compel women between the ages of twelve and forty years to work at field labour, by day, week or year "for such wages and in such reasonable manner as they shall think meet." Women who resisted could be imprisoned.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.5).

Jobs such as coalmining and quarrying, were performed by women as well as those which are usually regarded as traditional women's work, such as silk and lace making, cotton weaving, spinning wool and so on, which were carried on in the home as a cottage industry in which all the family participated. Clearly the ideology of the home as women's 'true' sphere does not have its roots in some golden age of the past which the industrial revolution and the introduction of factory production was destroying; women working outside the home was nothing new. However, even though this ideology was not based in a reality that was being destroyed it did have a material existence in the form of practices within the trade unions. These practices, as well as constituting women as a cheap, unorganised sector of the work force, have also been instrumental in determining the types of jobs open to women, more specifically their exclusion from skilled work. Craft unions were particularly virulent in their attacks on working women and through their policies and practices have significantly contributed to the very small number of women craft workers. Women were denied entry into certain skilled occupations because the relatively strong craft unions

prevented girls and women from taking up apprenticeships. An example comes from the Pottery industry.

'In 1845, the Potter's Union issued an appeal to women starting on the new 'flat-press' machines: "To maidens, wives and mothers, we say that machinery is your deadliest enemy. Of all the sufferers by mechanical improvements you will be the worst. It is a systematised process of slow murder for you. It will destroy your natural claims to homes and domestic duties, and will immure you and your toiling little ones in overheated and dirty shops, there to weep and toil and pine and die.' (TUC booklet 1955. P.30).

One wonders why the men put up with these conditions if they were so injurious to people's health and why they did not fight with the women for better conditions in the industry. The fact that women worked while many craft unions campaigned to prevent them from working resulted in women being unable to take up skilled work. In the pottery industry,

'...they could never hope to take a job other than that of an employee of a working potter.'
(TUC booklet 1955. P.30).

In this way men managed to monopolise the skilled and more highly paid work wherever they could, and the scarcity of skilled women workers today testifies to the 'success' of their policies.

Even though by this time some unions began to admit women as members many made certain that women's rate of pay remained below those of men. The rationale behind this was that men would be enabled to retain their privileged position in the wages structure and would not lose any pay. And many unions continued to refuse to admit women members because of the fear that women would take over men's jobs. Whatever the reasons for the exclusion of women from trade unions it did not have the effects that were sought for. Instead of uniting with women workers, ensuring they were paid the same rates as men and so strengthening

trade union organisation and being able to raise male and female wage rates, the trade unions excluded women from membership and so ensured that they would provide a supply of cheap labour which could be used by the employing class to undercut their wages and would compete with them for their jobs.

Another effect of the lack of unionisation of women workers and their resulting low wages was that where new technology was introduced into industries the work became lighter and it was possible to employ women on jobs which had previously been done by men; the lower wages of the women workers were more attractive to the employers.

'In the evidence before the Poor Law Commission of 1908, a witness declared: "The women are ousting the men in most trades, including the iron trade. Many women are doing the light kind of drilling, etc., which used to be done by men. We have hundreds of them in Manchester now doing work that was formerly done by men on drilling machines. Women in the iron works were unknown a few years ago, but there are hundreds of thousands of them now."' (TUC booklet 1955. PP.53-4).

The point is underlined by a statement which came from Birmingham and Coventry, the centre of the cycle and motor industry, which said:

'There are many machine shops where the work is principally done by women and girls. They are, of course, got at a much lower rate of pay.'
(TUC booklet. 1955. P.54).

Thus the employers employed the cheapest labour possible which was female labour, and this state of affairs had been greatly facilitated by the policies towards women adopted by most trade unions. Instead of the desired aim of keeping women out of the work force and in the home, so protecting men's jobs, the unions had created a situation where as soon as the development of technology made it possible, cheap, unorganised female labour

was substituted for male labour. Thus instead of acting to protect their own interests they had effectively divided their ranks. The class that benefitted from this division was not the working class but the capitalist class.¹²

Because of the failure of unions' policies to achieve the desired aim of total exclusion of women from the work force and the resulting situation of women workers as a cheap, reserve, source of labour, unions eventually began to realise that it was not in their own interests to keep women out. Women had been organising independently of male workers and one of the the bodies active in promoting the organisation of female

12 The fact that women were recognised as a source of cheap labour is spelt out very clearly in the following extracts from a report by Mr. Scudamore on the employment of women in the post office. He writes that:

'...the wages which will draw male operators from but an inferior class of the community, will draw female operators from a superior class.

Female operators thus drawn from a superior class will, as a rule, write better than the male clerks, and spell more correctly; and, where the staff is mixed, the female clerks will raise the tone of the whole staff.

They are also less disposed than men to combine for the purpose of extorting higher wages, and this is by no means an unimportant matter.' (TUC booklet 1955. P.56).

Consideration is also taken of the fact that women tend to leave work on marriage or childbirth and consequently do not have a long enough period of continuous employment to qualify for a pension on retirement. This was another factor in favour of female labour as far as the employers were concerned.

'On the whole, it may be stated without fear of contradiction that if we place an equal number of females and males on the same ascending scale of pay, the aggregate pay to the females will always be less than the aggregate pay to the males; that within a certain range of duty the work will be better done by the females than by the males, because the females will be drawn from a somewhat superior class; and further, that there will always be fewer females than males on the pension list.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.56).

workers was the Women's Trade Union League.¹³ In 1889 it invited trade unions which admitted women members to affiliate to it and offered to affiliated unions the services of a woman organiser. The extent to which certain unions were beginning to realise the importance of organising women workers is shown by the fact that fifty or sixty societies affiliated that year. A letter from one union puts the case for organisation of women workers in very extreme terms:

'Please send an organiser to this town as our amalgamated society decided that if the women here cannot be organised they must be exterminated.'
(TUC booklet. 1955. P.60).

Perhaps it would be a truer reflection of the practices that the unions had been involved in to say that since all attempts to exterminate women workers had failed they would have to be organised.

The divisions within the working class and the trade union movement along sexual lines stand out with glaring clarity in examining, even briefly, the history of the economic class struggles of the working class in Britain. The struggle against these divisions had to be taken up by the women workers themselves and it was only through their own organisation that eventually male trade unionists were forced to admit women into their ranks. A common notion that women 'just aren't good trade unionists' was contradicted by an enormous welter of facts

13 The Women's Trade Union League was founded in 1874 as the National Protective and Benefit Union of working women. It aimed to organise women workers and was represented at the TUC from 1875 onwards. In 1891 it became the Women's Trade Union League, before that, in 1889, it was the Women's Provident League, and it ceased to exist in May 1921.

pointing to the opposite conclusion; we only have to think of the Matchgirls' strike in 1889 which sparked off a wave of struggles for union recognition, among them those by the London gas workers and dockers.¹⁴ However, to succeed in the fight to win the right to join trade unions which were exclusively male was only the beginning of the struggle, discriminatory practices within the unions were not going to vanish overnight and the struggle continues to this day.

By the outbreak of the first world war women had been largely relegated to the ranks of the reserve labour force. It was held that men went out to work to support their family and their wives stayed at home to look after the children. Women of course did work, but they filled the unskilled, low paid sectors of the work force and were largely unorganised. The war and the need to supplement the male labour lost through conscription meant that for the first time women were seen as a pool of reserve labour that could be tapped when there was a shortage of suitable male labour.

The employers were not slow to take advantage of the war situation to try to eliminate the agreements wrested from them by the organised working class. Because women were in the main, not in trade unions, employers could pay them less than the men they were replacing. Lewenhak comments that:

14 Seven hundred women employed by Bryant and May went on strike. 'The Times declared the strike to be "the result of the class war which the body of socialists have brought into being."' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.49). 'The Women's Trade Union League backed the strikers, raising the sum of £400 ... The London Trades Council negotiated with the firm on the women matchworkers' behalf, with extremely satisfactory results. The firm capitulated, the strikers achieved practically the whole of their demands, and a Union of Women Matchworkers resulted, with Annie Besant as its secretary.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.49).

'Employers in the war industries saw women as their main resource, not only for replacing men who joined the armed services, but also for an expansion of industry by means of increased mechanisation and subdivision of processes. They hoped the war and appeals to patriotism might be used to force unions to abandon agreements on gradings and on earnings for skilled workers.' (Lewenhak. 1977. PP.145-6).

The employers were attempting to use the war to take away all the gains that had been made by the trade unions in the previous century. For instance they wanted a free hand to employ non-unionised female labour and to remove demarcations between skilled and unskilled work, both of which could be used as pretexts for reducing wages. (Lewenham 1977. P.146). Under the guise of patriotism and the national interest the employers were going on the offensive against the organised working class.

Initially these attempts were violently rejected by the trade unions and they appealed to women who were entering war work to join trade unions. However they were shutting the stable door after the horse had bolted, their previous anti-female policies had ensured that women were not organised into trade unions, and their motive for encouraging women to join unions now was the protection of male rates of pay rather than their concern for the conditions of the women workers. This is clear from a claim put forward by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers who did not in fact admit women members at that time. Their claim was for,

'£1 a week for all women over 18 years of age engaged in engineering and shipbuilding (except those in jobs which had been recognised before the war as specifically women's work)...'
(My emphasis. TUC booklet. 1955. P.71).

Thus organising women workers and raising their rates of pay was not seen as part of the union's struggle.

With the outbreak of war and the need to pull the reserve labour force into industry employers and government were able to use the ideology of patriotism and the need to subordinate everything to the war effort to attack the hard won trade union agreements and in this way use the war situation to their advantage. This could only be done because of the ideological divisions within the working class which had ensured that one particular sector of it was unorganised.

The trade unions were not able to resist the onslaught of both employers and government and in 1915 an agreement relaxing existing trade practices was announced between the government and the trade unions; this was known as the Treasury Agreement (Lewenhak 1977. P.146). The trade unions accepted ungraciously the principle of women replacing men although there were some that maintained their position that women should stay out of the work force altogether. For instance, the Spinners' Union,

'condemned the Home Office proposal to employ women on mule-spinning and demanded instead the introduction of Belgian boys. They also advocated the reduction of the school leaving age to enable boys to fill the vacancies caused by the call-up of the men.' (TUC booklet 1955. P.71).

The Shells and Fuses Agreement pledged that,

'The relaxation of existing demarcation restrictions or admission of semi-skilled or female labour shall not adversely affect the rates customarily paid for the job.' (Lewenhak 1977. P.147).

thus constituting an attempt to maintain wage rates in the face of an influx of non-unionised labour. However, many unions did not allow women members even though the trade union movement was calling for women entering war work to join unions. Thus women continued to provide a source of cheap labour while at the same time the unions were trying to prevent them from being used

as such. Agreements between unions and government regulating wages during the war were bound to be ineffectual because of the lack of organisation of the women workers who were replacing the men. In one instance Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, laid down instructions so as to maintain the rates of pay which had previously been paid to men. These instructions,

'related to piece work rates. Time rates were not mentioned, although the men, whose jobs the women were doing, had received both time and piece rates.'
(TUC booklet. 1955. P.70).

Thus employers were left free to pay women what they pleased because time rates were not dealt with.

The unions were paying dearly for the divisions which they had established and reinforced within the ranks of the working class. The Munitions of War Bill introduced in June 1915,

'made arbitration in disputes concerned with war production compulsory, and thus strikes and lock-outs became illegal. It provided for the wholesale 'dilution' of labour, by the employment of untrained, non-union workers, and threw open to women trades, industries, and particular grades of jobs previously wholly staffed by men.' (Lewenhak 1977. P.148).

The only way to resist the wholesale lowering of wages which such an influx of unorganised labour would mean was to overcome the ideological divisions within the work force. However, in the main this did not happen. Male workers did not want women working and taking over their jobs, so rather than unite with them for better pay and conditions they continued to subscribe to the ideological notions of 'women's' work etc., which divide women from men. In one instance in Newcastle-upon-Tyne however, a unified struggle was waged. Women in Newcastle

'were asked to volunteer for work on trams. They were offered a wage of 15/- a week. But the men refused to let them take the jobs unless they were paid their own full rate of 28/-. Despite objections

from the employers, the women were given the 'rate for the job' and all joined the union.' (Lewenhak 1977 P.149).

This is a very clear example of how a trade union's support for women actually works for the benefit of both the women and the union, the women's rates of pay were raised and the union was strengthened by the influx of women members.

The fact that women working in large numbers in industries in which they did not normally work was seen by employers and trade unions alike as a temporary phenomenon is clear. In April 1916 conscription was introduced by the government and thus in September they made an appeal to women and to employers that more women should replace men in industry. Here the use of women as a reserve labour force is very clear because the government stresses that they are only temporarily in the work force, with the cessation of hostilities they will return to the home.

'Employers who have met the new conditions with patience and foresight readily admit that the results achieved by the temporary employment of Women far exceed their original estimates, and even so are capable of much further extension. If this is true in their case, how much greater must be the scope for such substitution by those Employers who have not attempted it from reasons of apprehension or possible prejudice? The necessity of replacing wastage in our Armies will eventually compel the release of all men who can be replaced by women, and it is therefore in the interests of Employers to secure and train temporary substitutes as early as possible, in order to avoid any falling off in production.

Women of Great Britain, employers of labour, remember that:

- 1) No man who is eligible for Military Service should be retained in civil employment if his place can be temporarily filled by a woman or by a man who is ineligible for Military Service.
- 2) No man who is ineligible for Military Service should be retained on work which can be performed by a woman (for the duration of the War) if the man himself can be utilised to release to the Colours one who is eligible for Military Service, and who cannot be satisfactorily replaced by a woman.' (Mackenzie. 1975. P.306)(my emphasis).

Trade Unions also saw women as temporary members of the work force. In the Shells and Fuses agreement a clause was included,

'that where women in consequence of this agreement are employed to take the place of men, such women shall not continue to be employed after men become available.' (CIS report. P.12).

Thus women, during the first world war, were seen to be, and treated as, the main reserve of labour which had to be tapped to support the war, and the existence of women as such a reserve had been brought about to a large extent by the operation of the ideology of a woman's place within the trade union movement.

The influx of women into industry in such large numbers did mean that their capacity of performing certain 'men's' jobs was demonstrated.

'Women began to develop skills and assume a control over their work unprecedented in peace time. In some cases women learnt to set their own tools and instances were recorded of women employed as oxy-acetylene welders and instrument makers.' (CIS report p.12).

Female membership of unions also rose during the first world war:

'Throughout the four years of the war the female trade union membership in the country, excluding teachers' and artists' associations, rose from fewer than 400,000 to over a million, representing about 17% of the total number of organised workers. This was an increase of 60% compared with 45% in the case of the men.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.72).

However these new practices were not enough to change the policies of the unions, and when the boys came home women were expected to give up their work and either return to the 'women's' work that they were doing before the war or retire gracefully to the home. Kirkaldy commented that:

'The speed with which women had appeared in these industries was surpassed by the speed with which they vanished from them.' (CIS report p.12).

This situation was reflected in the female unemployment figures.

'Reynolds Newspaper in March 1919 reported one labour exchange with 2,000 women on its register and only 35 jobs to offer them. There were 530,000 women drawing unemployment donation, far more than men, including the demobilised soldiers.' (CIS report. P.12).

More general figures show that:

'Between the armistice of 1918 and the autumn of 1919 over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million women lost their jobs. Some found employment in their old industries but thousands became simply unemployed.' (TUC booklet. 1955, P.74).

Many, many women returned to the home and took up their duties as wife and mother. But even though immediately after the war there was a huge exodus of women from the labour market the changed practices that were experienced during the war years were to leave their mark.

The unions, when the war was over, made sure that women were once again relegated to 'women's' work so recreating all the divisions which had proved so disastrous to them during the war. In the Restoration of Prewar Practices Act, 1919,

'trade unions were enabled to re-create the division of industrial processes into 'men's work' and 'women's work'. The Act arbitrarily imposed on the women who remained in the industries lower standards of work and pay, and increased the hardship prevalent among working class women at that time.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.74).

It is hard to see what benefits the male unionists hoped to gain by this measure, in effect they were recreating the divisions that had in some measure been broken down by the practices of the war years. Through their action they ensured that women workers would go on providing cheap labour which brought hardship on the women workers and their families and also held down the levels of the men's wages.

During the second world war women were again mobilised to keep the economy going while the men were away fighting

'...according to official figures, of some 17,000,000 aged 14 to 64 there were in September 1943, about 7,750,000 women active in the services [armed forces] or in paid employment. The percentage of women who were engaged in the war effort was 45% in the autumn of 1943, as against 37% gainfully occupied before the war.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.82).

It was during the second world war that the introduction of part time work for women became a policy of employers.

Churchill, then Prime Minister, was also steeped in the ideology of a woman's place and clearly regarded their entry into industry as a new departure, in fact, as we have seen above, women had always worked outside the home. He said in 1943:

'This war effort could not have been achieved if the women had not marched forward in millions and undertaken all kinds of tasks and work for which any other generation but our own - unless you go back to the stone age - would have considered them unfitted: work in the fields, heavy work in the foundries and in the shops, very refined work on radio and precision instruments, responsible clerical work of all kinds, work throughout the munition factories, work in the mixed batteries....Nothing has been grudged and the bounds of women's activities have been definitely, vastly and permanently enlarged.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.83).

Such optimism rings rather hollow today especially in the light of the closure of such facilities as day nurseries, factory canteens and public restaurants, and laundry services which were organised during the war to free women from their domestic responsibilities. The call-up legislation in fact exempted mothers of children under 14 years of age but despite this many such mothers went out to work. In 1942 there were about half a million of these women employed full-time and a further 150,000

employed part-time. Facilities for looking after their children were provided by the government.

Union membership also increased during the war years. By 1941 there were 1,372,000 women in unions which constituted 19.4% of the total membership. This contrasts with a female membership of 972,000, 15.6% of the total membership, in 1939. (TUC booklet 1955 p.84). It was during the war that the Amalgamated Engineering Union decided to admit women members, this decision was effective from the 1st of January 1943. The statement issued by the Rules Revision Committee of the Union is heavily ironic in the light of the divisive and exclusive practices of the unions towards women workers for the previous century and a half. They are addressing themselves to the new women members:

'This marks a revolutionary change in the outlook of the operative engineer, who had previously refused to recognise the place women have gained as an integral part of industry. It is the fervent desire of the representatives that this new section of the A.E.U. will quickly absorb the tradition of trade unionism, and will stand shoulder to shoulder with their fellow-workers in maintaining and improving labour conditions.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.85). (My emphasis)

Even though the unions had at last accepted that women workers were here to stay and not something nasty that needed only to be ignored and it would go away, women were still seen as the ones whose real and natural task in life was to bring up children and she might want to go out to work as well. This comes out clearly in a speech delivered by Sir Stafford Cripps in February 1943.

'It is certain that we shall only be able to provide a decent standard for the people of this country if we can employ not only all the men, but a very large

proportion of the women as well, after the war. We have achieved the theoretical acceptance of equality of capacity, but we have not yet worked out the economic basis of that equality. There is, of course, one essential difference, which even the most fervent champions of equality will admit - women have an added responsibility in society which they would not want to ignore - the responsibility of bearing and bringing up children.

Woman is, and must remain, the homemaker, ... But while this difference exists, and must be insisted upon, it does not provide any reason whatsoever why women who wish to engage in industry or commerce should be debarred from undertaking any task of work which they choose.' (TUC booklet. 1955. P.86 my emphasis).

This attitude ignores the very real barriers that prevent women, as the ones who are responsible for the family and the home, from undertaking 'any task of work which they choose.' And this failure to tackle the basic problems confronting women workers has resulted in the perpetuation of the sexual divisions within the work force, and the reproduction of women as an unorganised, weak section of the working class.

The policies of exclusion practised until the 1940's by male trade unionists have had certain important effects on the organisation of women workers and also on their distribution in the work force. As we have seen the craft unions have effectively prevented women from becoming skilled workers such as carpenters and plumbers, such trades are considered to be 'men's' work. Protectionist practices have also led to women workers having to seek work in areas where there is not a strong tradition of trade unionism and where women were consequently not prevented from working by the unions. Since the second world war this area has been largely in the expanding service industries where the unions were not very strong or often not in existence at all. This has meant that workers taking up jobs in these industries were unorganised, and they were mostly women

because the hours of work are flexible and they had not been excluded from these areas by trade unions. This lack of organisation is a result, not of women's lack of interest in becoming organised, but of the exclusion of women from many areas of the work force where strong trade union organisation existed and the non-existence of trade unions in these specific areas; there are also difficulties inherent in the work situation of small shops and offices which put obstacles in the path of trade union organisation.¹⁵

Thus ideological practices within the trade union movement have led to the constitution of women as an unorganised, cheap sector of the work force and a source of reserve labour. The existence of women as a source of cheap labour has kept down the wage rates of male workers, and the ability of employers to substitute unorganised female labour for organised, and more expensive male labour, has often resulted in a general lowering of wages; these ideological divisions have clearly operated in the interests of the capitalist class. We have also seen that the ideology of a woman's place exists in the form of material practices within the trade union movement and it is

15 Trade unionism in these areas has grown in recent years and women form an increasing proportion of the membership. The growth of unions in the service industries and the public sector where many women are employed is commented on by Hunt: 'The growth in trade union membership amongst public employees coincides with the growth of the welfare state, the expansion of both national and local government services and the upsurge in office employment. The outstanding example is NUPE, a union which organises manual workers in the public employment sector - hospitals, schools etc., - and including many women e.g. school-meals assistants, hospital cleaners. Other unions which show sharp increases in women members are COHSE - again public sector employees; NUBE - bank employees; NALGO - non-manual local government workers. The 'general' unions, GMWU and TGWU and the AUEW, have also shown marked increases. The shopworkers' union USDAW, after a fall in the '60's, has since begun to increase its women membership.' (Hunt 1975. P.9).

through these practices that divisions between male and female workers have been reproduced. The class nature of the ideology is clear from our examination of the ways in which women were used during the first world war, both as a reserve supply of labour and as a means of undercutting long-established male wage rates. The economic class struggle of the working class is considerably weakened by the ideology of a woman's place and this operates to the advantage of the capitalist class.

Ideological practices within the trade union movement have not only reproduced sexual divisions within its own ranks but have also contributed to the sexual division of labour within the work force. Thus despite women's increasing participation both in the work force and in the trade union movement the ideology of a woman's place continues to be reproduced and women remain as a pool of cheap and relatively unorganised labour constituting a reserve labour force. In this chapter we have seen how practices within the work force and the trade union movement in the past have created these ideological divisions. An analysis of the practices reproducing these ideological relations within the trade union movement today remains to be undertaken.

Chapter 9

Structure and Practices within
the trade union movement

In the previous chapter we saw how practices within the work force and the trade union movement in the past have constituted married women as an important part of the reserve labour force. They have also resulted in the restriction of women to the lower paid and less skilled end of the labour market and their lack of organisation into trade unions. In this chapter I want to examine the way these ideological divisions are still maintained and reproduced within the trade union movement.

Ideological social relations are materialised in different practices within different state apparatuses. Within the trade union movement the sexual division of labour can be clearly seen in the positions that women occupy and the functions they fulfil in the structure of trade union organisation. This phenomenon is not restricted to one level of organisation alone but is found throughout the movement. Thus although the trade unions no longer exclude women from membership practices exist within them which maintain and reproduce the sexual division of labour.

To illustrate this contention I am going to look at two very different unions both of which have prepared special reports on the position of women within the union and the industries within which these unions organise. They are the National and Local Government Officers Association, NALGO, which set up an equal rights working party and has produced a report, and the Association

of Cinematograph and Television Technicians, ACTT, which has produced a report entitled 'Patterns of Discrimination'. It is interesting to compare these two unions because they cater for workers in very different circumstances. NALGO caters for non-manual workers in the government services and a survey conducted by the union showed that 8% of men and 35% of women in NALGO fell below the TUC low pay target of £30 per week in 1974.¹ ACTT, on the other hand, caters for highly specialised and often highly paid (when they are in work) members. However, despite the different occupations and salary levels that the two unions cater for the relative position of women within these unions is practically identical.

The NALGO working party carried out a survey in October 1974 to find out the extent of participation of women in union affairs. They state that:

'there is a good spread of responses among branches and districts, so that the results presented here may be regarded as representative.' (NALGO, 1975, p.29)

Participation of women members in union activities was measured by the number of women holding posts in the various branches. The following table shows that men hold posts on executive committees far out of proportion to the male branch membership and women are under represented.

¹ See Table 8, Chapter 5 for a further breakdown of these figures.

Table 1. Distribution by sex and by service of members of executive committees and ordinary members.

	<u>Executive committees</u>		<u>Membership</u>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Local Government	82.8%	17.2%	59.3%	40.7%
Health	67.3%	32.7%	40.6%	59.4%
Gas	83.2%	16.8%	57.9%	42.1%
Electricity	79.2%	20.8%	49.5%	50.5%
Water Services	90.9%	9.1%	76.8%	23.2%
Transport	85.6%	14.4%	68.0%	32.0%
Universities	29.8%	70.2%	15.8%	84.2%
New towns	85.9%	14.1%	71.2%	28.8%
Industrial Estates	56.3%	43.7%	58.3%	41.7%
Total	80.4%	19.6%	57.3%	42.7%

Source: NALGO Equal Rights Working Party Report, 1975, p.29

Local government is the largest individual service and women make up 40.7% of the membership, however women constitute only 17.2% of executive committee members. Clearly women are under represented at this level in relation to their proportion of the total membership and the report comments that,

'The cause of this cannot be simply in men out-numbering women in each branch, since the university branches are all at least 60% female, and even so the men are over-represented on executive committees.' (NALGO, 1975, p.30)

This sexual division of labour is reflected in the types of post held by branch officers of both sexes.

Table 2 (see overleaf)

Table 2 Sex of Branch Officers

Office	Males		Females		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
President	247	94.6	14	5.4	261
Chairman	448	94.7	25	5.2	473
Secretary	410	84.2	77	15.8	487
Assistant Secretary	124	58.5	88	41.5	212
Treasurer	433	89.5	51	10.5	484
Publicity Officer	280	82.8	58	17.2	338
Education Officer	253	83.0	52	17.0	305
Welfare Officer	217	70.2	92	29.8	309
Ancillaries Correspondent	256	88.3	34	11.7	290
Total all offices	2,668	84.5	491	15.5	3,159

Source, NALGO Equal Rights Working Party Report, 1975, p.30

Clearly most of these posts are held by men. The post that comes nearest to having a more even distribution of men and women filling it is that of assistant secretary. The report comments,

'Posts like assistant secretary are presumably held by women so that they can do the branch typing work. 41.5 per cent of assistant secretaries are female but only 5.3% of chairmen.' (NALGO, 1975, p.30)

As with the labour market there is a clear sexual division of labour within NALGO. Even though women constitute 40.3% of the membership they do not occupy posts in proportion to their total numbers, they remain ordinary rank and file members while the men are the ones who make their way up the union hierarchy. On the National Executive Committee of NALGO there were, at the time of the working Party's investigation, 6 women members which means that women constituted 8% of the Executive committee compared with 40% of total union membership. The practices which reinforce these divisions will be looked at below, here I merely want to illustrate that a form of sexual division of labour exists within

the union structure.

A similar picture emerges when we look at the ACTT report, it states that,

'women in the ACTT are under-represented at every level of the union, despite its democratic structure.'
(ACTT, 1975, p.15)(2)

The report continues,

'If women were 'just members like any others' approximately one sixth of all union officers, and representatives from the shop through to the General Council, would be women. Out of approximately 145 shop stewards in the union, in 1973-74, 9 (6%) were women. Three of the 26 Executive members were women (11%). This means that very few General Council members are women. Of the union's principal Committees, one - the Committee on Equality - has a majority of women. This is the only committee where any sexual bias could be justified. But of 149 positions on other committees, 12 were held by women (8.5%). The various positions were actually held by 76 different men, and 6 different women (7.3% - or exactly half the percentage of women in the Union). On the union's 26 branch, divisional and sectional committees, there were 72 officers. Ten of these were women, of whom 6 were secretary or assistant secretary to the committee. The remaining 4 were the chairwomen of predominantly women's sections. Of the 26 committees, only 6 had both women and men officers. There has never been a woman ACTT president.' (ACTT, 1975, p.15)

The report notes also that often a woman is encouraged to stand for election to a committee precisely because a committee needs someone who can type and/or record the minutes of meetings.

2 'Power in the ACTT is vested in the shops. Overall union policy is decided by the delegates to Annual Conference, who are elected by the shops. The week to week running of the union is in the hands of the executive committee, whose 26 members are elected by Annual Conference delegates. The Executive Committee can be overruled by the General Council, which is the governing body of the union during the year. Executive Committee members are also on the General Council but the bulk of General Council members are elected shop representatives, most often the shop steward, with additional representatives for large shops. The people who are elected as union officers (lay members in official positions) and other representatives, the sorts of issues they are concerned with and decisions they take, thus closely reflect the character of the shops. In turn the character of the shops closely reflects the structure of the industry on which the shops are based.' (ACTT, 1975, p.14)

In the ACTT the proportion of men who had ever been on a shop committee at all was two times the proportion of women who had. The following table gives the percentage of men and women who have held positions on the shop committee and it is startling to see the very high proportion of women who have served as secretaries and the low proportion of women who have held any other post except that of committee members.

Table 3

Positions held on Shop committee

Permanently employed shops.

<u>Position</u>	Proportion of	
	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
Shop steward	10.5	24.5
Deputy shop steward	3	16
Chairperson	0.2	5
Treasurer	1.5	6.5
Collector	0.3	1
Secretary	33.5	3
Representative	19.5	21.5
Committee member	31.5	22.5

Source: Patterns of Discrimination: ACTT, 1975, p.15

These two examples, NALGO and ACTT, reflect the position of women throughout the trade union movement. As Judith Hunt argues,

'It is noticeable that even in those unions with significant numbers of women members, women play a restricted role in trade union government. There are comparatively few women officers serving full-time with the exception of the Tailors and Garment Workers. There is gross under-representation of women on executives and delegations, and even where the majority of members are women, delegations have been sent to the TUC with negligible female representation. The T&GWU has no women on its executive /14.9% of its members are women N.C.7, nor does the AUEW Engineering section /13.1% of its members are women N.C.7. COHSE, with a very high proportion /70.4% N.C.7 of female members, has only one executive member who is a woman. There is some representation

on NALGO & NUT, but the highest representation is in the Tobacco Workers, CPISA(3) and the Tailors and Garment workers.' (Hunt, 1975, p.10)

The following table shows the disproportion that exists between female membership and female representation at the level of union national executives and full-time officials.

Table 4: Women in unions 1974

Union	no. of women members	women members as % total membership	National Executive		Full-time officials	
			men	women	men	women
NUPE	294,640	62.6	-	-	-	-
GMWU	269,263	31.2			136	4
TGWU	266,348	14.9			500	4
NALGO	200,503	38.7	52	8		6
NUT	186,146	74.3	35	7	12	2
USDAW	184,248	56.4	16	1	124	5
AUEW (Eng.)	154,169	13.1				1
CPISA	147,549	68.4	20	6	12	3
NUTGW	101,190	86.5	11	4	41	7
COHSE	80,722	66.6	27	1	35	1
APEX	68,678	53.9		4	49	1
SOGAT	68,284	36.4				
EEPTU	54,443	12.9	14	-	170	-
NUHKW	52,183	72.7				
UPW	48,602	25.0	14	5	11	1
ASTMS	45,100	14.5			22	4
Bakers Union	22,804	43.1	15	3	23	1
NU Dyers & Bleachers	21,433	38.8				
Ceramic & ATU	20,436	52.8	20	2		-
Tobacco Workers Union	13,726	65.6	13	3	6	3
(NUBE		48.0	7	1	14	3)

Source: Organising women workers: Judith Hunt, 1975, (p.10. Table 1)

Hunt says that representation is slightly better at local level where 'a larger proportion of women are shop stewards or in branch committees.' (Hunt, 1975, p.10) but in our look at NALGO and ACTT local organisation we have seen that the numbers of women holding such positions is still not representative of the numbers of women members. This lack of representation is also apparent at the level of the TUC where men occupy most of the leadership positions. The General Council of the TUC has 37 members and 2 of these are women, however they are 'token women' because these seats are specifically reserved for them. At the TUC congress the sexual division of labour is again obvious, most of the delegates are men. Hunt writes that,

'At the 1975 TUC Congress out of a total of 1,030 delegates there were only 84 women. Out of the 15 affiliated unions with more women than men in membership there were still 5 whose delegations to Congress did not include a woman.'
(Hunt, 1975, p.10)

So even though most unions had ceased to operate restrictive practices against women by 1975 the representation of women at the TUC and within the union structures themselves has not changed greatly in the last 40 years. At the present time instead of openly prohibiting women from joining unions and actively campaigning for their exclusion from membership and even from the work force the practices which reproduce the sexual division of labour have taken on more subtle and less obvious forms. But they clearly still exist because the sexual division of labour is evident within the unions.

The sexual division of labour in the structure and organisation of the trade union movement is a practical manifestation of the ideological relations which restrict women to the home. This male female division within the trade union movement often

means that women workers' problems are not seen as pertinent to the movement as a whole; this question will be returned to later. First it is important to place the under-representation of women in its proper context. In the years since the war the recruitment of women into trade unions has grown at a faster rate than the recruitment of men. In 1975 there were 2,772,819 women in unions affiliated to the TUC and they constituted 26.8% (Hunt, 1975, p.8) of the total membership. The rapid increase in female membership can in part be attributed to the ending of policies of exclusion previously practised by unions, and also the expansion of the tertiary sector of the economy where women are largely employed and the development of new unions in these areas.

Hunt comments:

'In the post-war period the percentage of women in trade unions again dropped to the pre-war average of 15 -16%. However... there has been a sharp increase in both the numbers and proportion of women in the trade union movement. The "take-off" point for this growth occurred in the early '60's.' (Hunt, 1975, p.8)

This sudden rise in female membership of the TUC is also partly attributable to the affiliation of unions which had a high female membership such as NALGO and the NUT, they affiliated in 1964 and 1970 respectively. It is certainly the service industries, the recently expanded area of the economy where a high proportion of women workers are found, that the growth in female union membership has come from. The traditional areas of 'women's work' such as clothing, footwear and textiles, have not seen any increase in the unionisation of women, in fact Hunt says that some have even suffered a decline. She goes on to say that in the traditionally female jobs where unions have been established

'women have always represented a large proportion, if not the majority, of the membership...The relative stability

in the proportion of women members in these unions is matched by the relative stability in the total number of members. The high degree of penetration of the unions into the work force, plus the lack of growth of these industries are no doubt responsible for this situation. (Hunt, 1975, p.8)

Despite the marked increase in the numbers of women in trade unions the proportion of women unionised is still lower than the proportion of men.⁴ This comparative lack of organisation of working women into trade unions is another aspect of the ideological relations which constitute the sexual division of labour. In this case the effect of such a division is clear, a large proportion of the work force is outside the trade union movement and is therefore not included in agreements about conditions of employment, wages etc., and does not take part in the struggles organised by unions at the place of work. This weakens the unions and allows the capitalist class to overcome working class resistance in areas of poor unionisation. It also means that many women workers are paid wages which are below union rates, they can be used as cheap labour, and this phenomenon undercuts other wages. So in the economic class struggle of the working class the lack of organisation amongst sections of women workers has a significant weakening effect and acts very much to the advantage of the capitalist class.

Although the proportion of women in unions is still lower than the proportion of men, women are joining trade unions at an increasing rate. However, despite the increase in female

4 'Female trade union members represented approximately a quarter of all female employees in 1961 and a third in 1971' (Women and Work, statistical survey, 1974, p.13) This compares with a figure of almost a half for male employees (1968.) (British Labour Statistics, 1971)

membership, within the unions, as within the labour market, a sexual division of labour operates which prevents women from taking on posts or jobs involving more responsibility and more time. Within the unions very few women take on positions as officials and within the work force they occupy the lower end of the labour market where wages are low and prospects for training and promotion hardly exist.

This sexual division of labour is often blamed on a specific external factor viz, the fact that women have domestic responsibilities and therefore do not have time to attend union meetings and participate in union affairs. It is argued that because this is a state of affairs in society as a whole the unions alone can not really do anything about it and it is only to be expected that it has effects within the organisation of the unions. This position is reflected in the following comments by the TUC general council on education facilities for girls. They are arguing against any improvement because it would give girls aspirations that society could not fulfil. It is a logical step from this position to say that the unions cannot change the position of women within the unions because the problem is a problem of the whole of society. This is from the report of the 1972 Trade Union Congress:

'The General Council considered that parental and other social attitudes had an effect on the differential educational opportunities for girls and boys...However, changes in the organisation and practice of education could be effective only if they were in general accord with changes in social attitudes and behaviour; and schools could not be expected to educate girls in ways which, given the current attitudes and general behaviour of society at large, might severely narrow (sic) their employment opportunities or their chances of job satisfaction.' (TUC report, 1972, p.170)

This position on the education of girls smacks of apartheid along sexual lines rather than racial.⁵ Because women's position in society is limited and many of the more interesting and rewarding jobs are closed to them they must not be educated to expect something that they cannot have, in other words nothing must be done to change the existing state of affairs.

Although the General Council may come up with a position such as this it is clear that there are contradictions within the trade union movement, and although some sectors wish to maintain practices which reproduce the sexual division of labour there are other tendencies which are fighting for a transformation of these practices and a unification of the working class in this particular sphere of ideological relations. Later in the Congress a NUPE member, a woman, attacked the position of the General Council:

'Last year the TUC women's conference passed a resolution calling for improved education and training facilities for women and girls. In paragraph 268 of this year's General Council's Report we are given the General Council's response to this resolution. We are told, first, and quite correctly in my opinion that the reasons for the relative lack of educational opportunities for girls are complex and arise from the traditional attitudes within society as a whole. But then we are confronted with the extraordinary statement that because of this the General Council feel that caution must be exercised in encouraging girls to undertake education or training "related to the fields of employment

5 Dr. Verwoerd of South Africa said something similar about the so-called Bantu. The Bantu education Act was introduced 'to ensure that Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them.' (First et al, 1973, p.56) He is in favour of an education that fits the 'Bantu' for the jobs that are available to them within the South African system of apartheid and thus it must be very limited to ensure that the result is not 'the creation of a frustrated people who have expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa do not allow them to fulfil.' (First et al, 1973, p.56)

traditionally regarded as mainly suitable for men, since their employment prospects might be impaired as a consequence."... On the other hand, the General Council concede that society has constructed barriers which inhibit the advancement of a group of workers who in this case happen to be women. Yet instead of exhorting us to breach those barriers as part of our general progress they appear to be asking the trade union movement to accept and to perpetuate the limitations imposed upon it by traditional thinking, historically conditioned. I am not singling out the General Council, because they are no worse and no better than the rest of us. I am merely trying to illustrate how ineffective the trade union movement can become if we allow capitalist values to determine our attitudes.' (TUC report, 1972, p.386)

Clearly there are practices, which reproduce 'values' and 'attitudes' within the trade union movement itself and these have to be transformed in order to begin to overcome the sexual division of labour. How do these practices function? Are they neutral as the General Council would have us believe, or are they an integral part of bourgeois ideological relations helping to maintain and reproduce not only the sexual division of labour but also bourgeois hegemony?

To provide the beginnings of an answer to this question it is necessary to examine certain practices within unions and to establish their effects. In arguing that practices within the trade union movement reproduce the sexual division of labour within the labour movement and have effects on the structure of the work force itself I do not wish to minimise the importance of women's 'domestic responsibilities' in preventing them from participating fully in the work force and in the trade union movement. But there are certain practices within the trade union movement which reproduce the ideological relations and contribute to the restriction of women to the home, these are what I want to look at now.

I shall first look at participation in union affairs by men

and women and I shall again take as examples NALGO and ACTT.

In NALGO's Equal Rights working party's report the low participation of members in union activity is noted, 'Only 34% of branches claimed to have more than 20% of members attending general meetings.' (NALGO, 1975, p.31) This low participation in union activities is clearly not attributable only to the women members, the working party undertook a detailed survey to find out why members of both sexes did not participate. Before we look closely at this perhaps it is worth noting that the TUC women's advisory committee laid the blame for lack of participation by women trade unionists in union activities firmly at the door of their 'domestic responsibilities', the responsibility was not perceived as being in part that of the unions. They wrote that,

'more than half the women workers in Britain today are married and have domestic responsibilities as have many single women who care for parents or other relatives. Trade union work is satisfying but it consumes time and it is partly because of their domestic responsibilities that so few women act in a representative capacity for their unions.' (Hunt, 1975, p.10)

The results of NALGO's investigations support the claim that domestic responsibilities prevent a lot of women from participating in union activity. But the practices of the union can either reinforce the difficulties created by these domestic responsibilities or can act so as to minimise their effects. In laying the blame at the door of domestic responsibilities it is easy for a union to conclude that the problem is one about which they can do little. It is more difficult and involves more work for a union to assess the effects of its practices on the participation of women in the union and to transform those practices which reproduce these ideological relations.

The following statistics come from a NALGO survey published in November 1974. A breakdown of the numbers of members who attended the last branch annual meeting by sex and marital status was carried out and the attendance was highest amongst married men.

Table 5 Percentage of members who attended the last branch annual meeting by sex and marital status.

	<u>men</u>	<u>women</u>
Married	48.4%	26.7%
Single	32.1%	23.5%
Widowed, etc.	42.9%	32.2%
Total	43.9%	30.0%

Source: Equal rights working party report: NALGO, 1975, p.71

On average 44% of men compared with 30% of women members attended, and perhaps surprisingly, single women were the least likely to attend union meetings. On the other hand, this might be explained by the fact that most young girls take jobs between leaving school and having their first baby. This means that their job is often seen, by them and others, as a stop gap, something that is only temporary. The fact that they are going to leave work within a few years means that they don't have any long term interest in improving their wages or working conditions and so don't participate in union activities. The fact that the great majority of women return to work when their children are at school is ignored so that although women do have a long term interest in work outside the home the practice of leaving work to have a family ensures that this long term interest is not recognised or acted upon. This is another example of the way bourgeois ideological social relations operate. In the form of 'a woman's place

is in the home' they serve to weaken the struggle of the trade union movement by acting against the full involvement of women in trade union activity.

The women most likely to attend a union meeting are those who are on their own, because they are widowed or divorced and this figure is comparable to the proportion of single men who attend meetings; married women attend less frequently than widowed women. The reasons for non-attendance are interesting and have been broken down in NALGO's statistics to give some surprising results. More men (22.1%) gave lack of interest in attending as the reason for non-attendance than women where the percentage was only 14.7%. This figure is broken down according to marital status. Only 10.7% of married women gave lack of interest as a reason for non-attendance whereas a total of 72.6% gave reasons of domestic responsibilities and inconvenient time and/or place. This shows that women who are interested in attending union meetings are prevented from doing so by other factors, 36.4% of them were prevented by domestic responsibilities alone. On the other hand 21.8% of single women gave the reason for non-attendance as being lack of interest and only 10.1% of them gave domestic responsibilities as the reason. This reflects the fact that single women, with exceptions such as unmarried mothers or those who are looking after elderly relatives etc., have the choice of attendance or non-attendance and a substantial proportion in fact choose not to attend. Interestingly, however, a far higher proportion of single men, 31.5%, decide not to attend because of lack of interest. The proportion of men not interested in attending was lowest amongst married men, 17.6%, where again a large proportion of them, 19.1%, cited domestic

responsibilities as the reason for non-attendance. These figures indicate that it is not simply a lack of interest in union concerns which prevents women from participating fully in union activity. There are very real material obstacles to this participation. With the removal of these barriers the opportunity for participation would then exist, although of course women might then decide that they are not interested and choose non-attendance. But given the present circumstances where women find themselves with responsibility for children and a home there is no justification for alleging that women are less interested in the unions than are men, the figures indicate the opposite.

Table 6. Women: Reasons given for not attending the last branch meeting.

	<u>Married</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Widowed etc.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Inconvenient time	24.0%	29.3%	24.9%	26.0%
Inconvenient place	12.2%	10.9%	13.2%	11.8%
Domestic responsibilities	36.4%	10.1%	27.4%	26.4%
Family illness, emergency	1.9%	1.7%	3.0%	1.9%
Not interested in attending	10.7%	21.8%	11.7%	14.7%
Other	14.8%	26.2%	19.8%	19.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: NALGO Equal rights working party report, 1975, p.72

Table 7 (see overleaf)

Table 7 Men: Reasons given for not attending the last branch meeting.

	<u>Married</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Widowed etc.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Inconvenient time	28.2%	23.2%	24.1%	26.6%
Inconvenient place	12.5%	8.9%	10.3%	11.3%
Domestic responsibilities	19.1%	3.8%	6.9%	14.0%
Family illness/emergency	2.8%	1.4%	6.9%	2.5%
Not interested in attending	17.6%	31.5%	24.2%	22.1%
Other	19.8%	31.2%	27.6%	23.5%
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NALGO Equal rights working party report, 1975, p.71

The percentages of men and women members attending branch meetings regularly and those attending annual branch meetings show that fewer women and more men than attend annual branch meetings attend the regular branch meetings. For annual branch meetings the figures for attendance are 43.9% of the men and 30.0% of the women, the table below gives a figure of 46.5% of the men members and 26.6% of the women members attending branch meetings.

Table 8 Percentage of members who normally attend branch meetings.

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
	%	%
Married	50.3	26.6
Single	26.1	25.1
Widowed etc.	47.6	33.7
Total	46.5	26.6

Source: NALGO Equal rights working party report, 1975, p.72

The percentage of members who normally attend branch general meetings rises with earnings which probably reflects the fact that more women are in lower earnings ranges than men. Amongst those earning less

than £1,000 a year the percentage of those attending is 32.7 and amongst those earning £4,001 or over the attendance is the highest at 50.9% (NALGO, 1975, p.72).

A sexual division of labour is evident at the meetings where a large number of women do not speak at all, 44.1% compared with 25.4% of men, and far fewer women (20.3%) than men (43.8%) speak on motions affecting union policy. Thus even when women manage to get to union meetings the ideological relations still operate and they participate less fully than the men who attend. Presumably this is a reflection of less training in such skills as public speaking for women than for men. Such opportunities are often not available to women for the same reasons that they cannot attend union meetings and this lack serves to reproduce the sexual division of labour between delegates and representatives and the ordinary rank and file members of the union. Another factor which militates against women taking on positions of responsibility in the union structure is that most representatives and officials have a long unbroken career within the unions. Because of the position women occupy as housewife and mother their union career is broken and they therefore do not have one of the important prerequisites for becoming a union official. There is a higher proportion of men with long union membership than women.

Table 9 Proportions of members in each range of years of membership.

<u>Years</u>	<u>Men %</u>	<u>Women %</u>
less than 1	9.9	18.7
1-2	7.1	12.6
2-5	24.3	28.9
5-10	20.4	21.3
more than 10	38.3	18.5
All years	100.0	100.0

Source: NALGO Equal rights working party report, 1975, (p.69)

The working party comments that this table shows that

'women usually have not been members of NALGO for as long as men. This is not because of a proportionately larger increase in women over the past few years, since, in fact, more men have been recruited. The explanation must, therefore, lie in a higher turnover rate among women, which prevents them from developing the long union "career" which is helpful for reaching branch, district and national executives.'

(NALGO, 1975, p.68)

This higher turnover rate is due to the fact that because of totally inadequate day care facilities and insufficient maternity provisions women have to leave work when they have their first baby. This also means that they leave the union, so both their union "career" and their job suffer an interruption and they do not ever make up the ground that is lost through the years spent bearing children and raising a family.

Despite the obvious problem that a woman's 'role' as wife and mother creates in terms of full participation in both union activities and in the work force can everything be reduced to this? Is there no way that the unions can change their own practices so as to minimise the effect of women's 'domestic responsibilities' on their participation in union activity? Can they not change certain practices so as to work for a transformation of the sexual division of labour evident within the union movement or are they condemned to impotence in the face of this division which embraces the entire social formation? I would argue that the sexual division of labour within a state apparatus, such as the trade union movement, is reproduced by practices within that apparatus and can therefore be changed by a transformation of these practices so that instead of tending to divide the working class along sexual lines a tendency towards unity is installed.

The NALGO branch meetings are usually held in the evenings,

this is common to a majority of trade unions. The table below shows at what times NALGO branch meetings are held.

Table 10 Percentage of branches holding meetings at particular times.

<u>Time</u>	
During working hours	3.5%
After working hours	92.2%
At lunch time	3.7%

Source: NALGO Equal rights working party report, 1975 (p.31)

The time of a branch meeting is of great significance as far as the ability of women to attend the meeting is concerned. If the meeting is held in the evening most married women, and many single ones also, have children to feed and put to bed, and household chores such as washing and ironing to do. They do not have much time to attend a meeting and are often unable to do so because the children cannot be left alone. A meeting during working hours, on the other hand, does not present these problems because women at work have already overcome the problem of their 'domestic responsibilities' and there is thus no more difficulty in getting women members to attend such meetings than men members. So the practice of 92.2% of NALGO branches of holding meetings after working hours maximises the problem of women attending. If all meetings were held during working hours women's additional responsibilities in the home would not act as a barrier to their attendance and so the sexual division of labour in this sphere would be minimised. This is underlined by the figures of men and women who would attend meetings if they were held at a more convenient time, there is a much higher proportion of women than men who would attend.

Table 11 Percentage of members who would attend meetings at a more convenient time, e.g., during lunch hour.

	<u>Men %</u>	<u>Women %</u>
Married	31.2	46.7
Single	32.3	39.8
Widowed	23.8	44.6
Total	31.3	44.0

Source: NALGO Equal rights working party report, 1975 (p.73)

Another practice which militates against women, or men, with young children being able to attend union meetings is the non-existent provision of creche facilities at meetings. Some branches have managed to set up day nursery or creche facilities at their place of work but this is 'only a handful of branches' and this does not make it any easier for people with young children to attend meetings after working hours. The working party recommended that a campaign should be launched to win 'the fight to hold branch meetings and time off for union representatives to carry out their functions during working hours.' (NALGO, 1975, p.31) These two aims would go a long way towards enabling women to participate in union activities on an equal basis with male trade unionists and such practices would not reproduce the sexual division of labour, they would work against this ideological division. However these practices have not yet been instituted and divisive practices are still in operation ensuring that women are prevented from participating in union affairs and so reproducing the division within the working class between male and female workers.

Another practice within NALGO which serves to underline the position of women within the union is the 'Prettiest new recruit' competition in the 'Public Services'. The practice reinforces the notion that women are not in the union to become active and

militant trade unionists but to be decorative ornaments and to look pretty. In reply to a questionnaire sent round by the working party which asked if members thought the competition was a good idea or not the majority of members, 1141 men and 1919 women were indifferent to it. But 717 men compared with 396 women thought that it was a good idea, and 388 men compared with 919 women thought it was a bad idea. The continuation of such practices serves to reproduce the sexual divisions within the union which can only weaken the overall organisation of the union rather than strengthen it. To maintain practices which ensure that the majority of women cannot attend union meetings and therefore cannot participate in and understand union affairs is to weaken the union itself. We have already seen how union practices in the past have divided women workers from men workers by excluding women from strongly unionised areas of the work force, skilled work and so on. This was done in order to keep women out of the labour market but in fact it ensured that women formed an unorganised section of the labour force and provided cheap labour for the capitalist class to exploit. This weakened the working class struggle against capital. Now, when women are allowed into unions and unions are encouraging them to join, practices are still in existence within the unions which maintain the sexual division of labour. Thus the bourgeois ideology of a woman's place being in the home is reproduced through practices within ideological state apparatuses and serves to weaken and divide the working class. It is a bourgeois ideology precisely because it divides the working class and helps to prevent its unity which is an essential prerequisite for the seizure of state power by the proletariat.

The same practices which are apparent within NALGO are found within ACTT. Attendance at meetings was found to be higher amongst men than women with two thirds of women and three quarters of men usually attending shop meetings.

'Approximately one fifth of both men and women said they occasionally attended, and the remaining one seventh of the women and one twentieth of the men said they hardly ever or never attended.' (ACTT, 1975, p.15)

These average figures, however, mask another factor which affects attendance rates.

'This difference between proportion of males and females attending meetings N.C. is not general throughout the whole industry, and is caused mainly by the low attendance of women in the largest companies. In the companies employing under 750 people, the attendance figures for men and women were almost identical, but in those employing 750 upwards, 20% more men than men than women attended meetings usually or always, and 13% more women than men never or hardly ever attended.' (ACTT, 1975, p.15)

The attendance figures in the freelance shops actually reverse this relation. The attendance figures for men and women are lower but a higher proportion of women (37%) than men (38%) usually or always attend meetings. Conversely,

'28% of the women and 30% of the men said they never or hardly ever attended. (ACTT, 1975, p.15)

It is interesting that as well as a sexual division of labour which operates through the generally lower numbers of women than men active in the union, both in terms of going to meetings and standing for office, there is also a strong sense of what it is appropriate to discuss in a meeting which tends to divide women's interests from general union interests. The following incident illustrates this contention and shows that even when women become interested in the union they are discouraged from pursuing this interest actively by the prejudices held by their fellow trade union members. The ACTT report states that:

'Several women in the ACTT said they had raised their dissatisfaction with conditions at their place of work, such as the medical facilities provided by the company, the cleanliness of the lavatories and the noise and safety in the building. "The shop steward told me it was nothing to do with the union" said one woman, and others complained that they had been ridiculed for making a fuss over trivial matters. One shop steward did indeed cite women who complained over noise and cleanliness as examples of "women's backwardness" in trade union matters, and such an attitude is not at all uncommon in the trade union world. Rather than criticising women for being 'backward', ignorant, or over-concerned with the conditions in which they work, the concern of women for this area of working life should be recognised as an important contribution to the union. The more areas of working life the union is involved in, the stronger it will be;..' (ACTT, 1975, p.16)

Sexual divisions are also present at the level of the TUC conferences, not only in the very low number of women delegates at the main conference but in the existence of a separate women's TUC. The TUC holds a special women's conference annually for women workers in affiliated unions. At this conference full discussions take place on all the major issues affecting women workers. However, these issues are, or should be, the concern of the whole trade union movement not only the women in the trade union movement; but because there is a women's conference where they are discussed they are not brought before the annual TUC. Thus 'women's' issues, which have a crucial bearing on the unity and effectiveness of the trade union movement, are segregated and not considered as part of the important business of the TUC. Women workers can deal with women's issues and because a women's conference exists the delegates to the TUC can be left free to discuss other matters. This institutionalisation of the peripheral nature of 'women's' issues reproduces the sexual division of labour within the labour movement and ensures that the whole labour movement continues to see these issues as only women's

issues. This refusal of the trade union movement to confront the issues as being of vital importance to male and female workers alike ensures that problems of child care and so on are still seen as the personal problems of women workers who are thus prevented from participating fully in the labour movement and the work force. Recently there has been debate about the women's conference in the TUC on whether to eliminate it altogether. At the 1971 Congress an ACTT member, female, commenting on the existence of the Women's Advisory Committee and the Women's TUC said:

'Whatever way you look at it women are being kept apart, possibly for the best of motives, but nevertheless kept apart. Later during the week we shall be discussing a country, South Africa, where there is a word for this kind of thing: apartheid. There it is a question of colour, here it is a question of sex.' (TUC report, 1971, p.420)

She went on to say that having a women's TUC separate perpetuates,

'a myth that as a body we can be effective while at the same time keeping our women in a little section apart, that somehow or other their problems are different from those of the men, that their problems do not interest men. I think this is doing a disservice to our brothers. After all, I have it on the best authority that all our brothers here have had mothers, and a great many of them have wives and others have sisters...We are a divided body because we have a divided TUC for women...The only people who can benefit from any division, whether it is a well-intentioned one or a rather mindless one, are the employers.' (TUC report, 1971, p.420)

This argument reflects the way that the women's TUC serves so as to prevent or curtail discussion of 'women's' issues at the TUC, it can always be argued that they have already been, or will be, discussed elsewhere. This problem was highlighted during the debate on the Working Women's Charter at the 1975 TUC. Although in this case discussion took place many delegates regarded the issue as of secondary importance and not central to the TUC.

Miss B. Dean said:

'Reference has already been made to what I am going to say but perhaps when a motion comes before Congress on the Working Women's Charter so many male delegates find a sudden thirst and leave the hall, that in itself is a case why unions need to have a policy adopted by Congress to ensure that trade unions do more to involve women within their ranks and achieve equality for women whether at work or in social life.' (TUC report, 1975, p.414)

At every congress the women's advisory committee reports on what has been discussed at the women's TUC but this report only gives headings such as 'trade union organisation, aspects of equal pay' etc. There is no report on the discussions themselves or the issues raised and positions taken and so the report does not serve to bring these issues before the main body of the TUC at all. If the women's TUC acted so as to raise and debate issues within the main body of the TUC its existence would not necessarily be divisive. As it exists and operates at the moment however it is divisive because it ensures that many issues relating to women do not get raised at the TUC. This is not to say that no issues relating to women are raised at the TUC but that the women's TUC tends to segregate women's issues from the main TUC.

The women's TUC is restricted to debating 'women's' issues only, other issues cannot be raised. For those who argue that the women's TUC is important to raise the confidence of women to speak at conference this is a point to remember. If the delegates are restricted to speaking on women's issues alone they will master arguments and become articulate on those issues and will probably be able to debate them successfully at the TUC. But the arguments relating to other issues will not be familiar to them, they will not have had the opportunity to discuss them in the context of a conference, and so their ability to handle these arguments will not be improved. Perhaps this goes some way towards explaining the topics on which women delegates at

the TUC speak.

If we look at these topics it is noticeable that women only speak on so-called 'women's' issues, this does not pertain the other way round as many male delegates also speak on 'women's' issues. At the 1970 TUC the Industrial Relations Bill was discussed at length as it was an issue crucial to the future of the British trade union movement. No women delegates spoke on this issue at all. The issues that women spoke on were the existence of the women's TUC, price rises and unemployment, and one on low pay - this last was an exception. The speaker on price rises herself emphasised that prices are seen as a woman's concern, she said that she was speaking, 'not only as a trade-unionist but as a housewife.' (TUC report, 1970, p.534) This again reinforces the notion that women as housewives are the only ones who have to face the price rises in the shops! In this particular conference 'women's' issues were hardly mentioned at all and no debates took place on them apart from the comment on the women's TUC. This reflects the situation that the trade union movement was in at the time. The Equal Pay Act had been passed so there was seemingly no more discussion to take place on that, and a Tory government was in office and attacking the working class with legislation such as the Industrial Relations Bill. This is not to say that women workers did not support the struggle against the Bill but that because of all the obstacles in the way of their full participation in union affairs this support was not as great as it could have been. The sooner the trade union movement takes up and struggles for the demands that women workers are putting forward the sooner will women workers be able to fully participate in struggles around the other issues which face the

trade union movement, and the movement will be stronger because of this.

Practices which perpetuate the sexual division of labour within unions also affect the structure of the labour force. In 1975 the TUC general council carried out a survey of unions' rules and administration in the light of proposals in the White Paper 'Equality for Women' (Cmnd. 5724, 1974). At the 1975 Congress the General Council reported that:

'A questionnaire was sent to unions and a study of the replies in February showed that the unions' rules did not in the main discriminate against women, although there were a few exceptions. For example, two unions replying to the questionnaire excluded women entirely and in at least two further areas it appeared that female members were confined to a women's section irrespective of any qualifications they might possess, and this might in certain circumstances influence their employment prospects.' (TUC report, 1975, p.43)

So practices of exclusion of women from unions, and through this from certain jobs because of agreements between employer and union, were still occurring in 1975. Clearly union practices can affect the distribution of women in the labour force in this way and we shall see below how their policies are even now playing an important part in reproducing the sexual division of labour within the labour market. The General Council of the TUC clearly subscribes to the view that the unions themselves are not to blame for the position of their women members, the problem is a social problem and unions are practically impotent in the face of it.

'The General Council took the view that although the survey illustrated that most unions did not discriminate against women, women generally took a disproportionately small part in activities in relation to their numbers. This was probably due more to general social considerations than to factors within unions, but there might nevertheless be a case for positive discrimination in favour of women, although whether and how this was to be done would be a matter for each union to decide in the light of its own circumstances.' (TUC report, 1975, p.43)

This cautious attitude on the question of women's rights in trade unions only helps to ensure that the position women find themselves in does not change and the divisions remain. To underline the extent of discriminatory practices within unions that are affiliated to the TUC, a body which has upheld the principle of equal pay for women for almost 100 years, it is instructive to look at the ~~imp~~act of the advent of equal pay and sex discrimination legislation on the organisation of the unions themselves. The General Council made recommendations to affiliated unions as follows:

'Membership: Unions should ensure that women not only have equal rights of admittance to unions, but equality of access to all sections of them.

Contributions and Benefits: With equal pay becoming operative, contribution rates should be reviewed, and to conform with the new legislation differences in union contributions and benefits on the basis of sex should be phased out as soon as possible and certainly by January 1, 1978 at the latest.' (TUC report, 1975, p.44)

This is astounding in the light of the arguments aired at previous conferences about the time scale of the implementation of equal pay by the employers. At the TUC congress in 1970 the General Council reported on its discussions on the Equal Pay Act with the employment secretary. The Act was to be implemented by the end of 1975 but the General Council argued that this time period was too long and that it should be implemented by 1972. Clearly, from the recommendations above, 1975 is too soon for the unions themselves to conform to the legislation, 1978 is a more realistic deadline. They had already had since 1888 to enforce their own declared policy within their own organisations.

There is no recognition that lack of participation of women in union activity is rooted in practices both inside and outside the trade union movement. The General Council recommendations on this problem are totally inadequate and ineffectual,

'...unions should do more to encourage women to play an active part in their affairs. Unions might be able to use their journals for this purpose but very largely it was a question of endeavouring to change the attitudes of existing members of both sexes, and this would be a long term process.' (TUC report, 1975, p.44)

The General Council also recommended that unions should encourage more women to stand for election to posts of full-time officials. However in all the recommendations there is no mention of the practices which, as we have seen above, prevent women from being active trade unionists, and no amount of pious recommendations will change this situation if the material conditions and practices are not transformed.

The General Council also found it necessary to point out to unions that in their capacity as employers,

'the new legislation would make it unlawful for a union which employed more than five persons to discriminate either between applicants for jobs or between existing employees in respect of the treatment it accorded to them - in particular with regard to promotion, transfer or training.' (TUC report, 1975, p.44)

The practices which reproduce the sexual division of labour in the trade union movement and in the labour market are very deep rooted if they are to be found within organisations that have been actively campaigning for equal rights for women in the work force. The TUC, on behalf of its members, had been engaged in discussions with the government on equal pay for many, many years and had been highly critical of any reluctance to implement equal pay on the part of the employers. But their own members, in their role as employers, had been practising the same form of discrimination while campaigning for other employers to be prevented from so doing. This shows that the enactment of legislation in an area such as sex discrimination can have very important effects on practices within other ideological state apparatuses. The advent

of the sex discrimination bill forced many trade unions to translate paper resolutions into practices, whereas without such legislation they would have remained as resolutions with no teeth and no effect on ideological social relations at all.

Practices which reproduce the ideological relations of a woman's place are apparent even in the way in which the equal pay issue has been resolved in negotiations between unions and management. This does not only apply to cases where the implementation of equal pay has been avoided by segregating male and female jobs but where, at a first glance, equal pay has been granted to the women workers in a way which brings them up to the level of the men. What is not challenged in many cases is the whole wage structure itself, and as we shall see, this is usually weighted against women workers. To illustrate this point I shall look in detail at the way in which equal pay was implemented in the pottery industry, the union concerned is the Ceramic and Allied Trade Union, CATU.

In the pottery industry equal pay has been implemented successfully and the industry's wage structure conforms to the requirements of the Equal Pay Act. The union officials are pleased with the smooth way that equal pay has been achieved and feel that the job has been well done. Technically women do have equal pay, but in fact the take home pay of most of the men is higher than that of most of the women. How has this situation arisen? In order to implement equal pay in the pottery industry the female wages structure had to be integrated with the male one and the basic hourly rates of female workers be brought up to the lowest male rate and this was the task that CATU set itself. There were 3 female grades in 1973, F-1, F-2 and F-3, and 8 male grades,

the pay differential is shown in the table below.

Table 12 Comparison of male and female wage rates in the Ceramic Industry. 1973.

<u>Occupational group</u>	<u>Basic hourly rate</u>	<u>Minimum per week of 40 hours</u>
<u>Adult females</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>£.p</u>
F-1	40.00	16.00
F-2	40.50	16.20
F-3	40.75	16.30
<u>Adult males</u>		
M-1	53.5	21.40
M-2	55.00	22.00
M-3	56.50	22.60
M-4	58.25	23.30
M-5	60.50	24.20
M-6	65.50	26.20
M-7	67.75	27.10
M-8	72.50	29.00

Source: The Ceramic industry wages structure, 26 March 1973, (p.14)

The piece rates also show a marked differential between female rates of pay and male rates of pay. As can be seen from the above table the highest paid women workers were receiving £5.10p less for a forty hour week than the lowest paid men workers. Clearly some large rises in women's pay were called for to introduce equal pay and the size of the increase, as I was told by a union official, made some union officials fear for the future of the industry; they were sure that such a wage rise would break the Ceramic Industry! However, after a series of lectures and discussions on equal pay and its implementation these fears were allayed and the union set about negotiations with the employers for the introduction of equal pay. The employers wanted to introduce equal pay by changing the grading structure so that there would be ten occupational groups, the female occupational groups

would be the two lowest paid groups in the new structure and the male groups would be the eight higher ones. This obvious tactic to keep women's wages at their existing low rates was opposed by the union which operated on the principle that women's rates of pay must be brought up to the lowest men's rates. As well as a pay differential between men and women there is also a sexual division of labour which operates within the industry. For instance all the workers who operate a wheel and actually throw the pots are men while those who put transfers onto pots or who complete the delicate hand painting are women. This meant that many of the jobs that women did were not done by men and were therefore outside the scope of the equal pay act. However the union argued successfully that these women's jobs should be included in the lowest paid male grade which was reclassified as OG - 1. The union went through all the female job classifications and where these were the same as jobs that were performed by men they were put in the same grade. In this way the differentials that had existed between female grades, i.e., between F-1, F-2 and F-3 were maintained. The differentials between some male workers and women workers were not maintained though and this threatened to cause problems, some men said they would not lift heavy weights for the women now that they were being paid the same. A union official told me that in the event this has not been a problem and the men have accepted equal pay for women.

The new wage grades can be seen in the following table from the 1976 wages structure booklet.

Table 13 (see overleaf)

Table 13 Basic Hourly Rates in the Ceramic Industry. 1976

<u>Occupational group</u>	<u>Basic hourly rate</u>	<u>Minimum per week of 40 hours</u>
	p	£.p
OG - 1	84.10	33.64
OG - 2	85.60	34.24
OG - 3	87.10	34.84
OG - 4	88.85	35.54
OG - 5	91.10	36.44
OG - 6	96.10	38.44
OG - 7	98.35	39.34
OG - 8	103.10	41.24

Source: The Ceramic Industry Wages structure. 29 March, 1976, p.12

Obviously for women's wage rates to be abolished and the jobs women do to be graded in the same wages structure as the men's has meant a big increase in wages for women, but the structure as it now exists, although the obvious wage inequality has been eliminated, still maintains a wages differential along sex lines. This inequality exists because of the sexual division of labour that operates within the industry and because of the wages structure which values traditionally 'male' jobs, such as those which involve lifting leavy weights, higher than traditionally 'female' jobs, such as painting fine lines on tea sets. Thus the skills that are traditionally women's are given a lower place in the wage structure than the skills which men have, so highly skilled women can never achieve the highest rate of pay in the wages structure as it now exists within the ceramic industry. The union official said that even with equal pay women are taking home less pay than men because there are no women doing such jobs as casting which is heavy work and is also one of the best paid. The grading system clearly operates in favour of what have been traditionally

regarded as male attributes and the so-called female skills are undervalued. CATU has not recognised that this is an in-built form of division which operates against women ever achieving equal pay with the men. Other unions have recognised the persistent undervaluing of 'female' jobs which governs wages structures and job evaluation schemes and also the positive weighting given to certain factors which have the effect of tending to value men's work higher than women's. The NALGO working party comments,

'The Working Party...would strongly recommend against the acceptance of job evaluation. First, the Working Party takes the view that in many schemes the factors used tend to be 'tailor-made' for the existing employment situation and would, therefore, militate against women in whose current jobs, generally speaking, these factors are not prominent.' (NALGO, 1975, p.12)

Clearly this reinforcing of a sexual division of labour makes it more difficult for women to achieve equal pay and this is what has tended to happen in the ceramics industry. The women's rates of pay are now fixed within the old wages structure, and although this meant an initial increase in pay women are now in jobs which are undervalued compared with the jobs that are done by men, and the pay is correspondingly lower. Management is ensuring the continuation of this sexual division of labour by not employing men on jobs which are usually done by women, the argument being that they would have to pay a man more and if they did that they would have to bring all the women on the job up to the man's rate of pay. This practice underlines the importance of measures such as those recommended by AUEW (Tass), they write that,

'we have evolved our own wage structure based on the forth-right demand that equal pay means that a woman should get the same pay as a man would get for the same job.' (AUEW (Tass) 1975, p.2)

Clearly the distinction between male and female rates of pay still operates within the ceramics industry even though its explicit expression has been eliminated from the wages structure. Thus the union's negotiations with the employers have brought about changes which conform with the Equal Pay Act but have reproduced the sexual divisions which ensure that women do not receive pay that is equal to that received by the men.

Another practice which reinforces the position of women as housewife is the operation of the 'twilight shift' in the ceramics industry. This shift takes place in the evenings and so makes it possible for women with young children at home to go out to work when their husband comes home from work. The employers operate this shift when there is a bottleneck in production and it is often decorators that are taken on to finish off the products. This twilight shift is composed solely of women and the employers can 'hire and fire' them at will, the union does not interfere. Thus women who are unable to go out to work full-time because of domestic commitments and inadequate facilities are used as an easily manipulable section of the work force. They are taken on when they are needed and laid off when they are not needed. In supporting 'twilight' shifts for 'housewives' the union is accepting the sexual division of labour and the ideological social relations which designate the home as the proper sphere of activity and special responsibility of women. The logic behind this is that women should be enabled to fulfil their domestic responsibilities and go out to work if they want to and this does not question the ideology of a woman's place being in the home. This acceptance serves to reinforce these ideological relations and helps to ensure that women continue to be the ones who are responsible

for the maintenance of the home and the rearing of children. The union, despite its successful implementation of equal pay, is not pursuing policies which will transform ideological practices within the ceramics industry. Thus the sexual division of labour is being reproduced and women, who constitute 53% of union membership, remain relatively inactive within the union considerably weakening it in its struggles with the employers.

Part-time workers

Trade union policies towards part-time workers, of whom the majority are women, also contribute towards the reproduction of the sexual division of labour in Britain. Part-time working is encouraged by the unions because it is one way of enabling women with homes to run and families to look after to enter the labour force. However, part-time work for women is seen precisely as an addition to their work within the home. A woman's role as wife and mother, with prime responsibility for the home, is taken for granted and used as the basis for formulating policies to help women enter the labour force; in this respect trade union policies are the same as those of government. The crucial assumption that a woman's prime responsibility is to her home and family is not questioned, and this means that women, if they have children and family responsibilities, have no chance of taking up full-time employment, they can only get a part-time job because there are no facilities to relieve them of their household drudgery. The unions' advocacy of part-time work as a solution to the problems facing women workers only ensures that those problems remain. The provision of social facilities to relieve women of their 'domestic responsibilities' is not actively campaigned for

by many unions so women workers still have to perform two jobs, making one of these jobs part-time makes it a little easier for working women to fulfil both, but it does not enable women to enter the work force on the same terms as men of their own social class. Women are forced to take up part-time work, they are frequently unorganised and their jobs are insecure because they are not covered by redundancy agreements etc., and preferential treatment is almost always given to full-time workers. These policies thus maintain women as a low paid, unorganised section of the work force.

The acceptance of a woman's prime role as wife and mother is embodied in clause 9 of the TUC's twelve aims for women at work (already referred to above). This aim is entitled 'Family Responsibilities' and states that,

'Two in every three working women are married. Nearly half the married women workers have dependent children and many women - single as well as married - look after elderly or infirm relatives. Often they cannot work full-time, so about a third of working women are part-time workers and most do 21 or fewer hours a week.

Unions say - Employers must accept the need for women to work the hours which will enable them to meet their commitments as mothers or to assist them to care for their elderly dependants.'

Many trade unions have taken up this clause but there are different ways of approaching these problems. Some, like the TUC clause itself, accept that women need to be able to work part-time and do not seek to alter the material conditions which cause this situation to arise. Secondly, while recommending that women should work part-time they do not negotiate such favourable terms and conditions of employment for their part-time worker members as for their full-time workers. This is very important because it means that women, as part-time workers, often have lower hourly rates of pay than full-timers and generally less favourable terms

and conditions of employment.

In its pamphlet 'Equal pay and Equal Opportunities' the Transport and General Workers Union, states that,

'women...have to combine their work outside the home with their household duties, since it is still traditionally thought that the bulk of the responsibility for the running of the house lies with the woman.' (Jones, 1975, p.2)

They call for the provision of more part-time work so that women can cope with their two jobs:

'..there are many women who would like to work and are unable to do so because they cannot find a part-time job. Employers should be pressed to organise work in such a way as to allow for employment part-time.' (Jones, 1975, p.5)

This statement accepts fully that a woman's job must fit in with her primary role as homemaker, there is no suggestion that women cannot work, not because there are not enough part-time jobs available, but because there are not enough nursery places, no care provided for children after school hours, no canteens to relieve women of cooking, and so on. The dearth of social facilities such as these force women to take part-time rather than full-time jobs, and to advocate more part-time work is to ignore (and therefore accept) the conditions which put women in the position of needing part-time work.

The General and Municipal Workers Union, also takes the view that women's role as mothers and wives must not be interfered with. In its pamphlet 'Justice for Women Workers' it says,

'As a working woman you will probably be running a home, caring for children, looking after dependent relatives - a working woman has special needs.' (ClS, p.23)

It advocates 'flexible working hours, more part-time work, paid maternity leave' (ClS, p.23) etc., but does not question the burden that working women carry. As the ClS report points out,

'Advocacy of policies such as part-time working without a clear commitment to fight the unequal treatment of such work is, in reality, the advocacy of continuation of the divisions between men and women in paid labour' (CIS, p.23)

A lot of unions call for increased provision of nursery facilities and so on but practically none question that it is and always will be a woman's job to look after the home. Their policies call for jobs that can be fitted in around their first and 'most important' job as homemaker. This effectively denies women the opportunity of undertaking any training or of bettering their position in any way. Their position at the low paid, unskilled end of the labour market is reinforced and reproduced by policies such as these. The AUEW (Tass) pamphlet goes some way towards recognising this problem and they do not advocate part-time work for women as the solution to a woman's domestic responsibilities. They write,

'...allowance must also be made by employers for the demands on young mothers for flexibility of working hours to cope with children's sickness, problems of school holidays, etc. After all, somebody has to do these jobs and if it is assumed that it must be the woman and that her promotion prospects must suffer as a consequence of this "absenteeism", she will always remain at the bottom of the heap.' (AUEW (Tass), 1975, p.16)

It goes on to say that,

'It is virtually impossible for women to compete on equal terms in these circumstances and it is right that the scales should be tilted in their favour.' (AUEW (Tass), 1975, p.16)

They are also aware of the need to change the sexual division of labour within society as a whole:

'In our view a mother OR a father should be given time off with pay on producing a sick note for a child.' (AUEW (Tass), 1975, p.16)

The policies outlined in this pamphlet, while recognising that women have special needs given the existing state of society,

work towards changing the sexual division of labour, whereas the advocacy of part-time working for women maintains and reproduces the existing ideological relations because it takes as its starting point a woman's role within the family.

Unions' policies towards part-time workers have the effect of dividing the working class and this division takes the form of a sexual division of labour because so many working women, over one third, are part-time workers. Part-time workers are often not covered by redundancy agreements and are often the first to go when redundancies occur. Until the Employment Protection Act came into force in 1975 no worker who worked under 21 hours a week was entitled to redundancy payments. The 1975 Act changed this to 16 hours so as to cover the majority of part-time workers who worked 21 hours or less a week. However employers have been able to avoid the implications of the Act by reducing the working hours of their part-time employees, unhindered by the trade unions involved. An example of this occurred in York where 8 women cleaners were each working 20 hours a week and some had been employed for 5 years.

'Because they worked less than 21 hours a week they were not protected at that time by laws relating to unfair dismissal. Their employer, the Young Women's Christian Association, sacked them and took on instead 12 women cleaners at 2 hours a day each at the rate of 74p an hour. The others had earned 90p an hour. As these women will be working a total of 10 hours a week, they in turn will be unprotected by the new legislation.' (Women's Report, 1977, Vol.5, no.2, p.15)

At the Women's Conference of the TUC in 1976 attention was drawn to banking. It was pointed out that

'part-time women had been employed for many years to overcome an acute staff shortage but because managements were afraid of the possible effects of the Employment Protection Act, these women who worked a 20 hour week, were now being

pressed to work full-time or were having their hours reduced to 15 a week. Pay of part-time workers was not always pro-rata to that of full-time workers and, in some jobs, they were substantially underpaid. In addition they had no sick pay entitlement, were not members of the occupational pension scheme, and did not qualify for other employee benefits.' (Women Workers 1976, p.50)

Thus, employers, rather than give part-time workers the rights to which they are due with the advent of the Employment Protection Act, will alter their hours of work in any way possible so as to avoid extra expenditure on part-timers.

Another blatant evasion of any responsibilities towards part-time workers was exposed by the Observer (11/9/77):

'At the D.H.S.S. a certain group, of about 2,000 women mainly engaged on filing and research are sacked every 26 weeks, sent home for a week without pay and then (perhaps) re-engaged. This is to defeat the provisions of the Employment Protection Act. The scheme has been imposed because the workers do not have 20 levels necessary to become a permanent civil servant. After 26 weeks of continuous service the women could not be sacked. Ms. Pauline Parker, worked for 4 years in Leamington under this system. On previous occasions she had been taken back after each successive 26 week period, but when she was finally dismissed she claimed unfair dismissal. This was rejected.' (Women's Report, 1977, Vol.5, no.6, p.9)

It is indeed surprising that these sort of practices are tolerated by the unions involved.

Clearly to advocate part-time working for women is to relegate them to unprotected and low paid jobs. Union policy in cases of redundancy, is often to sacrifice part-time rather than full-time jobs, and because the majority of part-time jobs are filled by women they are the ones who lose their jobs. In the winter of 1975-6 in the Birmingham Area head office of the post office automation was being introduced. The post office decided that it needed to make 36 workers redundant and opened negotiations with the union accordingly.

'...a resolution was...passed at the local UPW branch that no man should be compulsorily retired or made redundant while part-time labour was being employed.'
(ClS, p.15)

This in effect meant that no man must be made redundant as long as women were still employed. The result of negotiations between the union and the post office was that instead

'of the 36 full-time men's jobs, 72 part-time women, presently working 25 hours a week, would have to go. Besides, those that remained would have to have their week reduced to 18 hours. The union encouraged women to accept voluntary redundancy and redundancy payments. (ClS, p.15)

One of the women involved said that, 'The union doesn't really want part-timers on the jobs.' (ClS, p.15) More than this the union doesn't really want women on the job either. Tom Jackson, leader of The Union of Post Office Workers, is on record as saying, in relation to women post workers:

'You have been recruited solely against a male vacancy. We consider a postman's job to be an all male establishment.' (ClS, p.14)

Such divisions within a union, whether between full-time and part-time workers or between male and female workers, make it easy for the employer to manipulate the work force as s/he sees fit. In the case of the post office it was easy for them to sack a section of the work force because the other section thought that through this action their jobs would be secure and there would be a lot of extra money to be made through overtime before the rationalisation process had been completed. However in the long term more redundancies will be required, and the union, because of its actions in the past and its willingness to sacrifice female part-time workers to male overtime will have greatly weakened its bargaining position.

The Employment Protection Act 1975, although improving the

position of some part-time workers still leaves a large section of this part of the work-force unprotected. The TUC Women's Advisory Committee made some recommendations to the General Council of the TUC on the provisions to be included in this Act. Their recommendations were that:

'provisions on unfair dismissal, the Contracts of Employment Act, and the Redundancy Payments Act, should be extended to cover part-time employees who have had reasonable continuity of service with their employer.' (Women Workers 1976, p.16)

These recommendations were put to the government and this protection is now provided

'for employees who work a minimum of 8 hours a week and who have at least 6 years' continuous service with their employer.' (Women Workers, 1976, p.16)

Undoubtedly this is a step forward towards protecting part-time workers, however it is often difficult for women to fulfil these conditions of service, particularly that relating to 6 years' continuous service with the same employer. Because of their position in the family, and the lack of any adequate provision for child care or care for the elderly, women take up jobs that will fit in with their family responsibilities. Under these circumstances younger women in particular, if they want to work at all, have to take up part-time work and it is very difficult for them to build up 5 years' continuous service with the same employer. They may leave work because of the birth of a baby, the illness of a child, husband or elderly relative, they may even have to leave work during the school holidays and return afterwards and under these circumstances they would be entitled to none of the provisions of the Employment Protection Act. Thus for unions to encourage employers to provide flexible hours, time off work during school holidays etc., is to ensure that the

employers can employ women without having to comply with the provisions of the Act. This means that part-time women provide cheap labour for the employers and the unions' policies ensure that this continues and women remain an unprotected and very low paid sector of the work force.⁶ Even though the Employment Protection Act goes some way towards improving the rights of part-time workers it does not challenge the way employers can hire and fire part-time workers as and when they want with no fear of a comeback from the unions. Part-time workers remain an easily manipulable and cheap sector of the labour force and most part-time workers are women. The policies of trade unions towards part-time workers do not challenge this position, they do little to improve the rights of part-time workers and they encourage employers to employ more women in part-time jobs. The combination of these factors means that women workers, instead of entering the work force on an equal basis with men of their own social class, have no option but to take up part-time employment with no training or promotion prospects. Their position at the lower end of the labour market is thus reproduced and they are confined

6 The CIS report comments on the Employment Protection Act in relation to provision for part-timers:

'...even for those part-time women working over 16 hours a week the Employment Protection Act may well be less of a boon than at first appears. In some of the most important rights areas there is a service qualification which part-timers are less likely than full-timers to be able to meet. The right to redundancy payment, for instance, is dependent on 2 years continuous service... Of the large number of part-time women taken on over the last 2 years a great proportion have now been laid off. In the manufacturing industries 100,000 lost their jobs in 1975, and it is probable that 'last in, first out' applied in many cases. Many, then, will not have a full 2 year stretch on the books...'

The report goes on to say that

'There are some part-timers who can never achieve continuity of service because of the nature of their work pattern. This would apply for instance where two people share a job, working alternate mornings and afternoons, weeks or fortnights, as is ~~the case in~~ clearing banks.' (CIS, p.21)

to low paid, unskilled "women's" work.

Because of the unprotected nature of many part-time jobs part-time workers are easily manipulated by the employers. The C.B.I. has said that employing part-time workers is advantageous to employers because long meal breaks are not necessary as they are with full-timers, and part-timers are paid lower rates of pay. Thus unions, when advocating part-time work for women are perpetuating the situation where women constitute the majority of low paid workers in Britain and, because they are not fighting against these low rates of pay for part-time workers, are reproducing a cheap form of labour from which the employers can benefit. In the present economic crisis part-timers have been employed instead of full-timers because it is easier and cheaper to get rid of them when they are not needed any more. From June 1971 to June 1972 full-time male employment in all industries fell by 106,000, full-time female employment fell 14,000, but part-time female employment rose 120,000. (CIS, p.17)

In manufacturing industries the percentage of part-time women workers as a percentage of all women workers shows that part-time women workers are becoming structurally more important in these industries. In September 1973 the figure was 20.6%, December 1973 21.6%, June 1975 22.6%. During the boom in 1973 part-time women were recruited at a fast rate.

'After the boom had peaked, the down turn had begun, and the redundancies of full-timers were beginning, the employment of new part-timers, particularly women continued. It was not until things were much worse, well into the middle of 1975, that part-time women too began to lose their jobs in large numbers.' (CIS, p.17)

Because of the lack of protection afforded to part-time workers, due to unions not negotiating the same conditions for their part-

time members as they do for thier full-time members, and also to the fact that many women part-time workers are employed in weakly organised sectors of the economy, employers can manipulate part-time workers far more easily than they can full-timers. Part-timers could be

'employed for a period of short up-turn in preference to full-timers, thus avoiding the contractual expenses full-timers might represent, and could be easily shed when the slump demanded, avoiding redundancy payments, extended notice, wages in lieu of notice, and all the other expenses which full-timers might have presented.' (CIS, p.19)

Clearly employers have not been slow to take advantage of the availability of part-time workers to lower their labour costs. The following figures show how the numbers of part-time workers have increased between 1971 and 1974:

Table 14 Increase in numbers of part-time women workers.

	June '71	June '74
All males in employment	13,424,000	13,363,000
All females in employment	8,224,000	8,933,000
Part-time females in employment	2,757,000	3,421,000

Source: Annual census of employment results for June 1974, (CIS, p.18)

For unions to encourage employers to provide more part-time jobs for women so that women can work and look after the home and family is to ensure that a cheap, unprotected section of the work-force grows. The ideology of a woman's place provides the rationale behind these policies and they are pursued because of ideological practices which designate the home as woman's prime sphere of responsibility. In accepting this ideological relation and acting within it the trade union movement is reproducing

bourgeois divisions within the working class. Part-time workers, mostly women, continue to be low paid, unskilled and unprotected by legislation that the trade union movement has been instrumental in fighting for. The capitalist class can thus use part-time workers in the ways that have been outlined above. The bourgeois ideology of a woman's place acts, through union practices, to divide the working class and weaken it in its economic struggle against the capitalist class.

Another important factor which weakens the trade union movement is the low level of organisation of part-time workers and this is recognised by the TUC.

'It has always been claimed that part-time women workers are more difficult to organise into unions than other workers. However, if the proportion of women working shorter hours continues to rise.. the degree of organisation in many occupations may be seriously prejudiced if a solution is not found to ways of bringing these women into unions. The position could become acute if an employer finds it expedient to utilise machinery more efficiently through 2 or 3 part-time shifts rather than one full-time shift. While part-time women remain unorganised the committee believe they constitute a threat both to the effectiveness of union machinery and to the security and working conditions of other workers.' (TUC report, 1966, p.144)

Much progress has been made by unions such as NUPE and USDAW in recruiting part-time women employed in the recently expanded areas of employment. However, the same conditions that force women to take up part-time rather than full-time work also act to prevent them from becoming involved in trade unions, and unless these problems are tackled by the unions women will remain a relatively unorganised and weak sector of the trade union movement.

Although the TUC and many unions follow policies encouraging part-time work for women because of their so-called domestic responsibilities there are some unions which take a more progressive

position on part-time workers and on women workers. One of these unions is the Tobacco Workers Union.

The policy of this union towards part-time workers

'is precisely the same as it is towards any of our members; they are covered by full trade union protection and any of our national agreements give part-time workers the same conditions as full-time employees. Of course if we are negotiating an additional week's holiday then the part-time worker will receive the benefits of the new agreement on a pro-rata basis.' (Letter to the author from T. Marsland, Deputy General Secretary 14/1/77)

The union's treatment of part-time workers is the same as its treatment of full-timers, it is also not seeking to confine women to part-time work and thus keep women chained to their 'domestic responsibilities' and limited in the scope of jobs available to them. In the same letter Ms Marsland writes,

'We are at this stage pursuing most vigorously the question of nursery and creche facilities at factory level, along with paternity leave.'

She goes on:

'..employers who make considerable profit out of women workers should be made to inject some of that money to provide the facilities which will allow women to take up the options now open to them within the terms of the Sex Discrimination Act.'

Clearly this union has recognised that for women to be able to enter the work force on the same terms as men there has to be provision made for the responsibilities such as child care, which have hitherto fallen on women. They are seeking to change the ideological relations which constitute the sexual division of labour, and this transformation would tend to overcome the divisions along sexual lines which exist within the working class. The union has also drawn up guidelines for the industry on the introduction of equality of employment for women. These were pushed for by the union before the Equal Pay Act or the Sex Discrimination

Bill became law in December '75, but were to become operative at the same time as these laws.

Union positions on women and part-time work are not all identical. Some unions, such as AUEW (Tass) and the Tobacco Workers Union, pursue policies which, by calling for increased social provision such as nurseries and after school care for children, tend to challenge the traditional 'place' of women. Others, who encourage women to take up part-time work so that they can fulfil their domestic responsibilities, and at the same time do nothing to improve the terms and conditions of part-time workers, reproduce the sexual division of labour within the work force and bolster the ideological relations which confine women to the home.

It is clear from what has been described above that the ideology of a woman's place is not merely a question of people's attitudes. This bourgeois ideology has its basis in practices at all levels of a social formation and these practices serve to maintain and reproduce the existing sexual division of labour both within the unions themselves and within the work force. Thus the trade union movement reproduces divisions within itself which weaken it in its struggle against the employers. The ideology of a woman's place is therefore a class ideology, it acts in the interests of the bourgeoisie to divide the working class and is reproduced within the organisations of the working class. Lenin writes:

'...the spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism, ...and trade-unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie.' (Lenin, 1961, CW5, p.383)

One of the forms of this 'ideological enslavement' is the divisive

ideology of a woman's place being in the home, and to combat this ideology is to struggle against one form of the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the working class.

Having examined ideological practices at various levels of the social formation which assign women, and men, to certain places, both within the capitalist production process and in ISA's such as the family and the trade union movement, it is now important to examine the effects of this ideology in terms of the class struggle. The previous chapters have clearly demonstrated the correctness of the theoretical position that ideologies exist in, and are reproduced by means of, material practices. This has been shown to be the case in legal practice, in government policies and within one of the main organisations of the working class, the trade union movement. The divisive effects of this ideology, and hence its effectiveness as one of the conditions of existence of bourgeois class rule, have also been apparent in each chapter. However the specific ways in which the ideology of a woman's place affects the class struggle have not been explored and this can best be done through an examination of concrete struggles. The two areas that I am going to look at are the struggle for equal pay, which is seen both as a trade union issue and as a 'women's issue', and a local struggle for a day nursery, which took place on a local housing estate, outside the trade union movement.

Chapter 10

The Struggle for Equal Pay

The struggle for equal pay has for many years been a major concern of women trade unionists, however the ideological divisions within the trade union movement have constituted a considerable barrier to an effective fight on what has been seen as a 'women's issue'. For the majority of working women the introduction and implementation of the Equal Pay Act has meant absolutely no change in their rates of pay and has not altered the position they occupy at the low paid end of the labour market. In this section I want to examine the class nature of the equal pay legislation which, while constituting a gain for the working class movement in Britain is, at the same time, an instrument which is and has been used by the employers to maintain women as a cheap sector of the labour force and maintain the wage differentials that exist between male and female workers. This will entail a brief look at the history of the equal pay act, the importance of the struggle for equal pay waged at the point of production, and the socio-sexual divisions within the trade union movement and the work force. These divisions allowed the employers to create an Act which, although it enshrines in law the principle of equal pay for equal work, in fact operates so that this very principle can be evaded.

The class nature of the Act will be examined through an account of the discourse and practices of government, employers and the trade union movement, the positions adopted by them and the relation between those positions and the struggle waged in

the workplace for equal pay. These forces and opposing class interests contributed to the final form of the Equal Pay Act and also its effectiveness once in operation.

The Ford women machinists' strike.

Although the T.U.C. passed a resolution in favour of equal pay for women in 1888 and had passed resolutions almost annually ever since then, it was never considered a burning issue by the trade union movement. It took the convergence of a Labour government committed to the introduction of an equal pay act, a strike in the motor industry which purported to be an equal pay strike, and a woman Minister of Employment, to make equal pay legislation a reality. This latter factor was clearly not enough on its own to bring about any action on the equal pay issue. In the Times a statement made by Barbara Castle in 1964 was recalled:

'Women have waited long enough for this elementary piece of justice. The only answer now is legislation and I'm delighted that a labour government is pledged to introduce this. This can't be done overnight but as the Common Market countries have shown, it can be done within a short transitional period. It is time that Britain was brought into line with them.' (Times 3/5/68).

Later on the article mentions that the engineering unions had

'unanimously agreed to instruct their executives to press for equal pay for equal work - even to the point of industrial action.' (Times 3/5/68).

Clearly the mounting pressure from the labour movement, culminating in the Ford women machinists' strike was the decisive factor in forcing the government to honour its electoral pledge, four years after it had been elected committed to the introduction of equal pay. Prior to 1968 the TUC, CBI and government were involved in tripartite talks on the issue of equal pay. The General Council's report to the 1966 Trade Union Congress

commented:

'...in May 1965 the Ministry of Labour had said that an inter-departmental committee was making progress with an examination of the problem in the light of the prices and incomes policy. But the full implementation of equal pay was the task of great magnitude involving complex economic and social issues, the full appraisal of which would take time.' (TUC report. 1966. P.158).

Just how much time the government would have liked it to take will be seen later, there was strong feeling elsewhere that the issue of equal pay was urgent and had to be tackled immediately.

The strike that made equal pay headline news and woke up parliament, the CBI and the TUC on the issue was the Ford women machinists' strike at Ford's Dagenham plant; 183 women machinists went on strike for an extra 5d an hour in June 1968. It is significant that the strike occurred in the motor industry because even though fewer than 200 women were involved it threatened to halt production. The women went on strike on the 6th of June and by June 13th articles were appearing in the press saying:

'Five thousand production workers at the Ford factory at Dagenham, Essex, may be sent home next week.' (Times 13/6/68).

and the next day:

'Over 40,000 car workers are likely to be laid off "imminently" at Ford factories throughout the country...' (Times 14/6/68).

By June 15th the government was involved in the dispute, not because the demands of the women were of vital importance but because the lost production

'could lose export orders worth millions of pounds.' (Times 15/6/68).

and was also

'threatening to lead to thousands of male workers at the factory being laid off.' (my emphasis) (Times 15/6/68).

Although the women workers who were on strike saw the issue as being one of equal pay management maintained that it was a dispute over grading. One of the unions representing the women, the National Union of Vehicle Builders, agreed with management and the other, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers, took the same position as the striking women. The Official enquiry into the strike concluded that the strike had been about re-grading, but as we have seen above (Chapter 9) grading schemes, while they may not explicitly list male and female rates of pay may embody differential rates of pay between male and female workers in their very structures.

A new grading scheme had been introduced to Fords by management in 1967 which put the women sewing machinists in a lower grade than they, or both the unions involved, thought appropriate. Clearly the issue was not simply a question of equal pay, but the fact that women workers at Fords were on the whole paid less than male workers was a very important factor in motivating the women to strike. The report of the official enquiry into the strike states that:

'Women employees had felt for a long time that they were not given the same consideration as men. In general wage awards they had consistently received less than the majority of men. Yet in all jobs they were required to achieve the same work standard as male employees. They had therefore welcomed job evaluation since it was supposed to be objective and would thus abolish discrimination of this sort. The women machinists had however been disappointed to find that even in the new wage structure their skill was not recognised, particularly as they were almost the only production workers who had to pass a trade test for entry.

This discrimination against machinists was symptomatic of the Company's more general discrimination against women. Of 38,000 male production workers, 9,000 were in grade C - roughly one in four. The 850 female production workers included only two in grade C - one in four hundred. Even with

technical and clerical work included there were only twelve women in C. There were no women at all in the two top grades D and E.' (Cmnd. 3749 p.16).

So clearly for the women on strike, the fact that they were graded lower than they thought they ought to be was a function of a more general discrimination against women in the wages structure at Fords. This general undervaluing of women's work was supported by some of the unions involved, the report states that:

'The Company's record for stability of employment based on a flexible labour force and flexibility in overtime working, required mobility of labour, which argued for fewer grades rather than more. In addition some of the unions, including the largest, were opposed to any change in the then existing structure (which, as all women's jobs were included in one grade, was basically a 3-step structure)' (Cmnd. 3749 p.35). 1

The official enquiry concluded that the dispute had not been about equal pay but about regrading, and that in their view the sewing machinists had been graded correctly. However, the dispute was settled by the intervention of Barbara Castle who dealt with it as an equal pay dispute. She had talks with the women involved in the dispute and also with the trade union officials and she is on record as saying afterwards:

'Of course I believe in equal pay, I get it myself and I think it is right. But we cannot have it come into industry overnight.' (Times 29/6/68).

In a subsequent article in the Times the journalist wryly comments:

'In fact it officially took three nights for 92% of equal pay to be formally agreed by the company.' (Times 8/7/68).

1 Clearly women did not have any chance of improving their pay through promotion or mobility if all women's jobs were in the lowest paid grade of the wages structure.

Thus although the dispute may not have officially been about equal pay the way it was resolved and the impact it had on government, employers and trade unions alike was as if it had been about equal pay. For the first time equal pay for women was a real possibility. Barbara Castle had in fact stepped outside her own government's pay guidelines in approving the wage increase agreed by Fords.² Clearly it was important that Barbara Castle, a woman who thought that issues such as equal pay for women should be taken up, was Minister of Employment at the time the Ford machinists' dispute took place. The issues raised by the strike were not clear cut and it was not a simple equal pay strike. But the intervention of Barbara Castle with the setting up of a Court of Inquiry meant that the issue of equal pay became urgent.

The CBI and equal pay legislation

The reaction of industry shows that up to this point equal pay had never been considered a real possibility. Now, however, the CBI began to fight against the implementation of equal pay

² The Times commented: 'The fact that there has been no outcry for the reference of a 7% pay increase to the National Board for Prices and Incomes leads one to think that it already had the tacit approval of Mrs Castle even before the formal settlement was made.

'How it will be justified under the existing criteria governing pay increases is another matter entirely. Higher productivity and increased efficiency is not a condition of the increase and the only other ground on which a rise may exceed the 3½% ceiling imposed by the Government is where there has been a major reorganisation of wages and salary structure.' (Times 8/7/68).

by using arguments which could divide the working class on the issue. The Times of 2/7/68 says:

'The CBI fears the Fords offer, which brings women's pay up to 92% of Ford men's, may start a country-wide race for equal pay.' (Times 2/7/68).

The attempts to delay the implementation of equal pay by the CBI had begun and their tactics had serious effects on the final form of the Equal Pay Act. The article continues:

'A CBI spokesman said the CBI accepted the principle of equal pay for the same work. But there are however, difficulties over timing.' (Times 2/7/68).

And at the same time they began to put forward horror stories about the cost of implementation of equal pay. Given the existence of policies of wage restraint and so on it was an attempt to use the ideology of the national interest and the existence of a fixed wage fund to imply that any increase for women workers would either bring the economy to its knees or mean a reduction in male workers' wage increases, or even a stand-still in men's wages, or both. I will examine how these arguments were dealt with by the trade union movement later, but first I will look at the form they took when presented by the CBI and how they were supported by the government.

The Times reported that:

'The cost of equal pay to British industry has been estimated variously at 2½% to 6½% on the national wage bill. The employers put the figure at 6% or £1,200 M a year without any consequential increase in productivity.' (Times 2/7/68).

However, while the Ford strike had struck fear into the hearts of the employers it had pushed Castle and the Labour government to set a firm date for the implementation of equal pay which was clearly a real step forward from the time when its implementation was only an electoral promise.

'Mrs Castle, Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity last week promised in the commons that she would immediately discuss with the TUC and the CBI a timetable for the implementation of equal pay and made it clear that it should have a limit of 7 years.' (Times 2/7/68).

Although fixing a time limit for the implementation of equal pay was not agreeable to the employers and their interests, the long time period of 7 years was not fast enough for the working class and trade union movement. Thus the forces in conflict over the issue of equal pay, the employers and the working class, and their relative strengths were already affecting the form that the Equal Pay Act would take. The action taken by the Ford women and the support it received from the unions forced the government to recognise the issue as urgent, but the counter reaction of the CBI and the outcry about the cost of equal pay to the nation ensured that the government would not act quickly on the matter and, indeed, would drag it out for as long as it could without provoking further industrial action.

With the firm commitment of the government to action on the equal pay issue a long series of meetings and negotiations began between the TUC, CBI and government. Although they were supposedly furthering the introduction of equal pay for women what characterises all the decisions and statements that were made on the issue is a desire to delay the implementation for as long as possible, given that its eventual introduction was inevitable. The delaying tactics used by employers and government were not adequately countered by the TUC because of the divisions within its ranks between male and female workers, and this balance of forces in favour of the employing class left clear marks on the final form of the Act.

The Ford strike had its impact in parliament where the militancy shown by the women gave added strength to the arguments of those MP's campaigning for equal pay. In a debate on the Prices and Incomes Bill in June 1968 an amendment was moved which sought to exclude equal pay settlements from wage restrictions. Arguments in favour of the amendment used the example of the Ford strike,

'Dame Joan Vickers...said that not since the match girls' strike of 1888 had there been a women's strike as militant as the one at Fords. Fords in America did give equal pay for this work, so it was extraordinary that it was not given in Britain.'
(Times 27/6/68).

It is interesting to note that even among those arguing in favour of equal pay the so-called 'fact' of the cost of its implementation is accepted and even used as an argument for equal pay.

Dr. Shirley Summerskill is reported as saying that:

'The fact that it would cost £600 million would cripple the economy, but such was the contribution made by working women. It was by this amount that they were being exploited and by this amount that the economy depended on their work. Only when women went on strike was this issue taken seriously.' (Times 27/6/68).

Also in Parliament the argument about a fixed wages fund was raised by Mrs Castle. She is reported as saying that:

'If they were to advance towards equal pay without inflationary effects it would mean in some cases that men would have to hold back in order to let the women catch up. It was in the national interest that the relative position of women should be improved.' (Times 27/6/68).

Clearly what was really 'in the national interest' was that given the pressure for equal pay it must be introduced in such a way that the profits of the industries concerned would not be affected and the working class would remain divided over the issue. Attempting to maintain these divisions by arguing that

more for women would mean less for men was a tactic which would ensure that pressure from the working class as a whole for equal pay was minimised. As long as it appeared, and would really be the case, that equal pay for women would mean less money for men, the working class would not be united in the struggle for equal pay.

The delaying tactics employed by the government and employers in the implementation of equal pay become clear if we look at the history of meetings arranged to discuss the issue.

'It is estimated that introduction of equal pay may inflate Britain's wage costs by as much as £1,200m, and the new negotiations are expected to centre on ways to stagger the load in line with the nation's economic performance and avoid placing new stress on the prices and incomes policy.'
(Times 16/7/68).

The notion of staggering the introduction of equal pay was patently a means only of delaying its introduction. In the event there was hardly any staggering of the introduction of equal pay, the only way the length of time allowed for such staggering minimised the impact of the implementation of equal pay was by giving the employers time to evade the act.

Evasion as a means of minimising the cost of implementation was guardedly suggested by the Industrial Editor of the Times. As well as accepting that men would have to forego wage increases if women were to get equal pay he suggests that the,

'government could borrow from French experience, where sexual inequality is codified into a cunning system of grades. The net effect should be to hold the increase in industry's costs well below some of the figures (up to £1,200m) estimated.

Ironically, the first effect of this policy is likely to be a drop in women's employment. But, when men are sacrificing so much, why should the women draw back?' (Times 18/7/68).

In fact the employers have, in many cases, 'codified' sexual

inequality 'into a cunning system of grades' and the lengthy debates about the cost of equal pay to the nation merely gave them time to put their evading tactics into practice. On July 23 1968 an article appeared in The Times headed 'Women Workers must wait for 'costing' report on equal pay'. It said:

'The Government will take no decision about the introduction of equal pay for women workers before next year. This emerges clearly from a meeting yesterday between Mrs Castle...and leaders of the Confederation of British Industry.' (Times 23/7/68).

The 'delay' was necessary to wait for the results of an investigation into the costing implications of equal pay for industry. Of course no investigation was carried out into the loss of wages suffered by women who were still not getting equal pay, and the TUC did not question the government's position on the need for such an investigation. Even the time limit of 7 years set on the implementation of equal pay by Barbara Castle was being questioned by the CBI, any excuse was used to delay its introduction.

'For such industries [those which employed a high proportion of women] 7 years might not be long enough to make the annual burden tolerable. John Davies, director-general of the CBI, said after the meeting that his confederation could not commit itself until it knew what was involved as a result of the studies being made.' (Times 23/7/68).

He also said that the introduction of equal pay for women would mean that fewer women would be employed. Another reason given by employers for not implementing equal pay immediately was the 'economic crisis', a perennial phenomenon for which the working class is continually paying by forgoing wage increases of one kind or another.

The reason that the employers were so much against equal pay is clear: women are a source of cheap labour. An article in the

Times examined this trend as it appeared in the engineering industry and commented that having low wages for women also kept men's wages down.³ This obviously means higher profits for the employers and, in this specific industry, bringing female wages up to the male rates would add nearly £125m to the wage bill.

The question of the cost of implementation of equal pay for women was still exercising the minds of politicians and employers over a year after Mrs Castle had promised that equal pay would be implemented. Just before the annual Trade Union Congress equal pay again come into the headlines. In August 1969 the cost studies of equal pay had been completed but had not been publicised. A leading article in the Times on the subject of equal pay says that:

'Researches already undertaken by the Department of Employment and Productivity - a survey of 300 companies in 13 industries is regrettably being withheld from general publication - appear to indicate the need for great caution.' (Times 3/9/69).

It continues:

'Calculations show that some concerns may have to advance the pay of female employees by as much as 7% more a year for 5 or 7 years to reach equality.' (Times 3/9/69). 4

3 'What has emerged is a very clear trend in the industry towards the use of "cheap" female labour for many jobs previously in the domain of the male. More and more employers in the electrical, radio and television engineering fields are modernising their production lines - and using women as their labour force.

What the male union leaders do not seem to realise is the fact that unless female rates of pay rise at the same rate as for men, employers, naturally enough, are going to increase their efforts to rationalise their businesses to take advantage of this cheap form of labour. And thousands of jobs for men in engineering may gradually disappear. And in industries liable for selective employment tax there is the added benefit to employers of a lower payment for women.' (Times 23/10/68).

4 This is used as an argument against the rapid introduction of equal pay by the capitalist class and its representatives in the media and in the government. However it reveals the terrible wages that women were putting up with and could constitute an argument in favour of the most rapid introduction of equal pay possible. However the TUC did not take this up.

It advocates caution in the introduction of equal pay, having opened up the article by commenting that:

'Since 1888 some 40 resolutions have been passed by delegates [to the TUC N.C.] on the subject of equal pay for women. Yesterday's unanimous vote at the Portsmouth conference in favour of a motion calling on the Government to implement its electoral commitment to the principle without further delay is yet another addition to the minute book.' (Times 3/9/68).

This long history of the desultory 'struggle' by the trade union movement for equal pay would seem to indicate that perhaps too much caution had already been exercised in the implementation of equal pay. But this seems to have escaped the Times which goes on to note that:

'There are great dangers in promoting hasty action ... Since over half the working women in Britain earn less than £10 for a 40-hour week - and only 1 in 30 gets the average male wage - the sense of grievance could be unnecessarily [my stress] inflamed at a time when managements and unions are trying to remove the causes of strikes and other industrial troubles.' (Times 3/9/69).

The leader concludes with a discussion on how equal pay can be defined and comments that:

'No national policy can be worked out until the government gives a formal definition - and the desultory work of recent years on the subject hardly indicates that Mrs Castle and the Cabinet are in any great hurry to give a clearer lead.' (Times 3/9/69).

In the absence of any real pressure on the government since the Ford women's strike the issue of equal pay had again been left until the Trades Union Congress in the autumn of 1969. Militant voices were raised at the conference and the CBI reacted strongly. In the Times of 16/9/69 it was reported that:

'Mrs Castle...will be told tomorrow in the strongest possible terms that Britain cannot yet afford to contemplate even the phased introduction of equal pay for women. The warning will be given by leaders of the Confederation of British Industry, who are seriously concerned about the impact that such a

decision would have, not only on the annual wage bill but on foreign opinion.

One prominent CBI leader said last night: "It is not a question of whether or not we accept the principle of equal pay. It is simply that the country is not yet economically strong enough to bear such a burden. We need a sustained improvement in the balance of payments before any move of this kind is introduced." (Times 16/9/69).

Of course accepting the 'principle' of equal pay is quite painless because it does not increase the employing class's wage bills! The CBI was also arguing for a 'transitional period' of 'at least 7 years' (Times 30/9/69) ostensibly to enable them to stagger the increase in their wage bills. When the Labour Government finally announced the introduction of an Equal Pay Bill in the next parliamentary session there were headlines in the papers such as: 'Cost of Equal Pay for women will be at least £1,000m' (Times 30/9/69) and estimates of the cost for industries employing mainly women were enormous. In the event, because of the wording of the Act, industries where women are the majority of employers have been able to evade or avoid the Act; this will be dealt with later.

The reaction of the employers to Mrs Castle's firm commitment on an equal pay bill was to cry 'wolf'.

'There is a grave danger that the 5-year timetable for equal pay for women proposed by Mrs Castle ...will be disastrous for many companies, the publication of the Engineering Employers Federation E.E.F. News said yesterday.' (Times 9/10/69).

But already the employers had gained some of the time that they were so anxious about, the TUC had wanted an implementation period of 2 years and the 5 years that was eventually proposed by the government was far nearer the CBI's demand of 7 years.

The trade union leaders were aware of the collusion between government and employers. An article in the Times of 13/10/69

says that:

'it looks as though equal pay may cause the biggest rumpus between the Government and the union leaders. They complain that Mrs Castle had barely started her consultations when she announced her intentions at the party conference, and that she has yielded too much to the pressure of the employers.' (Times 13/10/69).

The 'compromise' of a 5 year implementation period reached by Mrs Castle was criticised by the TUC.

'The union leaders point out that this is not 5 years from now but more than six.' (Times 13/10/69).

It goes on to comment:

'The main object of the longer period is, of course, to avoid a sudden increase in labour costs - estimated by the Government at from £600m to £800m altogether a year, and by the CBI at more than £1,000m.' (Times 13/10/69).

The longer time period did not serve this purpose in the event so in fact all the arguments about the cost of implementation of equal pay provided a means of ensuring a delay in its implementation,⁵ the effects of the 5 year implementation period about which the employers were so upset are examined below.

Another major argument used by the government and CBI to minimise the impact of equal pay on industry's profits was that of bargaining the introduction of equal pay for the removal of protective legislation. In May an article appeared in the Times saying:

5 The real object of the longer time period was understood by the TUC but nothing was done to counter the employers' tactics. '...we are now told that we have to wait a further 5 years before even the limited legislation which is proposed becomes law, and this 5 years' delay imposed upon the Labour government by the employers means that employers have in fact been given an opportunity to perpetuate and consolidate the position of women workers as a continuing source of cheap labour.' (TUC report. 1970. P.722, Mr. R. Whitely Draughtsman's and Allied Technician's Association).

'The Department of Employment and Productivity have told the TUC in effect, that a condition for the introduction of equal pay for women will be the abolition of statutory restrictions on the hours of factory women workers, including night work, shift-working and the length of the working week.' (Times 26/5/69).

A leader in September also pontificates on the subject of protective legislation.

'Women cannot regard the award of equality in pay as a right without concessions on their part. Employers will expect some review of the Factory Act which severely restricts female working hours (with special exemptions such as nurses and waitresses) and stringently controls the employment of women on night-shifts.' (Times 3/9/69).

The CBI pressed hard for the abolition of curbs on the employment of women once it was clear that an equal pay bill was definitely going to be introduced in Parliament, and the government supported this position as can be seen from the above recommendations to the TUC.

The trade unions and equal pay legislation.

The reaction of the trade union movement to the tactics of government and employers over the equal pay issue reveals how the ideology of a woman's place weakened it in its pursuit of the goal of equal pay. The divisions within the working class allowed the government and the capitalist class to manipulate the Act, so minimising its effects.

Before the advent of the Ford women machinists' strike in 1968 the TUC was half heartedly participating in talks on equal pay, but, as was made clear at the annual congress in 1967, no real progress was being made. One of the delegates pointed out:

'...in the past year precisely nothing has been achieved in the struggle for equal pay. I am not criticising the activities of the working party,

which is not a policy-making body, but I am saying that in fact the Government and the General Council appear to have given way to the delaying tactics of the employers. We have always known that the employers would not give way on this question without a struggle...' (TUC report. 1967. P.457. Mrs. E.A. Hunt. Association of Scientific Workers).

Later in her speech the nature of the TUC's professed espousal of the cause of equal pay is revealed:

'Last April Mr Woodcock was reported in the press as saying that the TUC was not formally committed to equal pay; it was a matter for individual unions. I have never seen a public denial by Mr. Woodcock of this statement, nor its repudiation by the General Council. I would like to point out that equal pay has been Congress policy for some 80 years, and that such a statement is a clear indication to employers that they need not fear any concerted action from the trade union movement.' (TUC report 1967 P.457).

It is clear that equal pay was not seen by the General Council as an issue which needed to be fought for, and its dilatoriness over this issue meant that the Act would not have the effect of making women's pay equal to men's. In fact the General Council was itself guilty of discriminatory practices in relation to women. Mrs Hunt, in commenting on paragraph 67 of the General Council's report to the 1966 Congress said:

'In this paragraph reference is made to two meetings attended by members of the General Council, one with the minister of Labour on April 21 and one with representatives of the Ministry and of the Confederation of British Industry on July 18. What the paragraph does not tell us...is that neither of the 2 women members on the General Council was included among the General Council's team on either occasion. I intend no reflection on the abilities of the men who participated nor on the sincerity of their devotion to the cause of equal pay; but the two women members were elected by Congress to represent the interests of women workers. Equal pay is today the most important question of all for women workers, and we contend that the women's representatives ought to take a direct part in these discussions which are of such vital significance.

The Women's Advisory Committee of the TUC, of which I am an elected member, at its meeting on

July 6 expressed its concern that no woman had participated in the talks with the Minister, and also expressed the opinion that the General Council's representatives attending the tripartite talks later in the month should include a woman. The General Council saw fit to ignore this expression of opinion by its own Advisory Committee. The action of the General Council in our opinion is an insult to its two women members, to the unions which nominated them and to this Congress which elected them to represent the interests of the women workers.' (TUC report 1966 p.416). 6

The reply of the General Council to this was extremely patronising and complacent and they clearly did not see the implications of their own practices towards women as trade unionists and the effects that these attitudes and practices were having on the effectiveness of the fight for equal pay.

'I feel that the delegates from the General Council responsible for meeting the Minister of Labour did a good job. They have got the caravan moving. We may have been a little remiss in not inviting one of the women members of the General Council to accompany us on the 2 meetings that have been held - I am always prepared to apologise to the ladies - and we can rectify this in the considerable number of meetings which I believe will be necessary in the immediate future.' (TUC report 1966. P.416 Mr. G.H. Lowthian.)

The meetings did indeed continue, and the slowness and lack of urgency that characterised the position of the trade union movement on the equal pay issue came under strong criticism at the 1967 Congress:

'We are glad to learn that the working party completed its report in July and now we are having another 3-sided meeting. What is this, some sort of new game without a time limit, when nobody

6 Another delegate expressed a similar opinion: 'Does the concept of women as second rate workers extend to their abilities as advocates of their own cause within the Trade Union movement? I cannot believe this is so, and I therefore think we must censure the General Council for any presumption of this kind which has precluded the participation of the women representatives in the discussions with the Minister of Labour and at the subsequent tripartite discussions on the question of equal pay.' (TUC Report 1966 P.416 Mr. A. McTurk. Draughtsmen's and Allied Technicians

scores any goals? It has been going on now for 80 years. We are not blaming the TUC. We know where the blame lies, and it is not only with the employers. There are still a lot of white skinned sultans about. If some of the Scottish Highlanders got women's pay it would not be long before there was another charge of the Light Brigade. There are now 8M women workers. We are a third of the working population, and we had to wait 100 years to get the vote, but we do not intend to wait for equal pay much longer.' (TUC report 1967 P.458. Miss A. Leak National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers).

However without the shock effect of industrial action no motion or resolution was passed and the General Council was content with merely promising to go on talking and trying to get something done about it.

The TUC's complacency over the issue of equal pay was rudely shaken by the Ford women's strike in 1968 which gave added urgency to the issue and valuable ammunition for delegates arguing in support of equal pay. This is illustrated by several of the delegates' speeches:

'There has been academic argument and discussion since 1888. After such a long time it is understandable that many of the arguments in favour of equal pay have become somewhat stale. I think it is right, therefore, that we should pay tribute to the Ford women machinists who have, by their action, sharpened the argument, who have restarted the equal pay campaign and evoked the biggest equal pay furore since the post-war campaign in the public sector.' (TUC 1968 P.454. Mr. W.L. Kendall, Civil Service Clerical Organisation).

Even at this early stage in the campaign for equal pay the delaying tactics of the government were in evidence:

'...the movement has been patient far too long, despite previous declarations of Congress, and there has been a long period of years during which

tripartite discussions⁷ have been going on and getting nowhere fast...the technical arguments which have been advanced in recent months to give tortuous justification for lack of action are of more than minor irritation.' (TUC report 1968. P.453. Mr. Kendall).

The lack of interest shown in the issue of equal pay by the trade union movement is commented upon by Miss J. O'Connell, she points out that the reason women have not yet got equal pay is because the majority of the trade union movement, which happens to be male, was not concerned about the issue and did not think it important. The capitalist class are the only ones who benefit from the lack of support within the trade union movement and although many delegates pointed this out the TUC still seemed reluctant to learn the obvious lesson.

'...when the history of our great trade union movement is written one of the less glorious chapters will be that which deals with the regrettable manner in which the male members of trade unions have, by their inactivity, condemned all their female members to industrial apartheid, an apartheid which permits the employers of this country to treat women as second-class citizens and thereby rob them of some £1,000m a year.' (TUC report 1968 P.455).

She continues:

'If verbal belligerence and moral arguments impressed employers, women would have had equal pay generations

7 'In the Spring of 1966 the Minister of Labour announced that the Government were committed to equal pay and steps would be taken to implement it. A tripartite committee was set up on which the employers and the TUC were represented. But the committee seem to have been in a process of deep meditation over the last 18 months. The employers are apparently raising the usual obstacles...The truth of the matter is that too many people have a chronic inability to overcome their feudal ideas of woman in society; and nowhere in the western industrialised countries is this more so than in this country...You talk about a wages policy. There has always been a national wages policy for women. It is a policy of national larceny, robbing all women of half their pay.' (TUC report 1967. Mrs. A. Robbie National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers).

ago. The painful reality is that only 10% of women working in Britain get the same pay as the men they work with. In our opinion this will not change until the women of Fords are joined by thousands of other workers up and down the country who, by taking industrial action, assert their right to the rate for the job and are supported by the male workers...Barbara Castle has equal pay for equal work; why should not the rest of her sex have it?' (TUC report 1968 P.455).

The re-emergence of the equal pay issue revealed the splits and weaknesses within the trade union movement that were exploited by a ruling bourgeoisie to render the equal pay Act impotent and maintain the ideological divisions which enable it to retain power. Those arguing in favour of industrial action in support of equal pay also pointed out that employers are known to use every possible means of evading the payment of equal pay. But despite this knowledge forewarned was not forearmed in the case of the trade unions. Mrs. A.E.Hunt pointed out that:

'Legal action of the kind proposed in the motion⁸ will not be enough. We have all heard how in the Common Market countries the employers have used all possible means to get round the equal pay laws which arose out of the Treaty of Rome.' (TUC report 1968 P.456).

She continued:

'Are they [the General Council] going to suggest that action such as refusing to blackleg, or subscribing to a strike fund, or blacking materials from firms where a dispute on equal pay is in progress, are things which are not justified? That is what we mean by support from affiliated unions.' (TUC report 1968. P.456).

The strength of feeling and commitment shown on the equal pay issue by many of the delegates was clearly not appreciated by the General Council which was opposed to industrial action over

8 The amendment to the motion under discussion, which had been proposed by the General Council, was as follows: 'Further, the General Council shall call upon affiliated unions to support those unions who are taking industrial action in support of this principle.' (TUC 1968 P.455).

equal pay claims and consequently tried to dampen down the militancy of Congress. They considered that slow and lengthy discussion would achieve equal pay and industrial action was not necessary.

'Following the decision of the Minister to activate a phased programme we have met her. We have not accepted 7 years, neither could we accept conclusively that we should be able to achieve it [equal pay] in 2 years. The important thing is that we now move forward to achieving it and this motion helps us.' (TUC report 1968. P.458. Mr. G.H. Lowthian for the General Council).

The two grounds on which he asks Congress to reject the amendment are one, that

'the means of achieving equal pay are matters for the unions themselves to decide'

and two, that

'we do not believe that it is right that the General Council should commit themselves in advance automatically to support industrial action irrespective of any other factors.' (TUC report 1968. P.458).

Despite this recommendation the amendment was carried, but it reveals that the General Council was reluctant to act, except according to the rules laid down by the government, on an issue such as equal pay. The effect of damping down the militancy shown at Congress on the issue was to open an important space for employers to reorganise and re-structure their work forces. The General Council was not prepared to look on equal pay as an urgent issue even in the face of demands from their own members, so this gave employers time to effectively evade the strictures of the Act when it finally reached the statute books. The idea of the General Council that the issue should be left up to individual unions to decide strikes a rather hollow note since for nearly a century, despite official TUC policy, hardly any

unions had taken up and fought for the issue of equal pay. Thus leaving it to individual unions was tantamount to putting the question into abeyance until the next annual TUC.

Despite all the motions and militant speeches at Congress in favour of industrial action to support equal pay claims the General Council, in June 1969, intervened in such a strike to stop the women involved from pursuing their claim; this shows the nature of their support for equal pay. Ten women lavatory attendants at the Lucas car component factory in Birmingham were on strike for equal pay.

'The women have been on strike for 4 days. They claim a £3 a week rise to give them the same rate as male cleaners. Although staff lavatories were offered to factory workers they refused to use them because they said that to do so would undermine the women's wage claim.' (Times 21/6/69).

Even though the male workers involved were supporting the women's pay claim, and despite official trade union policy, the General Council was taking a leading role in the attempt to get the women back to work. For the trade union involved, the Transport and General Workers Union, which had not made the dispute official, and for the General Council, an equal pay claim such as this one was not something which needed to be supported. This sort of action shows that the trade union movement was divided on the equal pay issue and this gave the employers and the government ample time to 'emasculate' the Act as much as they pleased because they were under virtually no pressure from the unions to implement it.

Although the General Council prevaricated over the equal pay issue many of the arguments put forward by trade unionists to counter the divisive tactics of the employers were very

strongly supported. The issue of the cost of implementation of equal pay clearly influenced some trade unionists (e.g., CATU leaders, see Chapter 9) but it was not an argument that held much sway at the level of the TUC. Also the bartering of protective legislation for equal pay was fought against strongly by some trade unions as was the notion that equal pay for women would mean less wages or smaller wage increases for men. These divisive tactics and ideologies, although strongly resisted at Congress by many delegates, still found representation in some of the speeches and in some General Council statements which bent to the will of a Labour Government even though it was representing the interests of the employers. Among the rank and file members of the trade unions strong divisions persisted on the issue and there was a lot of feeling against women getting equal pay as we shall see later.

The issue of men forgoing wage increases while women's pay caught up was raised by Harold Wilson (then Prime Minister) at the 1969 TUC. He said that:

'The Government was ready to discuss the legislation necessary for a phased introduction of equal pay for women but this must be based on restraint in incomes policy generally. The increment to the national dividend could not be spent twice over.' (Times 2/9/69).

The government and the CBI were trying to minimise the effect of equal pay on the profits of the companies concerned and to make the working class itself pay for the long-overdue increase in women's wages. This direct attack, giving with one hand and taking away with the other in an attempt to neutralise any gains made by the working class, was not accepted by the trade unions. Later in the same conference Jack Jones⁹ is reported as saying

⁹ Then general secretary elect of T&GWU.

that:

'it would be nonsensical to link incomes policy with equal pay. Women have been robbed for years, he said and it was time they had the money.'
(Times 2/9/69).

Mrs Hunt, a delegate from the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial staff (ASTMS) commented that:

'Frank Cousins has already exposed the fallacy of male workers forgoing increases in order that women may secure equal pay. I would merely comment that men did not forgo increases when equal pay was introduced into the public services, nor did men forgo increases in a number of settlements which my own union has concluded during the past year. We secured equal pay for women as part of a general increase. When men received increases which satisfied them, women received larger increases...'
(TUC report 1969. P.508).

She also goes on to point out that the cost of implementing equal pay is irrelevant and quotes the profits of large companies employing women saying that that is where equal pay must come from not out of the wage packets of other workers.¹⁰ She also argues that the notion of cost of implementation of equal pay and the necessity of having working parties and studies of it is merely another way of delaying its implementation. As Mrs Page commented at the 1966 TUC:

'As for the cost, it is going to cost us, it is said, about £600m. You might say that that is a lot of money, but they do not think £1,000m any

10 'Whatever the cost of implementing equal pay it must come out of the profits of the industries concerned. Let me give you just 2 examples of profits made last year by companies employing large numbers of women. Marks & Spencer's made £35,659,000 profit, roughly £1,200 per head employed, man, woman, boy or girl. British American Tobacco made £104,900,000 or £1,190 per head employed. Equal pay could come out of these profits without affecting male workers' increases in the least.' (TUC report 1969 p.508).

too much when they want to buy military aircraft in America. Let us get some of our values right in this country.' (TUC report 1966. P.415).

The CBI and government wanted to repeal protective legislation, calling it 'restrictive practices', as we have seen above. The TUC reaction to this offensive was forceful, particularly from unions such as the bakers' union which had previously been involved in limiting night work for their members. It is interesting to examine the arguments used for the retention of protective legislation however, because in many cases the fact that women have domestic responsibilities which they must fulfil is the premise on which these arguments are based. There is no attempt to question the role traditionally assigned to women or to pose any alternative to it, it is accepted as an irrefutable and immutable fact of life. The argument in favour of repealing protective legislation also appears within the TUC, this will be looked at later.

The government report mentioned above which recommended repeal of protective legislation was angrily rejected by some of the trade unions at Congress. Some of the recommendations put forward by the Department of Employment and Productivity (hereafter D.E.P.) were as follows:

'The broad proposition was that all restrictions on hours of employment of women embodied in the Factories Act and certain other legislation should be abolished because it was "no longer possible to sustain the traditional argument" that women were more in need than men of special protection: in addition the DEP argued that the abolition of legal restrictions would remove "one of the grounds for sex discrimination in selection for employment and for inequalities in pay. It would also help to remove one obstacle to increased productivity"..' (TUC report 1969. P.176).

It is interesting to note that Barbara Castle as Minister for

Employment and Productivity at this time was responsible for these recommendations, her position as a representative of the ruling class determined her policies rather than any feelings of 'sisterhood' she might have had for working class women. Thus she espouses the rhetoric of equality while ignoring the very real material conditions which lead to the sexual division of labour throughout the British social formation. To remove protective legislation would be to leave women in an even worse position given that they are still the ones who have to stay at home and rear a family. Until these ideological relations are transformed the basis for 'equality' between the sexes is an illusory one, and although equal pay is a small step along this road it in itself certainly does not mean that there is no longer any reason why women and men should not be treated exactly the same in the work place. Their material conditions of existence are different therefore it is not possible to speak of equality.

Urwin argued against the notion that prohibiting women from doing night work causes their low pay:

'Discrimination between the sexes on payment already exists in a wide area of British industry and British commerce where night work has never been thought about and is not likely to be introduced. So we must not allow the red herring of night work and things of this kind to get us involved.' (TUC 1969. P.512).

He continued:

'My union is strongly opposed to any proposals whatsoever that welfare legislation should be traded away, that women should be placed on night shift and the like, as a means of working towards equal pay. We must keep the question of equal pay completely separate from the question of welfare legislation. We should be fighting to extend welfare legislation not to restrict it.' (TUC report 1969. P.512. C.H. Urwin. T&GWU).

This strong position based very firmly on the principles of

trade unionism and defending the gains made by the organised working class was not shared by the General Council which already indicates that the government was successfully dividing, and therefore weakening, the trade union movement. The General Council conceded that once equal pay had been granted protective legislation might no longer be necessary. The notion of bourgeois equality underpinning this position completely ignores the material relations and conditions which have led to the massive concentration of women workers at the lower end of the labour market and maintained them as an unorganised and therefore weak section of the labour force. The position of the General Council would ensure that women workers remained the Achilles' heel of the labour movement rather than transforming the material conditions which prevent their full participation in the economy and the labour movement thus strengthening the working class.

The General Council's mealy mouthed reply to the DEP's recommendations took no firm position:

'They could not agree, for example, that the prohibition on night work by women should be removed until unions and workers were prepared to accept such a radical change and until equal pay was generally applicable.' (My emphasis. TUC report 1969 p.177).

This is tantamount to saying that when women have equal pay it will no longer be necessary to have protective legislation because women will no longer constitute a cheap section of the labour force so male wage rates will not be endangered by women working nights. The implications of the removal of protective legislation for women workers and for the working class as a whole have clearly not been taken into account.

This bargaining of equal pay for protective legislation

shows that the apparent victory of achieving equal pay for women is double edged. Although the implementation of equal pay is a real gain it is also an opportunity for the bourgeoisie to take away from the working class its other gains and to use the divisions existing within the working class to transform the equal pay issue into something that serves its own interests. The issue of protective legislation is one example of this process and, as we can see, it revealed divisions within the trade union movement.

The Bakers' Union took the position that night work for men as well as women should be abolished and therefore opposed any repeal of protective legislation:

'The Bakers union for a hundred years have campaigned for the total abolition of night work in the baking industry, from the time when bakers worked in cellars known as underground bakeries until 1954, when the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act came into being ...We are not prepared to sacrifice our female members on the sacred altar of productivity when in fact, for the first time, there is no restriction on the employers using their machinery for 24 hours a day, if they so wish, manned by male workers.' (TUC report 1969. P.513).

He also pointed out that:

'In Russia there is equal pay for equal work, but in the bakeries in Russia there is no night work done by women.' 11 (TUC report 1969. P.513).

11 However in the Soviet Union, although women have equal pay and constitute over 50% of the work force (Stites 1978. P.395) a sexual division of labour still operates both within the work force and within the family. There is a 'pervasive system of occupational segregation under which women are directed into relatively low-paying and low-status occupations...' (Stites. 1978. P.399) and women still perform two jobs. "For the enormous category known as 'family women', those with a husband, children, or relatives to look after, the major obstacle to equality is the 'double shift', which forces the average Soviet housewife to work a full day in the office or mill and then at once to begin her second shift with shopping, housework, and childcare... as Bette Stavakis wrote some years ago, 'the Soviets have not really refuted the theory that a woman's place is in the home, but have expanded it into a new theory which holds that women's place is in the factory as well as in the home.'" (Stites. 1978. P.409). Perhaps the continued existence of prohibition on night work for women only in the USSR is an indication of the persistence of bourgeois ideological relations?

He is emphasising that equal pay is not something that is prevented by the existence of protective legislation for women and that therefore protective legislation must not be considered when campaigning for equal pay.

The divisions that exist within the trade union movement on this issue are demonstrated by the responses to an invitation by the General Council to all affiliated organisations to comment on the consultative document on the form and content of the equal pay legislation. The report of the General Council says that:

'...3 replies were from unions with no women members, one of which said that equal pay would be opposed unless restrictions were lifted on the hours of employment of women. However, other unions took the view that the implementation of equal pay was quite distinct from restrictions on the working hours of women and that the 2 issues should not be confused.'
(TUC report. 1970. P.209).

Such divisions permitted the bourgeoisie to undermine the effects of equal pay legislation and to use it to their own advantage. Through confusing the issue and linking it to other areas of trade union concern they minimised the movement's commitment to equal pay and their militancy over it so leaving themselves ample time and space to turn the Act into its opposite. That is, instead of being a gain for the working class it would be used to the advantage of the capitalist class.

Urwin points this out in another speech stressing that it is not in the interests of the working class to abolish protective legislation:

'As we see it the danger comes from people who consider protective legislation...is no longer necessary at all. Voices are heard within the DEP and even amongst some prominent trade unionists in support of a so-called new approach to this

problem. They seek to equate welfare legislation with restrictive practices, and argue that employers should be free to employ either male or female workers without restriction at all. Some of them argue that this welfare legislation might be abandoned in return for equal pay. These arguments are entirely reactionary, and they should be emphatically rejected by progressive people inside the trade union movement and within government.' (TUC 1970. P.726).

The next speaker put forward the very argument that Urwin was rejecting:

'We have this morning passed a resolution calling for the Equal Pay Act to be fully implemented. Surely, we accept that with equal pay must go equal rights, equal responsibilities, equal opportunities: in other words, we want the same conditions for women....If a man does not want to work nights he does not enter an industry or accept a job where night work is a condition of employment. Women must be trained to do the same. They cannot on the one hand expect to receive equal pay and on the other hand be protected and have special conditions.

We can appreciate the one argument that for women to work nights will in some instances create some problems on the social side, but again I say they should not accept such a job if they are not prepared to accept what goes with it.' (TUC 1970 P.726. Miss V. Codrick. Transport Salaried Staffs' Association).

This argument is the same one as that put forward by the CBI and government to try to remove protective legislation. Underpinning it is the notion of the 'free' labourer and 'free' competition to sell his/her labour-power on which bourgeois equality rests. The equality between male and female if equal pay were established would be of the same character as the equality that exists between the capitalist and labourer before the law. They are both free subjects and are therefore equal in terms of juridical ideology; however materially they are not

equal.¹² Men and women workers would not compete 'freely' in the labour market on the same terms even if women had equal pay because their real conditions of existence are different. As long as women are tied to the home by their domestic responsibilities and there are no social facilities to remove this burden they are prevented from competing in the labour market on the same basis as men no matter how equal their pay is. There is no evidence that at this time (before the Equal Pay Act was implemented) the trade union movement was considering this as a problem. However, later on, when it was clear that the Act did not give most women equal pay, let alone equality, arguments began to be advanced to transform some of the conditions which prevent women from participating fully in the labour market and the trade union movement and are at the same time, used as justifications for discriminatory treatment.

In spite of divisions within the trade union movement over the question of protective legislation the TUC took the position

12 In his Critique of the Gotha programme Marx examines the notion of 'equal right'. The part of the programme under discussion reads as follows: 'And since useful labour is possible only in society and through society the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society.' (Marx, Engels 1973. P.14). Marx comments: 'Right by its very nature can consist only in the application of an equal standard; but unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are measurable only by an equal standard in so far as they are brought under an equal point of view, are taken from one definite side only, for instance, in the present case, are regarded only as workers and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored. Further, one worker is married, another not; one has more children than another, and so on and so forth. Thus, with an equal performance of labour, and hence an equal share in the social consumption fund, one will in fact receive more than another, one will be richer than another, and so on. To avoid all these defects, right instead of being equal would have to be unequal (Marx, Engels. 1973. P.18-19). The same argument holds true for the notion of equality between men and women, because their conditions of existence are not the same any standard applied unilaterally would result in a perpetuation of inequality.

that:

'legal restrictions on women's working conditions should not be relaxed as a condition of equal pay concessions.' (Times 14/10/69).

It is interesting to reflect on these statements about protective legislation from the trade union movement. Although the retention of protective legislation was crucial and its removal would have been a defeat for the organised working class the arguments advanced in its favour were firmly rooted within the ideology of woman as wife, mother and homemaker. The retention of protective legislation stems from a need to protect women from the harsher realities of working life, such as night work and so on. Hardly any mention was made of extending such protection to men, and no question was raised as to whether women should be expected always to be the ones to look after the home and children. This was accepted as a fact of life and left unquestioned. Thus the argument for retention of the protective laws was primarily based on the unwritten assumption that women's first responsibility was to the home and family. As we have seen this ideology has had very divisive effects within the trade union movement and constitutes a bourgeois ideology. The counter-argument, that if women want to be equal they should accept the same conditions as men, is also a bourgeois ideology but of a different character and one that on the face of it seems more progressive. However the latter, while arguing for equality between the sexes, ignores the very real foundations of the 'inequality' that exists, and though seeming to promulgate equality in fact ensures that it remains an unattainable ideal because the material conditions which determine the inequality

remain unspoken and therefore hidden, thus reproducing the conditions of inequality. Thus this argument, although in appearance progressive, becomes reactionary through what remains concealed and therefore unchangeable in those terms. The argument to equalise the rights and privileges of male and female workers through extending protective legislation to men was not even considered a possibility in these debates.

Although the TUC would not bargain away protective legislation for equal pay they did not think the issue important enough to put such pressure on the government that they would not have been able to delay its implementation. This was because of the ideology of a woman's place and its divisive effects within the movement. Women's issues are not seen as crucial to the whole trade union movement and as such are not fought for with the same commitment. This unenthusiastic approach allowed the employers and the government to create the Act in their own image and to defy the spirit of the Act in its very structure and implementation.

The notion that a woman's rightful place is in the home comes across in a lot of debates within the trade union movement.¹³ For instance in 1969 a delegate at the Trades Union Congress pointed out that:

'Over 50% of the women employed in this country are married women, with the additional jobs of a housewife to a family and, in terms of the economic situation of this country, they are making a

¹³ At the 1969 conference of the Transport and General Workers' Union Frank Cousins 'rebuked London busmen for their reluctance to accept women as drivers or inspectors and urged delegates to regard women as their equals at home as well as at work'. And later Mr. Jack Jones, 'general secretary elect, was critical of a few delegates who, in a debate on the provision of day nurseries, implied that a woman's place was in the home.' (Times 17/7/69).

valuable contribution to production by providing the home base from which a contribution to production can be made by the man in the family.' (TUC report 1969. P.514).

This graphically describes the two jobs that working women have to perform, but there is no question of a possibility or desirability of transforming this situation, it is accepted as a fact of life and something that must be recognised.¹⁴ This ideology exists in the form of policies, statements and practices within the trade union movement and the General Council's non-commitment to a militant campaign for equal pay is merely one of its expressions. Another example is the notion that women are not to be taken seriously as workers but are there to be ornaments and decorations, of course ornaments and decorations do not really need to be paid a 'man's' wage! Tom Jackson, discussing British Summer Time expresses this attitude in a particularly crude manner:

'The proposal to extend British Summer Time throughout the winter arises from the Government's application to join the Common Market. This so far frustrated attempt is having a remarkable effect upon the British way of life. For instance, in the early '70's the ideal statistics of Miss World will not be 36-24-36, but 91-60-91. It will also be possible on Sunday at 13.05 to stroll a kilometre to the nearest pub and to pay 20 new pence for a half litre of beer.' (TUC report 1968, P.449).

For Tom Jackson women are part of the entertainment of life and are not to be taken seriously as workers and trade unionists.

14 Of course it is the situation for the majority of working women, but there are 2 ways of looking at it: either accept the situation and adapt jobs accordingly - e.g., provision of part-time work for women with all its attendant effects, or fight to transform the position of women through the provision of social facilities such as nurseries etc.

This inability of male trade unionists to take women seriously has serious consequences not only for women but for the trade union movement and the working class as a whole as a delegate to the 1971 TUC spells out:

'We keep asking for equal pay, but somehow or other we never seem to go forward as a body that says, "We fight for equal pay because we know that by not having equal pay our conditions as men are being weakened." In fact this was referred to yesterday by a woman who said quite definitely that we are being used as cheap labour. But we are giving the impression to the employers that they can still go on playing us off one against the other.' (TUC report 1971. P.420).

and in Congresses 5 years before this the importance of the struggle for equal pay to the whole trade union movement was being pointed out. In 1966:

'The nation has come to accept that women are the main source of cheap labour, and too many women accept their present position in employment mainly because they do not see any way of altering it. And there are too many men only too anxious to keep them in their present position.' (TUC report. 1966. P.413).

In 1967:

'...women for so many years have been underpaid. They have been used as a source of cheap labour in many of our industries.' (TUC report 1967. P.506).

In 1968:

'...Men sometimes fail to realise that by women being badly paid they are a drag on the men's own standards.' (TUC report 1968. P.457).

However the trade union movement had failed to learn the lesson that so-called women's issues are issues of the whole movement and that to ignore this fact is to reinforce bourgeois divisions within the working class.

Another aspect of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home is the notion that women's work is not really important in

industry and is secondary to men's. At the 1972 Congress Mrs. P. Turner pointed out that:

'Far from being marginal workers, the commitment of women to industry is no less long term than that of men, though the work cycle may differ. On average women spend just about 8 years outside industry for the purposes of producing and rearing families and they return after that time for another 20 to 25 years, but it is on the basis of this relatively short absence, this break in employment continuity, that this discrimination against women is committed and rationalised.'
(TUC report 1972, p.384.) 15

And it is this devaluing of 'women's work' which supports the differential rates of pay between men and women.

At the 1972 Congress a delegate from AUEW Tass¹⁶ pointed out some of the effects of these ideological divisions within the trade union movement:

'Look at the position we are in at the moment. We have the Equal Pay Act. Because of this many trade unionists tend to believe that the problem will disappear automatically by 1975. This line of thought is absolutely wrong. Our movement has never achieved anything except when it has combined struggle with its other activities. Not to fight the equal pay issue gives the employers a chance to interpret the law in their own way ... We all know that the employers are seriously attempting to fight the spirit and intention of the Act, and we know that they are having successes.'
(TUC report 1972. P.385).

She continued:

'...you men should be concerned about this. You recognise mass unemployment reduces the effectiveness in the wages struggle - when will you really wake up and recognise that a colossal pool of underpaid female workers has the same effect?' (TUC report 1972 P.385).

But the sexual divisions within the movement ensure that women's interests are still seen as separate and distinct from men's

15 This is an interesting statement because it points to some of the material practices which reproduce the ideological social relations of woman as homemaker and childrearer.

16 Miss B. Tinton.

interests. Thus the ideology functions so as to ensure that women do remain a source of cheap labour. This lack of commitment to 'women's' issues meant that the capitalist class was able to avoid the Act and use it for their own ends. The delegate called for active commitment to the equal pay struggle but even though such resolutions were passed very little was done by the trade unions.

'What is needed is not another pious resolution, but an all-out effort by all sections of the movement, first, to organise women workers, noting that at this Congress there are 10M represented and only 2½M are women; secondly, to campaign for a series of demands aimed at bringing women to true equality in society; and thirdly to encourage women to participate in trade union work, noting that out of the 1,042 delegates who were present at the beginning of this Congress only 65 were women. On a proportionate basis the figure should be at least 250.' (TUC 1972 P.385).

Later she says that:

'Whenever this subject [equal pay] appears on agendas the debate has been dominated by women. The response is often sentimental and patronising. We women do not want your sympathy or patronage. We want a great struggle to the point where activity is so great or widespread that no employers and no Tory government would dare resist this demand any longer.' (TUC report 1972. P.385).

However such a struggle was not to be forthcoming. By promising an Equal Pay Act, and even by introducing legislation that would take a certain number of years to implement the bourgeoisie had successfully taken the heat out of the issue. The militancy sparked off by the Ford women machinists had been successfully damped down and the promise of Equal pay legislation obviated the need for any militant action in support of equal pay. This was another tactic which gave the employers time to get round the Act and institutionalise women's low pay in other, less explicit, forms.

The wording of the Equal Pay Act ✓

The wording of the Act itself ensures that few women are in fact eligible for equal pay. The Act states that a woman shall be entitled to equal pay if she is doing 'like' work with a man -

'A woman is to be regarded as employed on like work with men if, but only if, her work and theirs is of the same or a broadly similar nature, and the differences (if any) between the things she does and the things they do are not of practical importance in relation to terms and conditions of employment'. (Equal Pay (no.2) Bill. P.2).

This means that women, to achieve equal pay, must have a man doing the same or broadly similar work with whom she can compare herself. As we have already seen the majority of women workers work in jobs which men do not do and thus there is no chance of them claiming equal pay. As the Equality Report points out:

'The law as it stands ... is dealing with situations where an award of equal pay can be made to individual women, but where no really significant change is reflected in the earnings of women in general.' (Coussins 1976. P.8). ✓

and J. Hunt points out that:

'less than one third of the women who work are covered by the equal pay act.' (TUC report 1975. P.393).

In the debates in Parliament the danger of the Bill in this sense was pointed out by Robert Carr, a Tory M.P.,:

'...If we are to do what we want about women's employment in the years ahead we must recognise that we have to advance on two fronts, the front of equal pay and also the front of equal opportunities. This Bill advances only on the first front...There are cases where advancing on one front may be a positive danger. ✓

I am referring to the danger of a ring fence around women's employment. Certain jobs and industries have become almost marked out as women's employment. They become also low paid employment. If by advancing, as the Bill does, only on the

front of equal pay it were to have the effect of raising that ring fence and isolating more sharply special women's employment, where through lack of comparability the Bill would not bite, we might be putting back the opportunities for women rather than advancing them.' (Hansard. 23/4/70. Col.756).

He pointed out one of the effects of the Bill very clearly. Thus in Parliament and in the trade union movement the knowledge that the Bill would not affect most women workers and would in fact maintain them as low paid workers did not lead to a change in the final form of the Bill. The necessity for a woman to compare her work with a man doing the same work before she becomes eligible for equal pay ensures that the majority of women cannot claim equal pay at all.

The TUC had argued for different wording in the Bill which would have given more scope to women workers who were doing different work from men to claim equal pay. They supported the wording which appears in the ILO Convention 100 and specifies that equal pay should be awarded for work of equal value rather than work which is identical. However the much narrower definition of equal pay which has become law means that it is much harder for women to claim equal pay and thus restricts the applicability of the Equal Pay Act.

In 1970 a consultative document was sent to the TUC from the DEP setting out the form and content of the equal pay legislation. In reply,

'The General Council...pointed out that under the Bill, women doing work of equal value with men would only qualify for equal pay where there had been a job evaluation: this would affect only a minority of women and there were probably far more women doing work of equal value but whose jobs had not been evaluated. In addition, there was "women's work", i.e., work not done by men at all: although it appeared to be assumed that such work

required no skill, it often demanded more effort than some semi-skilled or even skilled male work.' (TUC report. 1970. P.210).

However the reply of the TUC did not have any effect on the final wording of the Bill due to their relegation of the equal pay issue to the pile of issues that were not considered of vital importance and the resultant lack of action to back up their words. The effect of this has been to maintain women as a source of cheap labour despite all the warnings sounded and debates held at the TUC. A delegate to the same Congress pointed out some of the loopholes of the Bill:

'Without trade union action that ensures that women are entitled to more than the basic male labourer's rate, under the legislation women will have to show that they are doing the same or broadly similar work, and this is impossible more often than not. Many jobs, the majority of jobs, particularly those of an especially fine and monotonous nature, have never ever been done by men. During the period of 5 years that the legislation will take to come into force, even where women are working side by side with men, without strong organisation employers will make attempts to shift them.' (TUC report 1970. P.723).

Knowledge of the actual work situation of women workers is crucial in assessing the possible effects of the Bill. Whereas at the level of the TUC this knowledge is commonplace and the material reality in which the Bill is to function colours assessments of it, in Parliament this is not so. In fact Mrs. Renee Short welcomed the wording of the Bill as being broader, rather than narrower, than awarding equal pay for work of equal value.

'I think that the Bill's interpretation is broader and better, because it provides more leeway. We do not have to pinpoint the similarities job for job with a man's job. There is the possibility of certain dissimilarities existing but of its being agreed that overall the job is broadly similar in many of its characteristics, and therefore, that the woman qualifies for equal pay.' (Hansard. 23/4/70. Col.756).

What an erroneous and optimistic view this is we shall see later.

She goes on to say that:

'the women's rate will disappear and, where the work is broadly similar, the women will spring off from the lowest rung of the pay ladder onto the lowest man's rate. This valuable principle will mean that trade unions will no longer negotiate for a women's rate in the collective agreements they make.'
(Hansard 23/4/70. Col.756).

What Mrs Short fails to realise is that although initially this will mean a rise for many women workers, in the long run it will institutionalise their wages as the lowest rate, the only difference will be that it will be defined by job rather than by sex. But because of the sexual division of labour all the female jobs will remain the lowest paid; the employers clearly were intent on ensuring that this did in fact happen.

Evasion of the Equal Pay Act

The employers managed to successfully evade the Equal Pay Act in a number of different ways all of which the trade unions were aware of in advance and all of which they did virtually nothing to prevent. This again reveals how the ideology of a woman's place divides the working class in the defence of its own interests and allows the capitalist class to use to its own advantage legislation that was fought for by the trade union movement.

One of the ways in which women's jobs were regraded so as to fit into the wages structure of a firm was through job evaluation schemes. Although at first glance this would seem to be fair such schemes are by no means free from bias in their evaluation of jobs. Jobs traditionally performed by women

which require so-called feminine skills are consistently undervalued while the reverse holds true for so-called masculine skills. Thus when a job evaluation exercise is carried out on this basis women's jobs are graded lower than men's jobs and so women workers' pay remains low. In this way the job evaluation scheme merely serves to change what was previously known as the 'woman's' rate into the lowest grade or grades of a wages structure. So instead of being overtly discriminated against on grounds of sex the discrimination is disguised and subsumed under a complex and seemingly neutral wages structure. The TUC was aware of these possibilities long before the Equal Pay Act became law and long before these job evaluations took place, but they did not do anything to oppose them. At the 1966 TUC the General Council reported that:

'A circular was...sent to all affiliated unions in January which said the General Council were aware that where the job evaluation is introduced women often continue to be placed in the lowest grades.'
(TUC report 1966. P.159).

The TUC wanted a clause in the Equal Pay Act that would ensure union consultation for any job evaluation scheme undertaken with a view to implementing equal pay. In the 1970 Congress the General Council reported that:

'There were innumerable interpretations of what constituted job evaluation and the dividing line between a job evaluation scheme and a pay structure was not clear-cut. What was a job evaluation scheme in one firm might be called a pay structure in another and this could be used to restrict women's ability to claim the proper rates for their jobs.'
(TUC report. 1970. P.211).

They recommended that union participation in and agreement with a job evaluation scheme must be written into the Bill and that:

'Unless specific guidelines were laid down, it would be possible to build in discrimination against women.'
(TUC report 1970. P.211).

Barbara Castle's response was reported:

'This point of view was not acceptable to the Employment Secretary...she said that any provision within the scope of the Bill would have to be restricted to consultation with unions on those aspects of job evaluation affecting the relative treatment of men and women and such a limited requirement would be very difficult for employers and unions to carry out in practice.' (TUC report. 1970. P.211).

Clearly the government was not willing to lay down the stringent conditions for job evaluation schemes which would have been necessary to ensure that women's jobs were given a non-discriminatory value, and employers were aware of the scope this offered them. The Times comments on a paper of guidance sent out by the Engineering Employers Federation to its local associations:

'The Federation's guidance paper mentions certain disadvantages of introducing job evaluation, for instance that its implementation will result in substantial wage and salary cost in additon to that arising from equal pay and that it could open up comparison between males and females where there is not now a comparison of like work. But the emphasis is much more on the advantages than the disadvantages [from whose point of view?] The document says that a simple, easily understood scheme will help the introduction of equal pay and reduce the number of comparability claims.' (my emphasis) (Times 3/9/71).

Obviously the Federation was aware that job evaluation schemes were likely to operate in their favour through undervaluing jobs performed by women, institutionalising them in a lower grade than men's jobs and thereby preventing any equal pay claim. Although the trade unions were aware of this danger nothing was done, further than written communication with Barbara Castle, to prevent such job evaluation schemes from being carried out. In fact, at the 1972 Congress a working party report on job evaluation schemes was mentioned which said that:

'...job evaluation depends on subjective judgements.'
(TUC report 1970. P.386).

A delegate commented that:

'In our society where traditionally women have been underpaid and undertrained this is a very special menace. It means that women will end up in the lower grades of pay.' (TUC report 1972. P.386.)

But although there had been a special working party set up to assess job evaluation schemes no further action was taken on the matter by the TUC - so another vital area in the struggle over equal pay was conceded to the employers.

Apart from delaying the Bill for as long as possible and trying to win back concessions that the working class had extorted from the bourgeoisie in return for such an Act the employers actively evaded the Act once it became law. This evasion was blatant and public, however the government did nothing to prevent it happening and neither did the TUC despite the many warnings sounded at Congress. The connivance of the TUC by default at this evasion could only benefit the capitalist class because it has permitted the perpetuation of a situation where women workers constitute a cheap section of the labour force. Thus the ideology of a woman's place, which sees women's work as being of secondary importance and the man's wage as being the one that counts in the family income, allowed the capitalist class and the government to weaken and evade the Equal Pay Act, because the trade union movement as a whole was divided over the issue and, in some cases, was against women

having equal pay.¹⁷

An indication of the unevenness of the response by unions to the equal pay issue is given in the report on the implementation of the Equal Pay Act published by the government. It reveals that some of the big unions such as the T&GWU, AUEW and GMWU had increased pressure for equal pay. The Electrical and Electronic Telecommunications Union had even drawn up guidelines for job evaluation schemes to be used to implement equal pay and had approached a number of major companies about it. The importance of equal pay as an issue which, if they were seen to be pressing for its implementation could attract more women members, was not missed by some unions. This shows that for the trade unions to take up these so-called women's issues is actually very important in strengthening the movement through unionising women workers who have previously been unorganised. The report also comments on the attitudes of male trade unionists at company level which shows the contradictions existing within the working class over the issue and the consequent lack of unity.

17 According to the official report on the implementation of equal pay, 'The degree of priority attached to equal pay by individual unions varies: some are pressing for its introduction to be completed by 1973 or earlier, whilst others appear to be content to wait until 1975. In some instances the interest of union officials in this matter has appeared to be no more than lukewarm, perhaps because (like employers associations) they have tended to be preoccupied with other developments such as the Industrial Relations Bill, general wage pressures, and problems of redundancy and unemployment.' (Equal Pay HMSO 1972. P.29). Thus we see that the lack of urgency given to the equal pay issue by the trade union movement allowed the employers to introduce evasive measures with impunity and with little fear of any comeback.

'About $\frac{1}{4}$ of the companies we visited told us that they had experienced union pressure for equal pay ...but in about 1 in 10 it was contended by managements that its introduction had been blocked by the attitudes of male union members. In some cases it was said that the men had resisted pay changes which would have narrowed the differentials between themselves and female employees and had successfully demanded the same percentage increases.' (Equal Pay HMSO 1972. P.29).

This practice is rooted in the notion that women work for pin money and men are the real bread winners, and, of course, the existence of male rates of pay, which are higher than women's rates, tends to reinforce this ideology because women cannot earn as much as men therefore the male wage, being higher, is more crucial to a family. The report also stated that in the manufacturing sector many,

'male employees were not prepared to accept a narrowing of differentials in order that equal pay might be achieved. In one industry union representatives rejected the possibility of a flat rate increase for men and women, instead settling for percentage increases which preserved the sex differential.' (Equal Pay HMSO 1972. P.31).

This resistance to the introduction of equal pay within the work force could only assist in delaying its full implementation and allowing the employers more time to continue to use women as cheap labour and take measures to evade the Act.

In 1970, before the Act became law, a TUC delegate pointed out that employers would try to separate men's jobs from women's jobs so that they were not doing work that was comparable.¹⁸ This had been made possible because the wording of the Act specified that a woman must be doing 'the same or broadly similar'

18 '...unscrupulous employers may try very hard to phase men out of certain categories, either by redeployment or promotion regardless of their ability, in order to have a basic grade consisting entirely of women to whom the present scandalously low wages can continue to be paid.' (TUC report 1970. P.721).

work to a man before she could claim equal pay. In other words the value of the work was not what equal pay would be based on but the identity of the work with work done by a man. And so if men's and women's jobs were separated and no man did the same work as a woman there was no basis for an equal pay claim. The official report gives examples of this happening saying that:

'We found a very small number of firms which were delaying the implementation of equal pay while they undertook a re-organisation of their labour force along lines which would reduce the applicability of the Act: this took the form of segregating men's and women's jobs in order to reduce the area of overlap.' (Equal Pay HMSO 1972. P.31).

They continue:

'In one company 80% of employees were women engaged on work similar to that of men rated as semi-skilled; they were, however, paid a rate below that for unskilled men. The costs of meeting equal pay within the existing job and pay structure were considered by the management to be prohibitive. With the acceptance of trade union representatives, who are concerned about male unemployment in the area, it is therefore now separating men and women into distinct categories of jobs.' (Equal Pay HMSO 1972. PP.31-2).

This clearly illustrates how the ideology of a woman's place divides the work force along sexual lines, the men are trading off equal pay for a fictitious job security for themselves, and the result will not be job security but that their wages can be kept low as well as the women workers not getting equal pay.

The report goes on to describe how this is being done:

'For example, the machine shop has had a female day-shift and a male nightshift; men are now being recruited for day work and women are being transferred to other departments; the more technical inspection jobs are being allotted to men and women are being transferred to simpler inspection tasks; central packing is to be a male area, line packing is to be reserved for women; work in the finishing and paint shops, and in the store, is to be a male preserve;

this also applies to signwriting, even though many women are considered to be more skilful at this.' (Equal Pay HMSO 1972. P.32). 19

Thus, although a female rate will be eliminated from the wages structure the sexual division of labour and the lower wage rates for women will be maintained, or even extended; the only thing that will change is that women's pay will no longer be named as such but it will be the rate for the job. Thus the lower wage rates will apply to jobs not to a sex - and the fact that women do all the jobs with the lowest wage rates will be acceptable to trade unionists, employers and government alike. Instead of overt discrimination against women the discrimination has become covert and built into the job and wages structure in a different form. As was pointed out in Parliament (above) and later in the TUC, the Equal Pay Act alone would not be enough to eliminate the appallingly low wages paid to women workers.

Another prong to the attack on equal pay legislation by the employers was to regrade jobs.

'White collar jobs are to be regraded into 3 grades: the lower one predominately for women, the middle one mixed, and the upper one predominately for men. As a result of this reorganisation, it

19 'Though the Equal Pay Act has had support from unions at national level the backing it has received from shop stewards at local level has been found to be less strong. In most of the organisations in the monitor group, implementation was not started until 1973 or after, and we have had very little evidence of any pressure from shop stewards to start plans moving earlier. In some of the instances of minimisation [of the effect of implementation] mentioned in the previous section, shop stewards either actively colluded with management (4 examples) or allowed management to carry them out without protest (5 examples). The collusion cited involved joint management-union agreement and action to ensure that most men continued to earn more than most women.' (Department of Employment Gazette Dec 1976. P.1339. Equal Pay experience in 25 firms).

is expected that by about the end of 1972 very little of the work undertaken by women will be even broadly similar to that of men.' (Equal Pay HMSO 1972. P.32).

This evasion of the Equal Pay Act was not a one-off thing that was uncovered in certain dubious areas. At the 1972 Congress it was pointed out that:

'The Engineering Employers Federation have already made a study in depth of this legislation and have issued written material to member firms on ways of evading the limited provisions of the Act.' (TUC report 1971. P.412).

Strategies range,

'from those sanctioned by the DEP, such as reclassifying semi-skilled women's work at the rate of unskilled men's work; "freezing" the minimum published man's rate which in practice no man is ever paid; placing female jobs in a separately defined and lower-paid grade; altering job titles (both these 2 are apparently exploiting a loophole in Article 3 of the ILO Convention); regrading upwards all or some of the men's jobs in the minimum rate category to which in theory all lower women's rates must now conform; and reclassifying women-only jobs as open to both men and women.' (Times 17/1/73). 20

Of course no man will take on a job with such low pay as most 'women's' jobs have.

The Office of Manpower Economics report comments that:

20 These measures of 'avoiding' the equal pay act are all suggested in a book entitled 'An Employer's guide to Equal Pay'. The authors comment: 'Faced with a possible sharp increase in costs, it is only natural and sensible that employers should seek to minimise them....It is also obvious that there is scope within the Equal Pay Act for dodging its requirements...drawing the parallel with the tax laws, where avoidance is not illegal (however it might be regarded socially) while evasion is, any book dealing with equal pay is bound somewhere to put on record some of the ways in which management is likely to arrange its affairs if it believes that the impact of the Act will harm its business. We therefore list at this point some of the more negative responses to equal pay that could be made under the legislation as it is framed at present:...' (Paterson & Armstrong. 1972. P.53).

'In almost all the firms we visited there were definite ideas about which jobs 'belonged' to men and which to women.' (Equal Pay, HMSO 1972. P.45).

It continues:

'In so far as these restrictions are based on deep-rooted traditions and assumptions about appropriate roles for women, it seems unlikely that the Act alone will do much if anything to remove them....If indeed employers tend to segregate women in different jobs from men to an even greater extent with a view to limiting the application of the Act, the effect will be to reduce opportunities for women still further.' (Equal Pay HMSO 1972. P.45).

The purpose of the lengthy discussions about cost of implementation of equal pay and the insistence by the CBI on a long timetable for it now becomes clear. The reason given by the CBI was to stagger the cost of implementation. However most firms did not introduce equal pay gradually but waited until the last minute, they used the 5 years allowed for implementation to evade the Act and to continue to employ cheap labour for as long as possible.

The Equal Pay Act gave the government discretionary power to compel employers to pay 90% of the relevant male rate to their women employees by the end of 1973 if progress on equal pay had not been satisfactory. However, even though

'Progress towards equal pay for women was slower during 1972-73 than in the previous 12 months, according to a special report by Incomes Data Study' (Times 20/7/73)

the government did not use this power. The reason given for this failure was that 'it could have had a very undesirable effect on prices'.²¹ Instead the government started a campaign of persuasion and, 'Hoped that its campaign would have the effect

21 Mr. Robin Chichester-Clark, Minister of State. Times 12/6/73.

of a statutory order'. (Times 12/6/73) Once again all means of delaying the full implementation of equal pay were being used. The Times reported that the failure of the government to issue a statutory order made the situation worse as far as progress towards equal pay was concerned.

'Of the 84 industries in the private sector reviewed, [in the incomes Data Study report] 49 (58%) were still paying women below 90% of the male rate at the end of May. Of these 49 industries 5 were still paying below 85%' (Times 20/7/73).

It goes on:

'The engineering industry nationally is shown to have retreated in eliminating the differential, the gap widening from 90% of the male rate in 1969 to 86.7%.' (Times 20/7/73).

Thus the 5 years' implementation period allowed for equal pay was certainly used by the employers to reduce the impact of equal pay on the total wages bill, not by introducing it gradually but by avoiding its introduction altogether. The lack of any concern with the cost of implementation despite all the horror stories before the Act was introduced is confirmed by the L.S.E. study of equal pay.²²

'One point to emerge from the project's research is that, in spite of the great concern expressed by industrialists about increased costs and inflationary effects prior to the passing of the Act in 1970, it appears that only one participating company has made any effort to cost the effects the Act has had on it in detail. There do not appear to have been attempts to separate labour cost increases as a result of the Equal Pay Act from other labour cost increases...' (Department of Employment Gazette, Dec. 1976. P.1340).

The equal Pay Act has also resulted, in a few cases, in women workers being replaced by machinery. The study quoted above notes that:

²² This was a study of the experience of introducing equal pay in 25 firms.

'When the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, it was argued that in the absence of any sex discrimination legislation, the Act would have one of 2 effects: it would either be against the interests of women since by making them more expensive it would lead to substitution of men or machinery for female labour, or it would be (sic) further women's interests by encouraging employers to use them more effectively due to their increased cost. In only 2 cases have these effects been found.' (Department of Employment Gazette. Dec 1976. P.1339).

In the parliamentary report in the Times of 18/4/73 it was reported that Mrs Sally Oppenheim had asked:

'what steps the Secretary of State for Employment was taking to discourage advertisements which suggested ways of avoiding the implementation of the Equal Pay Act.' (Times 18/4/73).

She went on to say that:

'Advertisements have appeared in the Financial Times exhorting employers to anticipate equal pay day with Vaughan automatic assembly machines.' (Times 18/4/73).

This points to another aspect of the use of women as cheap labour. In situations where employers could not avoid the equal pay act and so maintain their women employees on low rates of pay it could become economical, according to the laws of capitalist production, to introduce machines instead of the more expensive female labour.²³ The reply by Mr. Chichester-Clerk to

23 When discussing machinery in Capital Marx comments on the conditions that determine the introduction of machinery into certain branches of production: 'In some branches of the woollen manufacture in England the employment of children has during recent years been considerably diminished, and in some cases has been entirely abolished. Why? Because the Factory Acts made two sets of children necessary, one working six hours, the other four, or each working five hours. But the parents refused to sell the "half-timers" cheaper than the "full-timers". Hence the substitution of machinery for the "half-timers". Before the labour of women and of children under ten years of age was forbidden in mines, capitalists considered the employment of naked women and girls, often in company with men, so far sanctioned by their moral code, and especially by their ledgers, that it was only after the passing of the Act that they had recourse to machinery. The Yankees have invented a stone-breaking machine. The English do not make use of it, because the "wretch" who does this work gets paid for such a small portion of his labour, that machinery would increase the cost of production to the capitalist. In England women

the question of machinery raised by Mrs Oppenheim referred to the OME report:

'the move to equal pay might lead to the employment of women being checked by the improvement of layout equipment and by mechanisation and automation. Such a course is not forbidden by the Act and might be desirable in particular circumstances even though some women might thereby lose their jobs.

We should look unfavourably on adverts suggesting that mechanisation is necessarily the right response in making the move to equal pay.' (Times 18/4/73).

An example of the replacement of female labour by machinery was publicised in December 1971:

'The trend towards equal pay for women is leading Mr Isaac Donner...managing director of the Wakefield shirt company to recruit more men because it is not worth training girls who leave to get married at 18 or 19.

Mr. Donner said a woman's nimble fingers have been needed to cope with the delicate shirt making but now with automation men can do the job just as well.' (Times 31/12/71).

This example shows how the ideological social relations which confine women to the home affect the distribution of women in the work force. Because women do leave work when they have children they are not considered a 'good investment' for training unless they can be paid much lower wages than their male counterparts. Thus, even though they return to work often for 25 to 30 years when their children start school, the fact that they are the ones who have the responsibility for the home colours the whole structure of the labour market. And the ideology of

23 continued

are still occasionally used instead of horses for hauling canal boats, because the labour required to produce horses and machines is an accurately known quantity, while that required to maintain the women of the surplus-population is below all calculation. Hence nowhere do we find a more shameful squandering of human labour-power for the most despicable purposes than in England, the land of machinery.' (Marx 1970, I: pp.393-4).

the family and woman's place finds expression in practices such as the preference for male employees to female employees when their wages are supposedly the same. In another newspaper article it is reported that managements

'are also looking at the way they use their female labour. Because it has been cheap it has often been used wastefully, and managements will be trying to reduce the extra costs imposed on them by the Act by using their women more efficiently.'
(Times 3/8/71).

Or by replacing them by machinery it might be added.

The Equal Pay Act in practice

Despite the Equal Pay Act, in April 1976 the average hourly pay of manual women workers as a percentage of the average hourly pay of men workers was 70% and for non-manual workers the figure was 63% (Coussins 1976. P.9). This shows that the Equal Pay Act has not solved the problem of women being generally paid lower wages than men. Clearly it never had any possibility of doing this given the sexual division of labour which characterises the labour force in Britain and the consequent "ghettoisation" of women's work.

It is clear, however, from the examination above of the manoeuvres and manipulations performed by employers, government and the trade union movement, that had the working class not been divided on the issue, and had it not regarded 'women's' issues as rather unimportant, the form of the Equal Pay Act and its effectiveness could have been different. The divisions within the working class on this issue gave the capitalist class space to use the Act to their own advantage. The result has been, as we have seen, to regrade and restructure the work force

so that although there are now no women's rates as such - women's work still exists and is still paid at lower rates than men's work.

The maintenance of women as a source of cheap labour is not in the interests of the working class as a whole because the existence of a pool of cheap labour keeps down wage rates as does the existence of a 'reserve army' of labour. The ideology of a woman's place serves to maintain women in this position, they fail to achieve equal pay because due to these ideological practices they do not get the support of their fellow workers and the backing of the trade union movement as a whole. Thus the divisions within the working class induced by and constituting these ideological social relations tend to maintain women in their position as a low paid sector of the working class. However there are examples of the Equal Pay Act providing a framework for women workers to press for an equal pay claim. Often these claims are only successful when the workforce is united in struggle. The Act has been used to institutionalise women as a low paid sector of the work force by the capitalist class, but in the course of struggle around the equal pay issue it can also be used in the interests of the working class to make real gains on the wages front.

I have examined some of the ways in which the form of the Equal Pay Act has been determined by the opposing interests of the capitalist and working classes and how the Act, even when finally implemented, has not affected the pay of $\frac{2}{3}$ of working women and has often served to entrench the position of women as a low paid sector of the work force. I shall now look briefly at the tribunals which hear equal pay claims.

The Act in its implementation through tribunals often confirms the low paid position of women seeking equal pay and thus, by judging that a woman is not entitled to equal pay with a man, it becomes even more difficult than it was before for women to raise their pay to the level of male workers. Through the tribunals the Act is used to reinforce the position of women workers at the lower end of the wage scale rather than to transform this position. And the rhetoric with which they do this clearly reveals the ideology of a woman's place which regards 'women's' work as secondary to men's and therefore worthless. Thus the tribunals tend to maintain the sexual division of labour within the work force and the ideology finds expression in their discourse and practices.

Only 32% of women who have taken their cases to equal pay tribunals have won, 409 women out of 1257 who claimed that they were entitled to equal pay (Women's Voice May 1978. P.5). This is not, in general, because their claim is not justified but because the tribunals are interpreting the Act in a very narrow way which allows the employers to use any loopholes that they possibly can to avoid the necessity of paying equal pay. A typical example of the devaluing of women's work arose in a case where a housemother in a school for handicapped children was claiming equal pay with the housefather. She did not get her equal pay and the reasons behind this were elaborated by the Chairman of the tribunal Sir Martin Edwards:

'A housemother is engaged to look after the younger boys and carry out domestic duties. A housefather is engaged to lead the growing boy to a better approach to life and help him in his problems. The roles are largely those of a mother and a father in ordinary life; they are both important, but they are different....for these reasons we find that

the applicant is not engaged on like work with a man...full of admiration as we are for the work which she is doing...' (Coussins 1976. P.47).

This illustrates the role that the wording of the Act plays in limiting equal pay claims. Because the two jobs are not identical there is no claim to be met. If the Act had been worded so that work of equal value should be paid equally then this sort of claim might have had more of a chance. However the traditional undervaluing of women's work also contributes to the justification of not paying a housemother the same rate as a housefather - clearly a mother's job although necessary is not of so much importance as the father's in the eyes of Sir Martin.

Many equal pay claims have been lodged by cleaners. In one case the employers went to extraordinary lengths to try and justify a differential of over £10 a week between male and female toilet attendants. The employers' spokesman argued that there were fewer female employees than males so cleaning the female toilets was an easier job. The Equality Report quotes this extract from the written decision:

'...there was chaos in the men's toilets at 11.50 a.m. and at 4.20 p.m. when the men crowded round the wash basins and soapy water splashed, soap was misplaced and paper towels strewn around, and Mr Fenwick characterised this as an 'avalanche' twice a day.' (Coussins 1976. PP.48-9).

They go on to say that:

'Mr Fenwick's pièce de résistance was to say that "a male toilet attendant has to approach the job from a labouring point of view and a female toilet attendant approaches it from a housekeeping point of view.'" (Coussins 1976. P.49).

The idiocy of this remark speaks for itself, and it also clearly reflects the undervaluing of women's work, labouring is, of

course, a much harder and more valuable job than performing housework.²⁴

The ideology of woman as housewife occurs frequently in these tribunals, the fact that it is supposedly 'natural' for women to do housework seems to be used as an argument for paying them less than men doing the same work.

'In Greendale v. Jarman and Flint Ltd, a woman office cleaner thought she was entitled to equal pay with the man who cleaned the warehouse. One of the so-called differences which led the tribunal to dismiss the claim was the statement that "the office cleaners work in the comfortable surroundings of carpeted offices, very similar to the environment of one's own home."' (Coussins 1976. P.49).

So the women cleaners did not get their equal pay claim because of a woman's 'natural' affinity for housework. In this way the ideology of a woman's place is used as justification for and rationalisation of not paying women the same rate as men.

As we have seen above from one of the speeches at the TUC - often the only way that the Equal Pay Act can be made to operate in the interests of the working class is through industrial action and unity within the workforce. The ideological divisions within the workforce between men and women have to be fought against and then the Act can become a weapon in its hands. As long as the Act is used to maintain these divisions it is a weapon in the hands of the capitalist class. An example of a successful equal pay strike which in fact defied a tribunal decision which had ruled in favour of the employers is that of TRICO-Folberth, a windscreen wiper factory. This case also reveals another loophole in the act that can be exploited by employers, the so-called 'Red Circle' cases.²⁵

24 In this case the women won their claim.

25 A 'Red Circle' exists when an employer moves one or more employees from a higher paid job to a lower paid job but maintains their higher rates of pay. A 'red circle' is then drawn round these workers and they get paid more than other workers doing the same job who are outside the 'red circle'.

On June 15, 1976, a strike by 400 women working at TRICO was declared official by the AUEW. Working alongside the women on the production line were 5 men who were paid £6.64 a week more than the women - unions and management agreed that the men's and women's jobs were the same, but the women's rates were not raised. This was justified because the men had previously been working on a night shift which, in September 1975 had been closed down by the firm. They had been given the option of being made redundant, or transferring to the day shift while maintaining their old rates of pay. These were higher than the women's who were all on the day shift. The argument in favour of the men getting higher pay was supported by the supposed greater flexibility of the male workers and the fact that the female rates of pay were going to be brought into line with the men's after 12 months. However the women wanted their equal pay now, not in a year's time! The unity of the workforce in support of the women's pay claim illustrates how important it is for the working class to overcome divisions within its ranks in order to wage successful struggles. When the strike was declared official,

'male toolroom and foundry workers, fitters and setters came out to join the women pickets at the factory gates.

The company says it would be willing to abide by the decision of an industrial tribunal, believing it has a good case based on the anomalous or so-called 'red-circle' position of the men, and that victory would be assured by the precedent set in March when Hellerman Deutch successfully proved that some male workers were justly paid more than women on what was agreed to be a 'transitional one-off basis'. The Trico women, however, have refused to go to tribunal, and say they intend to settle by direct negotiation.

They point out that in the first 6 months of the Act, 72% of similar cases brought to tribunals

failed. "We are simply not prepared to abide by tribunals which are clearly failing to help the majority of women reach equal pay"... (Times 21/7/76).

The tribunal was boycotted by the union and the workers and it in fact ruled against them. The employers were right to put their faith in a body which had previously functioned so as to defend their interests in the majority of cases. And the women workers had rightly assessed the tribunals, in the main they were operating in the interests of the capitalist class. In spite of the ruling against them the strikers refused to go back to work and this decision was backed by the union. The tribunal had ruled that the pay difference was:

"genuinely due to a material difference other than a difference of sex". (Times 14/10/76).

The significance of the defiance of a tribunal 'which has the legal power to determine whether the women's claim ... is justified' (Financial Times 6/8/76) is that it demonstrates that the law, and its interpretation through such things as tribunals, is not neutral and is not above the class struggle. This was clearly illustrated by an account of an equal pay strike given at the 1973 TUC. A delegate gave the following account:

'More than 40 times has this Congress declared the principles contained in this motion and yet we must ask ourselves why we still live in a capitalist society which in many, many ways obscenely denies equality to and doubly exploits the women of our class. The lesson surely is that our movement must proceed more thoroughly from words to deeds. In the past year my union, and I suppose many others, have had many experiences showing that action is necessary. Here is one from many. Some 6 months ago my union organised staff women workers in what can only be described as the richest little company quoted on the Stock Exchange. To our horror we found that they were paying the women as little as £7 a week, a miserly unsecured bonus, and were not paying

for Saturday morning overtime. In the negotiations which took place we deployed every possible argument: the position of women in society, the question of humanity, equal pay legislation, the special provisions of Phase 2, comparative data and all the nitty-gritty of bread and butter negotiations. The employers' response was to deny the whole argument and to insist that the women would get £1 plus 4% and not a penny more. This would have created the result that some of the women would have been on £8.28 a week. Our experience is that the attitude exposed in this particular employer is widespread among employers who have not moved at all since that great intellectual capitalist Henry Ford 1, forty years ago, said, 'What do I care about the law? Ain't I got the power?'

We then commenced a strike action in which the women were joined by 170 blue collar workers of our engineering section, themselves earning more than £50 a week - and all honour to them....In 4 weeks that employer surrendered and agreed as a first step to pay £6 plus 15% and to regularise their other conditions. The government is fully aware of the terms of the settlement and it has not intervened. We feel that if it did the resulting publicity carried effectively to the men and women of our movement could be politically disastrous to it...the lesson is that employers cannot resist the united power of our movement and that it is time to create and deploy that power everywhere.' (TUC 1973. P.464). 26

The resulting settlement was outside the then existing pay policy but no legal action was taken by the government. These examples indicate that the law is not above class struggle, on the contrary, the strength of the forces opposing one another determines when and how the law will be used, and, as has been seen from the example of the Equal Pay Act, what form the law in

26 He gave the following account of the behaviour of the women strikers: '...in every hour of the day there was a new initiative coming from these women as they showed their power and courage in strike combat...these were not blindly led and instructed, ignorant, automated beings, these were living, vital women expressing their desire to carry through this struggle against a reactionary employer and showing every possible individual initiative to win. One example was that strike action. These newly organised, inexperienced young women, picketing hard from sunrise to sunset, in pouring rain on very poor rations, standing in front of great lorries as they drove fairly quickly towards that works entrance, persuaded the drivers to turn round, which many of them did.' (TUC report 1973. P.464).

fact takes.

The whole history of the Equal Pay Act has been determined by the class struggle and we have seen how the capitalist class has managed to turn the Act to its own advantage. As well as the law itself the operation of the tribunals is also subject to the balance of class forces. In the case of TRICO the unity of the workforce in pursuit of the equal pay claim was decisive in determining the strength of the law which had previously been operating in the interests of the employers. The Financial Times comments:

'The left-wing suspicion that any "progressive" legislation which survives its passage through the Commons and Lords will soon be cut down to size by the courts is being revived among such groups as the TRICO strikers by what they see as narrow and over-legalistic interpretation by tribunals.'
(Financial Times. 6/8/76).

The tribunals, in ruling on equal pay claims were upholding the letter of the law but defying its spirit. For instance, a Leicester community worker was refused equal pay because of her greater responsibility and seniority than a man - of course her work was not technically 'like' in all respects and these differences justified such a decision. In the case of the TRICO workers after a 21 week strike they won their equal pay claim, despite the tribunal ruling. This illustrates the strength that comes from a unified work force which is not divided along male-female lines.

It is clear that the class interests of the government and the employers ranged them against the implementation of equal pay, hence all the attempts to minimise the effect of its introduction. It is another form of wage increase around which the class struggle at the economic level is played out. It is

in the interests of the working class to fight for the wage rise , which the awarding of equal pay to women constitutes, and for this rise to come out of profits and not out of the wage packets of other workers. It is equally in the interests of the capitalist class and their representatives in Parliament, the Labour party in this instance, to attempt to minimise these wage rises. The tactics employed are clearly those of delaying the implementation of equal pay so that women continue to form a supply of cheap labour for as long as possible - and bartering with equal pay. This latter tactic takes the form of arguing that men must do without if women get wage rises, or that protective legislation must be abolished if women are to have equal pay. The victory of achieving equal pay after many years of struggle by the working class would be a hollow one indeed if it were to forfeit its other gains, and this was the aim of government and employers, to give equal pay with one hand and to negate its effects by removing protective legislation etc, with the other. Thus an examination of the issue of equal pay reveals the class forces which go into shaping the final form of the legislation and demonstrates that legislation is itself an arena of class struggle.

The major reason why the capitalist class has been successful in its attempts to reduce the effectiveness of the Equal Pay Act has been the ideological divisions within the working class. If male workers and the trade union movement had been 100% behind the equal pay issue and had considered it important, rather than a peripheral "women's" issue, the Act and its implementation would have looked very different. For instance

all of the evasion of the Act by employers, especially where collusion occurred on the part of the male employers, could have been eliminated. Now women still constitute a source of cheap labour although the discrimination in wage structures etc., has been disguised. A lot of male workers are happy because the wage differential between male and female workers has been maintained. But the ideology which sees women's wages as secondary to men's and therefore allows male rates and female rates to exist benefits the employers because it keeps down the wages of male and female workers alike. The ideology functions in the interests of the capitalist class and weakens the trade union movement in its basic economic struggle.

The only way that the Act can be used by the working class in its own interests is by forging a unity between male and female workers, and this means fighting against the divisions which constitute the ideological practices reproducing the social relations which chain women to the home and force them to do two jobs.

Thus the ideological practices which reproduce sexual divisions within the working class ensure that struggles on all trade union issues are weakened. The organised working class fails to unite on issues that are seen as 'women's issues, and women are unable to participate fully in the trade union movement. This situation of division is perpetuated by the ideology of a woman's place, women's struggles are weakened, trade union struggles are weakened, and the capitalist class is not slow to turn these weaknesses into its own strengths.

Chapter 11

Struggling for a nursery

The struggle for equal pay is an example of women fighting within the trade union movement over an economic issue. The practical existence of the ideology of a woman's place meant that this struggle did not receive the wholehearted support of the trade union movement, thus constituting a barrier to the successful outcome of their struggle. Women also confront the ideological relations which define them as wives and mothers when they undertake to organise within the community rather than at the work place. An examination of these ideological practices is undertaken below by means of an account of a campaign for a day nursery which took place on a council house estate in the Stoke-on-Trent area. Before proceeding to this account it is appropriate to examine the policies of government on pre-school provision, and the ideology underpinning them, which women organising to campaign for such facilities are bound to confront.

Pre-school provision: Distribution and Policies

Pre-school provision in Britain takes a number of forms which are often rather hazily distinguished. There are four main categories of pre-school provision: day nurseries, child-minders, play groups and nursery education, this latter includes nursery schools and classes.

Nursery education

Nursery schools and nursery classes are administered by the

Department of Education and Science¹ and I will deal with these first: Nursery schools differ from nursery classes in so far as a nursery class is attached to an infant school and a nursery school is a separate institution. They provide educational facilities for children over 3 years old during normal school hours, usually from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m., and are staffed by qualified teachers and nursery nurses. There has been much emphasis placed by successive governments on the importance of expanding the provision of nursery education, however the forecasts and recommendations of reports often remain unimplemented.

In the 1930's the Hadow Report recommended increased provision of nursery education and in 1943 a government white paper, 'Educational Reconstruction' repeated the call for expansion. More recently, in 1967, the Plowden Report recommended a growth in nursery education which would provide places for 90% of four year olds and 50% of three year olds. These places were not all to be full-time, the committee estimated that only 15% of both three and four year olds would wish to attend on a full-time basis and the large majority, 75% of four year olds and 33% of three year olds, would attend on a part-time basis. In 1968 nursery education projects were included in the Urban Aid programme, the funds provided for expansion in this way resulted in an extra 24,000 full-time places being made available for pre-school age children. In December 1972 the Tory white paper, 'Education: A framework for expansion', argued for the implementation of the Plowden Report so that by 1980 the targets of the report would be met. For the first time

¹ Hereafter D.E.S.

playgroups were included in this plan as an alternative to nursery schools and nursery classes but, as will be seen later, they are not strictly comparable. Obviously with the policies of public expenditure cuts one of the main reasons for the inclusion of play groups in such a scheme was to cut down on the cost of nursery education to the government while at the same time appearing to implement expansion of such provisions. Play groups are run voluntarily, usually by the mothers involved and do not need to be staffed by qualified teachers unlike nursery schools and classes. In January 1976 a D.E.S. circular states that the objective was to provide nursery education for all children from the first term after their third birthday. But because of the cutbacks in public expenditure that have occurred neither this target, nor that of the Plowden report, will be met. In fact only 4/5 of the 1972 target will be met. By 1980 only 72% of four year olds and 40% of three year olds will have nursery education or playgroup facilities available on a part-time basis, and far less on a full-time basis (Labour Research, 1976. P.77). At the Trade Union Congress in 1972 a delegate produced figures on nursery education which illustrated the paucity of its provision.

'Today, on the latest figures that we can establish, 99.8% of 2 year olds, 97% of three year olds and over 70% of four year olds receive no nursery education at all.' (TUC report, 1972. P.420).

Clearly a huge expansion of nursery education would have been necessary to fulfil even the targets of the 1972 white paper, but this expansion has not materialised.

The table below shows the extent of the cuts that were proposed in the building programme for education facilities for

the under-fives in 1976.

Table 1 Main proposed cuts 1975 prices (£ million)

	1975-6	1976-7	1977-8	1978-9
Proposed cuts in education building for under fives	32	23	11	6

Source: (White paper on Public Expenditure published February 1976) Taken from Labour Research April 1976, p.74.

Clearly provision of nursery education facilities has been hit hard by the cut backs in public expenditure. For new nursery building programmes started in England in 1974-5 local authorities were allocated £20 million by central government, the allocation for 1975-6 was £17.2 million and for 1976-7 £8.5 million (Labour Research April 1976, p.77). The figures speak for themselves and if inflation at a rate of 15% is taken into account then the cuts are even more severe in terms of real spending power. In fact the effects on nursery expansion are more acute than these figures suggest because,

'about a dozen of the 97 authorities in England have decided not to spend their full allocation even of this small sum'. (Labour Research, April 1976. P.78).

This is due to their need to calculate future running costs as well as initial expenditure on building, they are unable to increase their running costs and therefore unable to build buildings which will incur running costs because of the central government cutbacks.

All this means that a large proportion of children of pre-school age are not receiving any education before they reach the compulsory school age. In many cases even if they do receive it

it is only for six months or so before they start at school and it is part time. Even if a child is able to attend a nursery school or class full-time the opening hours, which are the same as school hours, mean that the problems facing women who wish to go out to work and who also have young children are not solved. In fact it is assumed that mothers of young children do not, or ought not to, go out to work when planning educational provision for the under fives. It is seen purely in terms of the educational needs of the child. The social needs of parent and child are not taken into account. Even when a child has a full-time place in a nursery school or class the mother has to find a job that will fit in with school hours. This limits the range of jobs open to her and goes a long way towards explaining the high numbers of women in part-time employment. In fact, government policy, as will be seen below, seeks to ensure that mothers stay at home to look after their children because this is seen as the best situation for both mother and child, policies on both nursery education and day care are formulated with this 'normal' situation as their basis. According to official policies day care (as opposed to nursery education) is seen as necessary only when something has gone wrong with the 'normal' family unit. An exception to this occurred during the war when women were needed in the factories, in the war situation the government was able to provide free day nurseries so as to free women from the home and in 1946 there were 1,300 local authority day nurseries. In 1975 this number had fallen to 453 and public expenditure cuts are likely to reduce them even further. In fact one Chief Education Officer said that because of the cuts:

'We are having to jettison everything we can to keep

the ship afloat. Unfortunately, nursery programmes are one of the most jettisonable items.' (NALGO Equal Rights Working Party Report, 1975. P.17).

This view is clearly that of the government, since, in the absence of any such facilities, or so the story goes, women as housewives and mothers can be relied upon to continue looking after their children at home until they are old enough to go to school, the necessity for the majority of women with young children to find jobs is not taken into account.

According to research conducted by Tessa Blackstone the distribution of nursery education facilities is uneven throughout Britain but those areas with the highest provision tend to be highly urbanised and industrialised counties such as London, Middlesex, the West Riding of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Staffordshire. Out of the County Boroughs

'...those with high maintained provision are all industrial towns in the Midlands and the North, with the exception of Oxford.' (Blackstone, 1971. P.102).

The table below shows the extent of provision in the County Boroughs.

Table 2 The ten County Boroughs with the highest maintained provision.

Place per 1,000 of the child population aged two-four.

Leicester	199	Oxford	124
Stoke-on-Trent	161	Bolton	120
Wakefield	158	Rotherham	118
Burnley	157	Manchester	117
Dewsbury	125	Darlington	116

Source: A Fair Start: Tessa Blackstone.1971. P.104.

Blackstone comments that:

'Seven of the ten towns listed have high proportions of women in the labour force, the exceptions being Wakefield, Rotherham and Darlington. All these towns have a high proportion of the labour force working in manufacture as opposed to service trades, but the type of industry which predominates varies considerably.' (Blackstone, 1971. P.102).

This is very interesting because in certain areas there is a strong tradition of women working in manufacturing, such as in the textile industry in Lancashire and in the pottery industry in Stoke-on-Trent. This means that as well as jobs being available for women in the service industries they are also available in manufacturing, and this results in a high proportion of women working. This phenomenon has clearly affected the number of places available in nursery education.

Blackstone's conclusions as far as authorities with low maintained provision go are also significant. She says:

'They include resorts in the North and South, small administrative centres such as Carlisle and large industrial towns such as Huddersfield and South Shields.' (Blackstone, 1971. P.102).

She says that these towns 'defy generalisation' but she goes on to point out a common, and most pertinent (in my view), feature:

'...they do share the common characteristic of low proportions of women in the labour force, in direct contrast to those boroughs with high provisions...'
(Blackstone, 1971. P.102).

Again there are three exceptions, Blackpool, Huddersfield and Eastbourne. The figures for these counties are in the table below.

Table 3 County Boroughs. The ten authorities with the lowest maintained provision.

Places per 1,000 of the child population aged two-four.

Blackpool	-	South Shields	10
Carlisle	-	Ipswich	11
Huddersfield	-	Plymouth	12
Wallasey	7	Burton-on-Trent	12
Solihull	8	Eastbourne	12

Source: Blackstone, 1971. P.105.

Blackstone hesitates to infer from these general impressions that the proportion of women in the work force has a direct bearing on the provision of nursery education by local authorities, but I think it is safe to assume that it is an important factor that is taken into consideration when the local authority is formulating plans and policies concerning such provision. This is certainly the case in Stoke-on-Trent which I shall look at more closely below.

It is also interesting that the authorities with high proportions of independent places, i.e., provision that has to be paid for,

'...have a high proportion of their populations in administrative and managerial occupations, and a low level of industrialisation and are situated in southern England. The only exception is Northampton.' (Blackstone, 1971. P.102).

Clearly in areas of relative affluence, such as the South of England, more people can afford to pay fees to send their children to privately run nurseries. Blackstone's conclusions are as follows:

'From this consideration of the authorities at the extremes a picture, admittedly hazy, emerges of the kind of authority in England, but not in Wales, that tends to have either a large or small supply of nursery education of one kind or another. The

administrative counties with high maintained provision tend to be urbanised, industrialised areas where those with low maintained provision are sparsely populated areas predominantly in East Anglia, and sometimes in the South-West. Those with high independent provision are all home counties with large middle-class populations, whilst the group with low provision is a mixture of rural agricultural counties and mining or heavy industrial areas with a larger than average working class population.' (Blackstone 1971. P.103).

Blackstone does not mention women in the work force as a factor affecting nursery provision when commenting on the administrative counties. But it is probably safe to assume that in the urbanised and industrialised areas which have a higher proportion of maintained provision there are more women going out to work than in rural areas. In the latter areas work for women is often seasonal and provision of nursery facilities is not required to enable women to take these kinds of jobs. The industrial areas having low independent provision are those that have high maintained provision.

Playgroups

Playgroups, because they are included in the government's plans for nursery education, receive money from the government. The Pre-School Playgroup's Association receives an annual grant and, according to the Times of 11/12/76, their next annual grant is to be doubled to £161,000.² The government is saving huge amounts of money by including play groups in the pre-school system because although they do not fulfil the same function as

² At present nearly half a million children attend playgroups in Britain so this money provides 32p per child per year. This is a pittance compared with the amount of money spent on each child in nursery education. And the amount of public money spent on nursery education itself is minimal when compared to the amount spent on defence. For 1975-6 the estimated expenditure on nursery expansion was £32M, on defence it was £4,538M. Clearly nursery education is not high on the priority list for government expenditure.

nursery schools and classes their inclusion in this sector means that such provision appears greater than it actually is. Thus public pressure for nursery education can be assuaged without a huge increase in government expenditure. This is made possible by the fact that nursery schools and classes need to be paid for out of public funds whereas playgroups are run privately on a very low budget and receive minimal financial aid from the government.

In nursery schools and classes the staff are fully qualified teachers and are paid the appropriate salary, whereas in most playgroups the staff are voluntary, with perhaps one person who is paid a nominal amount. There is no requirement that qualified teachers run a play group so, although often valuable for the development of the child, a playgroup does not fulfil the same function as nursery education. Most playgroups are organised by the mothers of the children who attend and staffed on a rota system. They are open for one or two days a week, some of the longer established ones may be open for 5 days but this is unusual, the children attend for two or three hours in the morning and for two or three hours in the afternoon with the mothers taking them home to feed them at midday. The standards maintained within playgroups vary enormously and depend a lot on the people involved in running them. Some playgroups provide a very high standard of educational and structured play, others let the children run wild and the educational value of this is hard to see. A new requirement introduced recently stipulates that to become a playgroup supervisor a woman, and it is by and large women who run these groups, has to have been through a course and obtained a certificate. However there are

a large number of playgroups whose supervisors have not received this type of qualification.³ Because playgroups are usually voluntarily run it is much cheaper for the government to encourage their development rather than pour huge sums of money into the expansion of nursery education. But again this type of arrangement is of no use to the woman with young children who does not wish to be a full-time housewife. In fact play groups rely on the involvement of the mothers in order to function properly. Thus they depend for their existence on women being full-time mothers and housewives and not going out to work.

In its policies for nursery education the government is clearly not prepared to recognise that many women with pre-school age children need to go out to work. On the contrary by emphasising playgroups as part of their education programme they are relying on mothers not to go out to work.

The trade union movement is very critical of the government's policies on pre-school education. Speaking on the Tories' white paper Mr. Allison of the National Union of Teachers accused Sir Keith Joseph and Mrs Thatcher of using playgroups

'as a means of getting something on the cheap in substituting the professional by the volunteer, catering only for the middle-class groups and not really doing it as it should be, freely.' (TUC report, 1973. P.419).

This comment brings out another aspect of the problem, most playgroups are organised by 'middle class' women, and in working class areas they are few and far between. This is a reflection of the fact that most working class mums have to go out to work at the earliest opportunity and they find a child-minder to look after their child, whereas in families with a

3 Qualified teachers or nursery nurses are also allowed to be playgroup supervisors, the requirement of a certificate is only a minimum requirement.

higher income it is no hardship for the mother to stay at home at least until her child reaches school age. This means that she has the time to organise play groups and make them work properly. Another point is that play groups are not provided free of charge as is nursery education. A small fee is charged per session, and whereas better off families can afford it easily working class families find it rather a lot to pay out for a few hours each week. For example a sum of 50p a week is perhaps negligible for a family with an income of £70 a week, but for someone who is on the dole, or someone earning £45 a week, with several children it is difficult to afford. Thus a fee prevents many working class children from benefiting from a play group.

The acceptance of the necessity of mothers staying at home and looking after their children is not peculiar to the government. Even though many speakers at the Trade Union Congress argue in favour of expansion of day care and nursery provision for the under fives the General Council seems to accept that women are going to stay at home at least until their children start at school. They

'accepted that for most young children, part-time attendance was appropriate.' (TUC report, 1973. P.156).

This is clearly in direct opposition to many of the calls made by the trade union membership, and ignores the fact that half a million working women have children under four years of age. Obviously nursery provision and education is geared to women being in the home with their young children twenty four hours a day and seven days a week. This position also governs practices as regards provision of day care facilities.

Day Nurseries

Day nurseries provide care throughout the day for pre-school age children. They are administered by the Department of Health and Social Security (hereafter DHSS) and are staffed by qualified nursery nurses or, less frequently, State Registered Nurses or teachers. A charge is levied for the use of the facility but it is means tested and frequently places are provided free of charge. This is because day nurseries are provided primarily for those in special need and they are often children who come from families with a low income such as one parent families. Despite this policy,

'According to the DHSS "there are not sufficient places in local authority day nurseries even for these 'priority' children, 12,000 of whom, in England, were without a place in 1974".' (Labour Research, April 1976. P.78).

Before looking more closely at the rationale governing the provision of day nurseries it is instructive to see how many there are and the relation of this kind of provision to that of nursery education. In March 1974 there were 25,000 children in local authority day nurseries in England and 24,400 children in 1,175 privately run day nurseries. Compared with this registered child-minders care for 56,700 children altogether which is more than the total number of children in local authority and private day nurseries. And this figure does not include the children cared for by unregistered child-minders where,

'the estimates vary from double the registered figures to ten times in some deprived areas.'
(Labour Research, April 1976. P.78).

Clearly women who work have to find an alternative to officially provided facilities and the vacuum is filled by childminders,

registered and unregistered.

Some employers find it necessary to provide day nursery facilities for their employees. In March 1974 there were 86 nurseries run by hospitals in England and 81 nurseries run by other employers. Many hospitals operate nurseries in order to attract nursing staff who would otherwise be unable to work because such a high proportion of nurses in Britain is female and many of them, who leave work to have children, would be lost to the hospital work force without such a provision. The reasons given by other employers for opening nurseries were interesting. In 1975 a survey of 22 of these nurseries was conducted for the Institute of Personnel Management. The main reasons were (a) shortage of labour in difficult recruitment areas, hence the need to attract women who might not otherwise go out to work because of the lack of day care provision available for their young children. (b) The desire of staff to continue working while having young children, and (c) the lack of local authority provision in the area. However, all the nurseries approached allowed only female staff to use these provisions, many only allowed one child per mother to use the nursery, and some gave priority to categories of staff in short supply or to full-time staff (Labour Research, April 1976). The main reason for setting up such nurseries is therefore to ensure a continual supply of labour to the enterprise. It is interesting that only female staff were allowed to use the facilities, presumably men with small children have no problem about finding child care facilities because they have wives who stay at home to look after them. Clearly the ideology of a woman being the one responsible for the children and the home

finds expression here in concrete policies adopted by enterprises.

Blackstone's findings show that out of all the local authorities in England and Wales 60 have no day nurseries, 74 have more places in nursery classes and schools than in day nurseries and 10 authorities have more places in day nurseries.

She comments:

'The majority of authorities have only one or two day nurseries, although there are a few exceptional areas with large numbers. For example, Lancashire has 53, Manchester 24, Birmingham and Essex 20, and Liverpool and Surrey 13. However, in the 10 cases where day nursery places exceed the places provided by the education department, it is usually a result of negligible provision by the latter rather than generous provision by the health authority.'
(Blackstone 1971, p.90.)

(Her figures are for 1965 and we can assume that if there has been a change in day nursery provision it has decreased rather than increased since then.)

Child minders

The other form of day care for pre-school age children is provided by child minders. They are usually women who are at home looking after their own children and in addition take in other people's children. There has been a huge expansion of this form of child care since the war corresponding with the influx of married women into the work force. In Circular 5/65 the Minister of Health notes that:

'...since circular 143/48 was issued the number of childminders registered under the Act has increased very considerably - from 271 in 1949 to 2,597 in 1963.' (Circular 5/65. 1965). 4

4 Circular 143/48 was sent out on 17 August 1948.

The reasons for this dramatic increase in the number of child-minders and a decrease in the number of day nurseries, at the same time as the need for day care facilities was clearly increasing, can be found in the policies of the Ministry concerned. Circular 37/68 from the Minister of Health states that:

'Since the issue of Circular 221/45 much attention has been focussed on the needs of children and on social situations that can endanger family stability. Day care is one way in which help can be given, but it must be looked at in relation to the view of medical and other authority that early and prolonged separation from the mother is detrimental to the child, that wherever possible the younger pre-school child should be at home with his mother, and that the needs of older pre-school children should be met by part-time attendance at nursery school or classes. Accordingly the Minister considers that the responsibility of local health authorities should continue to be limited to arranging for the day care of children who, from a health point of view or because of deprived or inadequate backgrounds, have special needs that cannot otherwise be met.' (Circular 37/68 Minister of Health, 1968).

In the view of the Ministry and the government, mothers should be at home looking after their children and nursery care will only be provided where this arrangement has broken down. The fact that many women who are mothers of pre-school age children need to, and do, go out to work is not taken into account in the provision of day nurseries. Thus this form of provision is hopelessly inadequate to fulfil the needs of working mothers.

In fact childminders,

'care for more children whose parents work full-time than all local authority, private or employer run day nurseries put together. They are the main form of daycare for children in their first two crucial years. In addition they tend to be used more by parents who are poorly educated, and unskilled or by immigrant communities, precisely because of the difficulty of finding day nursery care.' (Labour Research, 1976. P.78).

Clearly there are many childminders who look after the children in their care extremely well, at the same time there are many others who don't. Registration of childminders with the social services was introduced to try and ensure a minimum standard of hygiene and safety for the children in this form of day care. The regulations stipulate, among other things, that the person who is to look after the child, and any other people over 16 years of age living in the house, must not have been convicted of a crime or have been guilty of any child abuse. An example of the latter is to be found in Division 2 of the Nurseries and Childminders Act 1948 where it says that a person is not suitable to be a childminder if

'an order has been made under S.43 of the Adoption Act 1958 (removal of protected children from unsuitable surroundings) for the removal of a child from her care.' (Nurseries and Childminders Act, 1948. P.91,1).

In an interview with a local social services official I was told that even if it is suspected that someone is likely to mistreat a child they cannot be refused registration under this Act. The registration can only be refused once an offence has been committed. The same person told me that it is very easy for a prospective childminder to comply with the regulations and even though the social worker might feel that they would be wholly unsuitable for looking after children they cannot refuse registration. The only sanction that they can operate is that of not recommending that particular childminder to parents who come to social services to find a childminder. This is not a very effective way of ensuring that no child is placed at risk because there are so many people who find childminders through the grapevine rather than going to social services. A child-

minder is visited periodically by a social worker without warning to check up on the well being of the children in their care, but clearly if there is so little control over registered childminders then the conditions among unregistered minders could be, and in many cases are, far worse. Regulations controlling day nurseries are far more stringent and qualifications in child care are required by at least one member of staff, no qualification is needed to become a childminder.

Even though the standard of care varies enormously from childminder to childminder, and even though many parents do not wish to take the risk of leaving their child with a childminder whom they do not know, most have no choice in the matter. Day nurseries give preference to priority children and do not have enough places even for them, so for those parents who both work there is only one option and that is a childminder.

The reliance on childminders is clearly encouraged by official policy:

- 'The need for day-care may arise from one or more of a variety of circumstances in which the child or family need help. Priority will normally need to be given to children with only one parent (e.g. the unsupported mother living with her child) who has no option but to go out to work and who cannot arrange for the child to be looked after satisfactorily. Other children who need day care, some for the whole day, others part-time, will include those:-
- a) who need temporary day care on account of the mother's illness;
 - b) whose mothers are unable to look after them adequately because they are incapable of giving young children the care they need;
 - c) for whom day care might prevent the breakdown of the mother or the break-up of the family;
 - d) whose home conditions (e.g. because of gross overcrowding) constitute a hazard to their health and welfare; and
 - e) whose health and welfare are seriously affected by a lack of opportunity for playing with others ...' (Circular 37/68. Minister of Health. 1968).

The fact of mothers going out to work is not recognised as a situation which calls for the provision of day care. It is still assumed that in a 'normal' family the mother stays at home to look after the young child full-time and day care is only provided for children in 'abnormal' situations. Thus for the majority of working women with pre-school age children a child-minder is the only solution.

The significance of childminding is that it depends on the ideological relations which constitute the bourgeois family for its very existence. Responsibility for rearing children is the concern of each individual family unit and usually the mother within this unit. Thus individual mothers can find other women who will undertake to mind their child for them when they go out to work. But this 'solution' to the problem of working mothers relies on the existence of other mothers who stay at home in their rightful place. The sexual division of labour within the family remains the same with the woman retaining responsibility for child rearing. Thus to encourage the use of childminders as a solution for mothers with young children who go out to work is to ensure that the basic relations which produce this problem are in no way challenged. It is a solution within the existing ideological framework which does not release women from their 'domestic duties' but rather relies on these 'domestic duties' to permit some women to go out to work while others stay at home.

Many childminders take up childcare because they are at home with young children and it is a way of bringing in money before the children start school and they are able to go out to work. However, their existence as childminders is of a very

temporary nature. If they find a job which pays more than they are getting as a childminder and can find someone to look after their children they are very likely to take the job. The women who have been relying on her are then compelled to search for another minder or give up their own jobs and return to the home. Thus reliance on childminding is often precarious and does not free women from their 'prime' social duty of mother and housewife, on the contrary they are always being forced back into that role.

A full-scale provision of day nursery facilities would provide a permanent shift away from the reliance on women staying in the home and would mean that they could operate, and be perceived, as permanent members of the work force. However the government only provides such facilities when a stable female work force is needed such as during a war. No provision of nurseries means that women have to rely on registered and unregistered child minders and the women who are childminders are not able to go out to work and earn a living wage. Usually childminders' fees only cover the cost of looking after the child and often there is not even £5 a week left as wages for this hard work. In comparison a nursery nurse in a day nursery gets over £40 a week (1975 rates). Clearly this situation is not satisfactory from any point of view but it is tolerated and encouraged because women are supposedly 'naturally' suited to looking after children, it is their 'true' role in life, and this is the place assigned to them within the bourgeois family.

Official policy statements

The government's policies on day care for children are

based on the notion that a mother is 'naturally' the best person to look after her child and the assumption that in all 'normal' families the mother stays at home; in other words they are formulated within the bourgeois ideological social relations which define a woman's place as the home. Thus nursery provision is only deemed necessary for the priority cases listed above and women who go out to work, whether by choice or necessity, are forced to find childminders to look after their children. There are, however, contradictions which appear in various government directives on pre-school provision. For instance in one Ministerial Circular childminders are recommended because they provide conditions nearer to the child's home conditions. However we can also find statements which say that women who have 'only' brought up their own children are not necessarily the best people to look after others' children.

'In some areas there are private day nurseries where children in the priority groups set out in paragraph five may be satisfactorily placed, and a few authorities are administering daily guardian schemes under which selected childminders are paid a small retaining fee in return for their willingness to accept children in the priority groups placed by the authority. The Minister considers that in the right circumstances there is much to commend this arrangement. Carefully selected childminders can provide the type of substitute care which most closely resembles what a child would receive in a normal home, and the best child-minders, particularly where they take only one or two younger pre-school children, may be able to offer a more suitable form of care than the large day nursery.' (Circular 5/65 Minister of Health, 1965).

In an enclosure to circular 37/68 in discussing people without qualifications in child care who are childminders we find the statement that this type of person

'will frequently be housewives whose experience will be limited to bringing up their own children, which may often be insufficient to equip a woman to look after other people's children.' (Enclosure to Circular 37/68 1968).

It is difficult to reconcile this idea with the notion that a mother is the best person to look after her child which can be found in the same circular:

'wherever possible the younger pre-school child should be at home with his mother.' (Circular 37/68, 1968).

If a mother is the best person to look after her own children why should she not be the best person to look after another person's child? The only way that these statements can be reconciled is by the assumption of a special bond linking mother and child, the maternal instinct, which is better than any training and which is not there if a woman looks after another person's child.

Thus, if a woman is to look after children other than her own, the government deems some training necessary. It would be logical to deduce from this that a nursery staffed by trained personnel and with all the necessary equipment would be the best form of day care for pre-school age children. However, this is not the conclusion reached by the government. Their policies rest on the idea that the best place for a child to be is with its mother, or with a substitute mother, i.e. a childminder. Presumably these policies are based on the child's need for emotional security as well as the need for technical expertise and these considerations lead to the conclusion that child-minders are often the best form of substitute care. What is clearly being looked for is a situation which as nearly resembles the home situation as possible, this home situation being regarded as the best way to bring up a child.⁵ However

5 I am aware that all the ramifications of nursery care versus care by the mother for very young children are complex and the subject of a lot of debate. However here I am concerned to outline the ideological basis of government policy on child care and its effects on women as workers rather than to evaluate scientifically the merits and de-merits of the ~~various forms~~ that child care can take.

the Ministerial circulars do not make this clear and put forward technical arguments to support their reliance on child-minders. In terms of these arguments childminders and mothers would often appear to be less suitable to look after children than fully trained nursery staff. This reliance on technical arguments to back up the assumption that a mother is the best and most competent person to look after her child leads to obvious contradictions. The following statement clearly questions this idea because it is based solely on technical criteria:

'Enquiries have shown that in some groups, especially where mothers provide food for the minder to give to the children, the type of food offered lacked protein, had little variety and contained no fresh fruit or vegetables. It was found that reliance was sometimes placed on tinned soup and beans supplemented by potatoes, and milk given only in tinned milk pudding or tea.'
(Enclosure to Circular 37/68. Ministry of Health 1968. My emphasis.)

Clearly there is not a lot of basis here for the assumption that a mother is 'naturally' the best person to look after her child, perhaps anyone who intends to rear a child is in need of a certain amount of training to fill the role properly.

At local level in Social Services Offices it is known and recognised that women work and need day care facilities for their children. But due to government cut backs the only provision available is childminding. Local authorities have to a certain extent been forced into the position of recommending child-minders to all but the most 'deprived' cases by central government policy. In Circular 37/68 the Minister stated that:

'...as the total cost of day nursery schemes included in the capital building programmes, submitted by local health authorities for the three year period from April 1968, exceeds the amount of capital

investment which is likely to be available for this purpose the Minister regrets that he will be able to approve only a proportion of the schemes during this period. Local health authorities may however be able to provide day care for a larger number of children in special need by making greater use of their powers to arrange for such children to receive day care in facilities provided privately or by voluntary organisations.' (Circular 37/68, Ministry of Health, 1968).

Clearly government policy on day care for pre-school age children is governed by the assumption that women will leave work on the birth of their first child and stay at home until their youngest child starts school. She will then find a job, probably part-time, that fits in with her children's school hours. This is the pattern that a lot of women have to follow and it is the policy of government and TUC to encourage employers to provide jobs which will fit in with a woman's 'domestic duties'. Thus the ideology of a woman's place being in the home finds representation in government policies and practices in the region of provision for under-fives, whether it is day care or educational provision. These practices prevent many working class women from pursuing training courses or taking up full time jobs with good prospects. There are always the children to think about and no provision is made to allow women to pursue a job or career free from the burdens of 'domestic duties'. In fact all government policies are formulated around the assumption that a woman's first duty is towards her home and family, everything else must be shaped around that central preoccupation.

The Bentilee nursery campaign adopted the opposite position: the problem was to free women from their 'domestic duties' so that they would be able to participate fully in economic and

social life. The provision of a day nursery on Bentilee was seen in this perspective. Before the campaign is described it is important to understand some of the features of the Stoke-on-Trent area as far as nursery provision is concerned.

Nursery provision in Stoke-on-Trent

The national figures for all types of pre-school provision are given below:

Table 4 Number of children under five receiving pre-school provision.

	England	Wales	Scotland	N.Ireland
Nursery education	143,333	19,716	20,920	2,200
Already at school, etc.	419,834	34,541	6,930	18,600
Local authority day nursery	25,700	220	3,355	none
Private day nursery	24,400	1,670	958	91
Registered child-minders	56,700	481	2,869	468
Playgroups (estimated)	355,000	600	40,315	5,077
<hr/>				
Population under 5	3,382,400	200,300	395,200	144,700
% at school	16.6	27.1	7.0	14.4
% in day care	3.2	1.2	1.8	0.4
% in play groups	10.5	0.3	10.2	3.5
% with provision	30.3	28.6	19.2	18.3
Approximate full-time	19.8	28.3	8.8	14.8

Nursery education figures are at Jan '75, Scotland Jan '74.
 Nursery care figures are at March '74, Scotland Dec '73.
 Population figures are at June '74.
 Figures exclude places for mentally handicapped children and children in nurseries provided by hospitals and universities.
 Day care places are full-time places, but education and play-groups are total places including part-time.

Source: Labour Research. April 1976. P.79.

These figures show the lack of adequate provision for pre-school age children with only 19.8% of these children in England receiving full-time provision in any form and only 3.2% of pre-school age children in England being in day care.

The table below shows the figures for North Staffs compared with the national figures. They are not exactly comparable with the figures given above because they are for different years and they only cover the age range 3-5 years whereas the ones above include all pre-school provision. The non-comparability does not concern us because we are using them to show a difference rather than to determine exactly the numbers of children receiving pre-school provision.

Table 5 Nursery provision for 3-5 year olds (all figures are approximate) November 1975

	National	North Staffs	
<u>Percentages</u>			
Nursery school	(8.6	34.5)	15.3
Nursery class	()	19.2
Primary school	18.1	20.7	
Play group	26.6	29.1	
Day nurseries	1.0	1.3	
Total	54.3	85.7	
<u>Numbers</u>			
Nursery school	()	12.55
Nursery class	(129,000	2,831)	1576
Primary school	271,000	1,700	
Play group	400,000	2,387	
Day nursery	15,000	100	
Total	815,000	7,018	

These figures were provided by the research unit in the Psychology Department at Keele University. National figures for nursery schools, classes and primary school are obtained from Hansard, day nursery figures estimated from DES documents. All play group figures were from the PPA and all N. Staffs figures except those for play groups were obtained from N. Staffs County Council.

The provision of pre-school facilities for children is higher in North Staffs than it is nationally. It is interesting to note that the most substantial difference in provision occurs in the numbers of children attending nursery schools and nursery classes, figures for primary school and play groups are marginally higher for North Staffs but figures for provision of day nurseries are almost the same as the national figures. In fact if the figures given in the previous table are used to calculate the percentage of children receiving day nursery provision nationally we get a figure of 1.7% which is perhaps more correct than the above figure which was estimated. Thus the difference in day nursery provision cannot be considered significant. One factor leading to an above average provision of nursery education facilities was the progressive position adopted by the chief education officer in Stoke and various personnel in the DHSS in pressing for increased provision of nursery facilities, and from the pressure brought to bear by many headmistresses of infant schools who wanted nursery classes attached to their schools.⁶ It is mere speculation to discuss what led to these positions on nursery education, but in a document recently published by the City of Stoke-on-Trent Education Committee an indication is given as to one of the reasons. In discussing the recommendations of the Plowden Report on the proportion of pre-school age children requiring nursery education they say:

'In Stoke-on-Trent, based on present trends, it is likely that a much larger percentage of mothers will wish their children to attend full-time.'
(City of Stoke-on-Trent Education Committee 1974, p.21).

⁶ From research conducted by Helen Sweetman on decision making at local government level with respect to nursery provision.

This statement recognises the fact that part-time attendance of pre-school age children at nursery school as recommended in the Plowden report is not adequate to fulfil the needs of the mothers of these children. Perhaps this recognition is facilitated because of the long tradition of women working in the pottery industry in Stoke. If this is so perhaps one of the factors affecting previous decisions on pre-school education was also the large numbers of women in the work force in the Stoke-on-Trent area. The provision of full-time nursery education places is higher than the percentage figure given for England by the Labour Research Department.

'Nursery Education in Stoke in 1973 was provided by 15 nursery schools (821 places) and nursery classes at 48 infant schools (1507 places). Of the 2,228 places 343 were filled on a half-time basis.' (City of Stoke-on-Trent Education Committee, 1974. P.21).

This means that 84.6% of the places were full-time and this figure is far higher than the average for England which is 19.8%. Clearly for working mothers full-time places for their children enable them to have some sort of a job even though it has to fit in with school hours, whereas part-time schooling for their children does not allow them to go out to work at all. However, as has been said above, nothing less than full day care as well as nursery education would allow a woman to take a full-time job at the same time as having pre-school age children.

In the Stoke area there are six local authority day nurseries and each of them have places for about 40 children. A clear indication of government policy on day nurseries can be seen from the number of 'priority' children who attend day nurseries. In North Staffs 95% of the children at local

authority day nurseries are 'priority' children. Thus for the mother who wants to go out to work but whose child is not in the 'priority' category the only recourse is a childminder. This is underlined by the fact that there is a waiting list of 1 year 8 months for a place in a day nursery (1976).

On Bentilee itself the situation as regards existing nursery education facilities is described in the next section. Here I want to indicate the extent of childminding and the local social services office's implementation of government policy.

Bentilee is a large council housing estate situated East of Hanley, one of the five towns that constitutes the region known as the potteries. There are approximately 16,000 residents on the estate which was built after the war mainly to house miners and their families. On the estate the number of childminders that are registered with the social services is 21 and they have places for 40 children. In the area around Bentilee within easy reach of people living on the estate, there are 39 childminders with places for 52 children between them. There are obviously many childminders who are not registered for various reasons but no estimate was available. Among the registered childminders there was a sizeable proportion of unfilled places, 24 in all, which indicates that finding a registered childminder with whom to leave a child is not a problem in the Bentilee area.⁷ There are 2 local authority day nurseries within reach of Bentilee in Hanley and Longton, however in accordance with government policy the area social services always try to place a non-priority child with a childminder first because of the pressure on nursery places. However,

7 These figures are for February 1977 from the Social Services Office, Werrington.

if they are placing a child with any sort of developmental problem then every attempt is made to place him/her in a day nursery. This was seen as important because the child receives more stimulation in a day nursery than with the average childminder. This is an interesting point which shows that day nurseries are able to provide more for the child in this respect than are most childminders. Unless a childminder is exceptionally good, a nursery is always preferred for more 'difficult' children. Despite the recognition of the merits of day nurseries at the local level, government policy has been directed towards increasing childminding as a more desirable form of day care. And because of financial restrictions and government directives the local social services have been implementing this policy.

The policy of the area social services office is based on childminding as the main form of daycare for children and day nurseries only for 'priority' children. This is in line with the national figures for childminders above which show childminding as being the main form of day care available for pre-school age children. Registration of new childminders in the area dealt with by the Werrington Area office of Social Services takes place at a rate of 2 or 3 new applications each week. This may not necessarily be an indication of an increase in the number of childminders but may be attributable to people who are already childminding finding out that registration with social services is required. However opinion at the office is that childminders are a 'growing resource'. This is in marked distinction from day nurseries which are being closed by local

authorities in some areas due to the cuts in public expenditure.

Although government policy favours an expansion of child-minding rather than day nurseries there are many contradictions within this programme evident at the level of day to day administration. Day nurseries are by and large provided not so as to enable mothers of pre-school children to go out to work but so as to fulfil the functions which are normally fulfilled by the family in cases of breakdown of the family unit. This 'normal' family includes a mother who looks after her children full-time, in other words does not go out to work. However childminding has increased because of the fact that working class mothers continue to work even when they have young children, and whereas previously when families lived closer together, mum or mum-in-law could look after the younger children now someone who lives fairly close by has to be found. As well as providing a 'cheap' form of child care government policies, which stress childminding as opposed to other forms of day care, also ensure that although women enter the work force in compliance with the needs of the economy and the post-war labour shortage, they also retain responsibility for the home and family; this fulfils a crucial ideological function, as has been seen above.

These policies cannot be explained in terms of logic or reason. There are too many obvious contradictions, for instance the government recognises the superiority of day nursery provision over child-minders for 'priority' children but this conclusion is reversed in the case of children from 'normal' homes. It is also aware that a large number of women go out to work when they have pre-school age children, but their policies

remain based on the existence of a 'normal' family with the woman staying at home. If day nurseries provide facilities which are better than those provided by most child-minders for 'priority' children why are they not considered better for those children coming from so-called normal families? The notion that lends consistency to the various policies is that of the 'normal' i.e. bourgeois, family. Day nurseries exist to take over the functions of this family when it has broken down. No public money is going to be spent in providing day care for children from 'normal' families whose mothers 'ought' to stay at home with their children, for the government childminders are sufficient and offer an easy and cheap way out of the problems posed by increasing numbers of married women entering the work force. And to use childminders in this way ensures that women continue to be the home makers and child-rearers while at the same time constituting a cheap and easily manipulable sector of the labour force which can be tapped in times of economic upsurge and sent back to the home in periods of crisis and stagnation.

Clearly government policies on pre-school provision, as their policies towards women workers, are rooted in and actively produce the ideological relations which constitute the bourgeois family. The sexual division of labour within the family and the sexual division of labour within the work force are reproduced through practices at the level of pre-school provision in which these ideological social relations are materialised.

The Bentilee Day Nursery Campaign

Government policy on day care for pre-school age children

is firmly rooted within the ideological relations defining a woman's place as being in the home. The struggle for a day nursery on Bentilee was an attempt to transform these relations and 'free' women from the constraints of their position within the family. What follows is an account of this struggle and the obstacles posed to the political organisation of women by precisely the ideological relations which the campaign was attempting to transform.

The campaign for a day nursery on Bentilee was born out of the fusion of several different groups and circumstances, the occasion of this fusion was a performance given by the Red Ladder Theatre Group in one of the working men's clubs on Bentilee. The Bentilee Valley Project Committee⁸ organised the performance of the play 'A Woman's Work is never done' because one of their members had seen the play previously at a meeting which launched the North Staffs Women's Action Group⁹ (hereafter referred to as the women's group). Thus there was contact between these two organisations on an informal level which made

8 The Bentilee Valley Project Committee (BVPC) had grown out of the presence of the Young Volunteer Force on Bentilee. This is a government sponsored trust which sends teams of trained people, such as social workers and graduates in community studies etc., to localities where they try to create a "community". This is often on large new housing estates, such as Bentilee, where although houses are provided no sense of community and belonging has developed to form a socially cohesive entity. The YVF is invited to such areas by local councils who finance their activity and they usually stay for a few years, in the case of Bentilee their stay was 5 years. This was the time taken to train local people in community work and to establish community activities. The YVF had left Bentilee in August 1974 and the Red Ladder performance was in November 1975 organised by the BVPC. When the YVF moved out of Bentilee they left a small core of "committed" people to carry on the community work. The BVPC itself consisted of 12 people, 7 of whom were Labour councillors.

9 See Appendix 4 for The Working Women's Charter on which the women's group was based.

it possible for the women's group to be present at the performance of the play on Bentilee.

The Red Ladder theatre group was, through its plays, attempting to galvanise trade unions and working class organisations into action on various issues, one of which was that of the position of women in British society. Red Ladder recognise that theatre is an intervention and see their theatre as an ideological-political act. The fact that theatre is intervention is not unique to Red Ladder or even to 'progressive' theatre, but the fact that this theatre group is conscious of the possible political and ideological effects of their theatre and that their plays are directed towards certain effects rather than others makes them unusual, to say the least. The play 'A Woman's Work is Never Done' is an example of this type of intervention. It is an instrument of struggle against the dominant ideology which, in short, says that a woman's place is in the home. However it counterposes to this dominant ideology more than one 'opposition' ideology which produces a certain tension within the play itself; these ideologies are a feminist ideology and trade union/working class ideology. They form a contradictory unity through the course of action and the dispersion of reference marshalled to support the play. The feminist tendency, which is apparent in the references to Engels' Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State under the title of 'Herstory' is counteracted by a stronger tendency, shown in the struggle for equal pay, parity and the fact of a woman manager, which bases itself firmly in trade union and working class struggles. The latter tendency has the clear perspective of freeing women from their 'domestic duties' and uniting the working class in its

struggle against the bourgeoisie. The play deals with the position of women by means of the experiences of a specific woman. It traces the life of a working class girl through marriage, childbirth and rearing, working outside the home and becoming active in trade union struggle. This is done in a way which speaks to the working class audience, often eliciting comments which show that this strikes the chord of commonly shared experiences, and in a way which shows the actual conditions of this specific woman's, and through her all working class women's, life. Her white wedding where she appears with all the idealistic notions about romantic love and marriage is contrasted to the existence she leads after marriage with husband and babies to look after and never-ending housework to be done. It shows clearly that although such an existence is solitary it is most certainly not isolated. She is blasted by the media from every direction, tele, radio, newspapers, all competing in persuading her to buy one product rather than another and all telling her conflicting stories. This is only one example of the way the 'story' progresses through the play remaining firmly rooted in every day experiences. These experiences eventually lead to her participation in equal pay struggles at work, going on strike, and her husband and other men supporting her at work and at home, so producing a stronger more united front against the bosses. We are shown how her participation in union activity is hampered by the demands of husband and children. Whenever she wants to go to a union meeting there are meals to get, ironing to do, children to bath and hubby out at the pub. On the other hand his union work must take priority because it is important, even though hers must

take second place to his football match (a familiar story). When her domestic chores become more manageable because she has at last managed to persuade her husband that he should do his share, and the children are out at school all day, she is able to take a job. The job is 'women's' work with low pay and a job evaluation scheme in progress to make sure that the women go on getting low pay. Through this she begins to realise the importance of union organisation for men and women alike, and becomes active in union work. Complex trade union issues are presented in the form of very concrete and real images such as the familiar pint mug of beer in the pub. Parity is explained in terms of work forces in different factories getting a full pint mug of beer each rather than one getting a full mug and the other getting one half full. The women notice that they only have half pint mugs and even though they are filled they do not equal a full pint mug of beer, this raises the issue of equal pay. In the factory the women had previously supported the men's struggle for parity without considering their own position, once they understand that even though the men might achieve parity the women will still be getting a lower wage they take up the struggle for equal pay, and they demand the full support of the men in this struggle.

In contrast to this very immediate and understandable explanation of wage differentials and other material conditions which must be transformed to end the crippling of women politically and economically, the history of women's oppression is presented in terms of theoretical feminism. This feminism is not incorporated into the 'story' of the play but is introduced by an interlude which attempts to 'place' women's position in capitalist society historically and to show how it has evolved.

It takes as its basis Engels' Origin of the Family... in which Engels argues that the genesis of private property, and the subsequent necessity for the inheritance of private property to ensure the continued monopoly of the means of production by one class, coincided with the subjection of women to men and monogamy. The play, under the Marxist mantle of Engels, asserts that in the beginning everyone was equal, women and men gathered food and cooked it communally, but then a surplus was produced which the men appropriated. Thus the first and basic social division was that between male and female, class divisions are secondary and consequent on this initial male appropriation. This presentation of 'Herstory' is a misrepresentation of Engels and represents a feminist ideology in the play. However, as has been indicated above, the prevailing ideology of the play is not feminist but sees women's position and the freeing of women from the home in terms of the class struggle existing in bourgeois social formations.

The theatre group does not merely present the issues contained in the play so that the audience can take it or leave it. The issues raised in this particular play, those of women's (and men's) roles in the home, their involvement in paid employment, union activity, etc., were extended and developed in discussion after the play. After the performance on Bentilee the freeing of women from the home so that they could participate in paid employment was seen to be impossible without the provision of adequate child-care facilities, and discussion centred on the lack of nursery facilities on Bentilee. The theatre group did not allow discussion to remain on the level of bemoaning the fact that such facilities did not exist but

suggested ways of struggling to obtain a nursery. Examples were given of putting pressure on local councils to give high priority to nurseries on their building programme and even of occupations of halls by mothers and children. The two hundred plus women and men there considered squatting in the Harold Clowes Community Centre,¹⁰ quite a surprise for those who know the reputation of the estate which attributes an immovable apathy to all of its inhabitants. There was tremendous support for the idea of a nursery and the need to organise a campaign on this issue, even though some people, male and female, voiced the view that men are the breadwinners and that if women have children they must be prepared to be 'good' mothers and stay at home to look after them; this point of view was only held by a small minority. It was through this discussion, guided by the theatre group, that the women's group was able to offer their services in any nursery campaign that was undertaken on Bentilee.

At the time such an intervention was seen in terms of supporting the campaign, the main thrust and initiative of which would come from the women of Bentilee. Such support would consist of certain kinds of technical skills of which working class women would probably have had little or no experience. In fact as the campaign developed it became clear that the women's group would have to take a more decisive role and until this occurred the campaign did not really get off the ground; however this was not apparent at the beginning.

The BVPC, as well as having brought the Red Ladder to Bentilee, ran a community shop on the estate. This had been

10 The Harold Clowes Community Centre is a large building in the middle of the estate which was used at that time for the playgroup twice a week and was otherwise only open in the evenings. Opinion at the performance of the play was that it was not serving the community enough and if it was used to house a nursery this would be a step in the right direction.

started by the Young Volunteer Force and was now run by voluntary workers who lived on the estate. It was not an ordinary shop but an information centre which also provided a meeting place and the use of a duplicator for any community group on the estate. The availability of such facilities is of great importance to a penniless, new-born organisation and the community shop formed the first centre for the nursery campaign.

As a result of the Red Ladder performance in November 1974, where such strong feelings in favour of a nursery campaign were shown, the women's group contacted the member of the BVPC who had been responsible for arranging the performance and met her in the community shop to discuss possible forms that the nursery campaign could take. It was clear to most people that a campaign of this nature could not be undertaken by a group of people unless the need for a nursery on Bentilee existed, and this need would have to exist in both objective and subjective terms for any campaign to have a chance of success.

On Bentilee the objective need for a nursery, or indeed many nurseries, existed without a doubt. There were over 1,000 pre-school age children on the estate. The only facilities available for these children were an overcrowded playgroup which opened twice a week for a morning and afternoon session, and four nursery classes attached to the junior schools. These last were in such demand that a child was only able to attend them for the six months prior to him/her starting school at the age of five, and in some of them the demand was so great that attendance was only possible for half-days. Thus pre-school facilities were almost entirely lacking. This situation was exacerbated by the housing policy of the council. On the estate

there is a mixture of houses and flats, the council's policy is to house young couples/newly weds in flats, usually the upstairs flat, and elderly people in the other flats, usually downstairs. This arrangement would be alright if young couples remained childless, but in the nature of things this does not happen. So in many cases there are babies and toddlers living in an upstairs flat and old people occupying the flat below. This is wholly unsatisfactory for all concerned as babies cry and often make a noise during the night which disturbs the old people, and the toddlers are in constant danger of falling downstairs and can't go out and play in the garden because there isn't one; the only time they can go outside is when one of their parents can take them. When couples are older and their children are of school age they are likely to be able to move into a house, but by this time the children are old enough to be able to go out and play without adult supervision and the need for a garden is not nearly so crucial as it is when children are at the toddling stage and require constant supervision. It is very important that young children, and young parents, are not compelled to stay cooped up indoors for most of every day. Given these circumstances it can be seen that the provision of nursery facilities would be of great benefit to pre-school age children, both from an educational perspective and in terms of their being able to mix with other children of their own age and being able to play outside in complete safety.

From the point of view of the parents it is clear that a nursery would be very welcome. Many mothers with pre-school age children need to go out to work because their husband's wage is just not enough to cover the family expenses, or they are on

their own and the social security payments are not enough to keep body and soul together. The people working in the community shop had seen many such cases. Young women came in absolutely desperate to find a childminder to look after their child or children because they had at last managed to find a job, or perhaps the childminder that they had been leaving their children with had stopped taking in children. And frequently the shop had been unable to help them whereas if there had been a nursery available they would have had no problems as far as leaving their child in responsible hands was concerned.

Many mothers of young children on Bentilee go out to work despite the difficulties involved. Some have mothers or mothers-in-law who will look after their children, some pay childminders, and many take jobs that alternate with their husbands' hours of work. A large number of the women with whom the nursery campaign made contact worked in pubs and clubs in the evenings to earn the money that would make ends meet. Consequently, although they were with their children all day, as soon as their husband came home in the evening they had to go out to work; because of this they hardly saw their husbands. Those who used childminders also had problems. Many childminders do not do this job permanently, perhaps they do it while their own children are young and as soon as they reach school age they give up. Also there is no guarantee that changing family circumstances, or any other factor will not prevent the woman who is childminding from continuing to run such a service. Thus there is always an element of impermanence and instability in relying on such provisions for the working mother; such instability would not arise with a nursery. It is also evident

from talking to women who look after other people's children that some find it a heavy responsibility, especially if they are one of those who lives in an upstairs flat. Nevertheless, they continue to childmind because they have young children of their own and until they are all at school it is the only way for them to make ends meet. Thus from both points of view childminding is not a satisfactory answer although it is in practical terms the only answer for a very great number of working class women.

From the brief indications given it is obvious that objectively a need for a nursery on Bentilee definitely existed. But if there was such a facility would people use it rather than what they were used to, and were there enough people in need of a nursery and conscious of that need to make a campaign a real possibility?

Initially the nursery group had to find out whether there was substantial support for a nursery on Bentilee and, if there was, to involve as many people as possible in the campaign. It was also important to reach people who might support and use a nursery once it was open but were not interested enough to participate in a campaign. Such people needed encouragement and stimulation through discussion and forms of education explaining the advantages of a nursery over other forms of childcare, and the steps that would have to be taken to make a nursery a reality for Bentilee. In this way people would be encouraged to become actively involved.

Several methods were adopted at first to try to involve people in the campaign and to gauge response to this issue. Those involved at the outset were the women's group, a member of

the BVPC, and two women with young children who wanted to work for a nursery. A weekly meeting was held in the Community shop, posters were plastered all over the estate advertising it, a small questionnaire was compiled, a "publicity day" was organised, and a visit to the flourishing "Slimmers' Club" was arranged.

The weekly meetings were held in the evenings in the Community shop and attendance was very low. This was probably very much to do with the fact that the people who needed a nursery, i.e., those mothers who had young children, were the ones who found it difficult, if not impossible, to get out in the evenings because of baby sitting problems. This phenomenon was remarked on at the performance of the Red Ladder play, the audience consisted mainly of older men and women and there were hardly any people present who were likely to have young children. Thus meetings in the evening had built in problems for the very people that the campaign needed to reach. In an attempt to overcome this obstacle a meeting and film show with the Slimmers' Club was organised. There were about sixty women who came regularly to the club which was not only concerned with weight watching but also organised meetings, discussions and weekend/day trips. The nursery group, composed of members of the women's group¹¹ and local women, hoped to enlist the active support of this body in the nursery campaign. About fifty members of the

11 The women's group was based in Newcastle-under-Lyme on the other side of the potteries from Bentilee and was composed mainly of teachers, students from Keele University, women who were at home with young children, and social workers. The group's base was thus not close to Bentilee and their knowledge of the estate was very sparse at the beginning of the campaign.

club came to the film and discussed the need for a nursery, but the same problem that had been evident at the Red Ladder performance manifested itself, the group did not consist of the young women who would be directly concerned with nursery facilities. Although there was unanimous and enthusiastic support for the campaign the women at the club did not want to become involved themselves as all their children had long ago left the nursery age behind. It was encouraging that there was such obvious appreciation of the need for a nursery. With very few exceptions the fact that women as well as men needed to go out to work to make ends meet, even when their children were very young, was a recognised fact of life, and although the problem no longer existed for them they were willing to help with small things such as the distribution of leaflets when the need arose.

The questionnaire that the nursery group drew up was very simple and aimed to obtain the names and addresses of people who were willing to work for the campaign. But again the problem of reaching the right people arose. To try to concentrate the questionnaire on the sector of the population most likely to be concerned with the issue of a nursery it was distributed through the schools in the area. This was seen as being more likely to reach the right people than pushing a questionnaire through each letter box on the estate, it also involved fewer problems because only a small number of people would be required to distribute it. Permission for this venture was granted by the heads of the schools concerned and questionnaires were handed out to the children to take home to their parents. Of the thousands that were distributed a very small proportion was filled

in and returned, but from those that were practically 100% responded positively to the question, 'Do you think there is a need for a nursery on Bentilee?' (See Appendix 5 for a copy of the questionnaire). Thus again it was clear that such a need existed, the problem remaining was how to involve people actively in the campaign. Even with distributing leaflets through the schools the nursery group was not focussing closely enough on the women who had pre-school age children, it remained rather a hit and miss affair. However some of the replies were from women with pre-school age children and these were people who might be willing to participate in a nursery campaign.

Before discussing the "publicity day" I shall pause to outline the strategy for the campaign governing the tactics used. The nursery group had decided that the campaign should aim the demand for a nursery at the local council. It was known that in certain areas of London mass pressure on the council taking the form of demonstrations, pickets and sit-in-cum-creches in council buildings had been successful in forcing the council to give top priority to the provision of local authority nursery facilities. The campaign on Bentilee was seen in these terms. The council had originally planned to provide nursery facilities on the estate but the plans had been shelved for one reason or another. It was decided that pressure be put on the council urgently to resurrect and implement these plans and provide the long-promised nursery. In this process the support of the BVPC would be an advantage, but although they were a community based committee when approached by the nursery group they were not very helpful, they thought that it was up to the women and they would keep out of it. This meant that the one female member of

the committee was left on her own with a 'woman's' issue and without any meaningful support from the other committee members. So to get any real support from the BVPC it was essential to show them that there was a demand for the facility and that they, as a community organisation, should respond to such a demand with their active support. Thus in order to influence the BVPC and ultimately the council, it was imperative to mobilise mass support for the campaign and it was with this end in mind that the tactics outlined above were adopted.

The "publicity day" aimed to publicise the existence of an active nursery group on Bentilee, gather evidence of support for such a campaign, and show people the advantages for them and their children of nursery facilities. On a busy Saturday morning the nursery group went to the shopping centre in Bentilee and set up a stall outside the community shop there. There were posters advertising the campaign and the meetings and a petition for people to show their support for the nursery. A play area had been set aside by the nursery group where children could stay under supervision while their parents finished their shopping free from any worry about the whereabouts or safety of their children. A Saturday was chosen because it is the main shopping day of the week for most of the people on Bentilee. There would be a lot of women trying to do the weekend shopping and cope with young children at the same time, this would provide an opportunity for the nursery group to intervene helpfully in a routine shopping Saturday. As well as providing an opportunity to talk to a lot of people about the necessity for nursery facilities it was possible for the mums (and dads) to experience some of the advantages themselves. It was hoped that through

actually experiencing, even for a brief time, a situation where a young child could be left under proper care, women would begin to appreciate what a fundamental need a nursery would be able to meet. There were many children who really enjoyed their time painting, and there were hundreds of people who signed the petition. But still there was no increase in the number of people who came to the meetings which were the fundamental form of organisation of the campaign at the time. Somehow the need for a nursery, which everyone recognised as existing was not being reflected in active support for the nursery campaign, and without such support it was very difficult to influence the BVPC let alone the council.

The nursery group was confronted by an acute and serious organisational problem arising from time honoured ideological practices which assign to women the main responsibility for the care of children and the home. Women with young children to care for find it very difficult to attend evening meetings, their conditions of existence as mothers and wives put enormous obstacles in the way of their participation in organisations such as the nursery campaign, trade unions and so on. Women experiencing these conditions were the very ones that the nursery group needed to mobilise in order to begin to free them from their domestic 'slavery'. The dilemma presented itself very forcefully: provision of nursery facilities was seen as one of the pre-conditions for freeing women from their domestic burden and enabling them to participate fully in social and political activity, but in order to realise these aims these same women had to participate in the campaign for the nursery.

However the nursery group persevered and an attempt was made

to contact all the women who had replied positively to the questionnaire to try to involve them in coming to the meetings. After visits and letters had failed to get women to come to meetings it was clear that the nursery campaign was not reaching those that it had to reach and that the mistakes leading to this had to be rectified if the campaign were to have a future. It had become clear that a mass mobilisation of people on Bentilee around such an issue was out of the question given the resources of the campaign and the narrow sector of the population that the issue directly affected at any one time. Instead it was decided that the emphasis should be on organising a day nursery which would be run by and for the people involved in the campaign, to begin with, on a voluntary basis. This would not permit all the mothers to take up paid employment outside the home but there were some who were willing to make this sacrifice and some who did not want to get a job and were willing to undertake voluntary work of this kind. Looking after children in a nursery situation with other adults was a better proposition than leading an individualistic existence at home with their own children. Thus the goal became a nursery set up and run by the parents rather than putting pressure on the council to make them provide the nursery facilities as and when they felt like it. Thus the existing ideological relations were to be used to gain a nursery, their transformation would come later. In a nursery run entirely by those involved in it it would be possible to exert control over it and to run it as people wanted it to be run. This was a big advantage over local authority nurseries where there is very little real possibility of influencing what takes place within the nursery. However,

the basic problem of reaching those women who were at home all day with young children still remained. An attempt was made to ease the problem of meetings in the evenings by changing the time and place from evenings at the community shop to daytime meetings in one of the women's homes. This meant that people could bring their children with them and although this posed problems for the meetings it made it much easier for people to attend.

At this stage organisations which owned suitable facilities for a nursery were contacted and in the end one of them granted the nursery group permission to use their hall as a nursery. However there would be a high rent to pay which meant that the nursery would not be able to take children free of charge.

Once suitable premises to house the nursery had been found the regulations governing the setting up of such facilities had to be dealt with and this involvement with the bureaucracy was to prove the most damaging experience of the campaign so far. To give an idea of the delay such "red tape" caused suffice it to say that from the point of view of having staff to run it and publicity for children to attend it the nursery could have opened in November 1975, in reality the opening was not until July 1976, and it would have been later had all the formal procedures been completed before opening.

The lack of experience of all the people involved in the campaign as far as dealing with the Social Service regulations which cover day nurseries is concerned was felt acutely here. It was imagined that an application to Social Services for registration of the premises, or to the local authority for planning permission, would be dealt with fairly quickly, i.e.

within a month or two. Thus the rhythm of the campaign was geared to such a time period. It was crucial to raise money to buy basic equipment and to this end jumble sales were held where information about the nursery was also distributed. However much of the money raised in this way, which was not a large amount, went on expenses such as stamps, travel costs, etc. The rest of it bought beakers, towels etc., for the children who would attend the nursery. The nursery was very lucky in that a grant-giving body, the Quality of Life,¹² had been set up in the area to aid community projects which aimed to improve the quality of life of the people in the locality. The nursery group managed to present a persuasive argument to them and they granted the group £250. At the time this was needed to build storage facilities and make the outside play area safe for the children, it was a necessary pre-requisite for the nursery to open but did not allow any small toys books etc., to be bought. It was also tied to certain items and so some of the money was lost due to a subsequent change in premises and the consequent redundancy of the need for certain items of equipment. However without this money the financial situation of the nursery would have been far more difficult; it made possible the purchase of several large toys, a slide, a see-saw and a trampoline.

12 The Quality of Life was set up by the Department of the Environment in order to grant a fixed sum of money to projects in four 'depressed' areas of Britain. These areas were Stoke-on-Trent, Clwyd, Sunderland and Glasgow and the money had to be distributed within a time period of a year to 18 months; after this time the Quality of Life was disbanded. It was run locally by a committee made up of Councillors and representatives of the Arts, Sports, Social Welfare and education in the area in conjunction with the Department of the Environment.

The example of this grant illustrates the need for working class struggles to have some technical expertise to aid them. The local women who were involved in the struggle would have lacked the confidence to approach the Quality of Life to present their case. This is not because they were intrinsically incapable of doing such a thing but because of their lack of experience of such formal procedures, even filling in the application form for a grant is a daunting process when you have not had very much experience of complicated forms. Also the interview situation where one faces a grilling from the head of the organisation requires a certain amount of confidence and an ability to articulate one's position convincingly. This was an area where the organisational experience of members of the women's group was of considerable use in the advance of the struggle.

The experience of the Bentilee women did not include that of having been in any type of organisation such as a trade union or political party. Most of them were young when they had had their first child and had had a "filling in" job between leaving school and the birth of the child. This meant that they had not had a chance to develop their organisational abilities and this was one of the valuable experiences they gained during the nursery campaign. Thus the participation of members of the women's group was important in this sphere, they had a certain amount of organisational experience which could be passed on in the course of the struggle to the women who were new to any form of organisation.

This lack was reflected in other ways: due to the conditions of existence of many women with young children, i.e., not having

to get up at a certain time to get to work, having no fixed routine, having no company and only a baby or toddler to talk to all day, many of them found it difficult to conform to the discipline of a meeting. It was not seen as important to get there on time or have a certain structure to the meeting so that all the business could be got through in a certain length of time. They lacked the discipline necessary to the running of an organisation and which is learnt by the working class in the factories and work places.¹³ In fact the meetings were seen as something other than organisational meetings, for a lot of women they became a social occasion and a very welcome break from the conversation of a two year old. However during the course of the campaign attitudes changed and many women realised that keeping a record of meetings was important and began to take notes and keep files. Writing letters was also a problem and here again a technical skill was available in the form of members of the women's group who could pass it on to the others involved in the campaign. Thus the participation of the women's group in the campaign was necessary to impart certain technical expertise to the local women involved who had no previous organisational experience, so that through this experience they could develop new skills and gain confidence in their own abilities.

13 This problem was also met in China: '...9 factories were set up employing 2,000 women who made between them 225,505 winter suits. The article describes the chaos which at first arose because the women completely lacked labour discipline. Some came early and some came late, some brought small children who played in the workshops making a mess and distracting their mothers who sat around chattering.' (Davin, 1976 P.175). This is a problem which arises from the conditions in which women live when they are at home all day with young children and is clearly not peculiar to women on Bentilee!

Without access to such technical skills the campaign would have run up against insurmountable problems. Even if there had been enough women involved in the campaign to open and run the nursery the necessity of filling in many and complex forms, (see Appendix 5 for examples), and coping with interviews and officious petty-bureaucrats would have effectively destroyed the campaign. Thus effective working class organisation can be quietly strangled and disposed of soundlessly without any violence by means of the complex bureaucracy of local government. For organisations of the bourgeoisie with people educated and trained to cope with the "red tape", be it in the form of interviews or complicated forms to fill in, the bureaucracy presents fewer problems. For grass roots working class organisations whose members have left school at fifteen or sixteen with the minimum of the three R's this bureaucracy presents a very real obstacle, it constitutes an effective instrument of class rule. In this small but very important sphere we can begin to understand some of the material practices through which the class nature of the state apparatuses is realised. Local government requires that certain formal procedures, seemingly without class content, are gone through before such a thing as a nursery can legally open. These procedures apply to every sector of the population equally, however, the working class, because of education and other factors, finds it much more difficult to cope with all the formalities required. Without the ability to conform to these procedures the aim of a campaign cannot be achieved however much support it enjoys in the community. Thus certain practices embody class rule and act as instruments of this rule in so far as they prevent, or tend to

prevent, the organisations of the working class from becoming effective.

Even when this barrier can be overcome the length of time that is taken to deal with applications is so long that it is easy to lose the enthusiasm and momentum of a campaign. In the case of the Bentilee nursery campaign the women who were ready to work in the nursery when it opened in November 1975 were very disheartened when the necessary regulations had not been met by that date. It was necessary to apply for planning permission for change of use of the premises from the local authority, and registration of the premises as fit to be used as a nursery from the Social Services. These apparatuses of local government have a rhythm of their own which is completely divorced from the rhythm of, let us say, a nursery campaign. The delays operated through a series of committees and departments through which each application had to go and which are all separated from each other. For instance the committee that deals with planning applications only meets once a month and the application for change of use was submitted in November 1975. Although it was perfectly straightforward it was pushed to the bottom of the pile, and was not looked at at the November planning meeting and did not get through until the end of January 1976. This meant that the nursery could not open as planned. Before the nursery group knew of this delay they had been working very hard to encourage people to come to meetings, organise a rota of volunteers for the nursery, obtain equipment and so on. The local newspaper had been approached to do an article on the nursery and make an appeal for donations of toys, it also stressed that more helpers were needed to staff the

nursery.¹⁴ The response to this was very good, it was found to be a more effective means of reaching people and involving them in the campaign than putting up posters on the estate. During this period an intensive effort was put into visiting everyone who had recently, or not so recently, expressed an interest in the nursery and a date for a meeting was set. Creche facilities were provided by the women's group so there was no difficulty in bringing children to the meeting, and it was held in the community shop because a fairly large number of women was expected. However hardly any of the women came to the meeting. So although on paper there were adequate numbers of women to help in the nursery, when there was a meeting to come to hardly any of them came. This put a question mark over whether they would be reliable as helpers in the nursery since most of them, when visited, had said that they would definitely come to the meeting. This failure to attend a meeting raised another question that was crucial: was it a real possibility to run a nursery through voluntary help on an estate where most families were very badly off and both husband and wife needed to work to earn money? This highlighted a real contradiction. The nursery had to be self financing and so had to charge a fee that was as low as possible and at least as low as the fees that child-minders were paid, but would at the same time cover its costs. These costs could not be reduced below a weekly income which would cover the salary of a full-time nursery nurse, a requirement in law for any day nursery, the rent of at least £25 per week, and the cost of food for the children. The minimum charge

14 See Appendix 5 for newspaper article.

per child per week that would cover these costs was £7 which competed favourably with the fees charged by childminders and provided better facilities than many of them. Thus without raising the fees considerably and so making the nursery beyond the means of most families on Bentilee it was impossible to pay any other helpers in the nursery; this meant that it would have to rely on volunteer help. But the facility of a nursery should be available to all women with young children so that they can, if they wish, be released from the care of young children and consequently go out to work and earn a wage. This would mean that they need no longer be financially dependent on their husband and they would be enabled to participate more fully in social and political life. The circumstances of most women on Bentilee made it imperative for them to go out to work, but in order to do this they needed a reliable nursery where they could leave their children. This was the function that the nursery on Bentilee was intended to fulfil, but in order for it to achieve this end for some women, other women would have to continue to look after children without remuneration, the difference being that now they would be doing it in a nursery rather than in their own home. Perhaps the need to rely on voluntary help was going to prove irreconcilable with the conditions of existence on Bentilee.

Organisations such as playgroups are able to rely on voluntary help, but there are fundamental differences between a play group and a day nursery. A playgroup is seen solely in terms of the educational functions it fulfils for the child and as a means of learning to get on with other children in preparation for school. It is not functioning so as to release

mothers from the care of their children during the day so that they can go out to work. In fact they do not usually run for five days a week, it is often for two or three days, and usually the child is brought home at midday and fed by the parent. A day nursery is distinct from this in that it provides social play and education for the child while at the same time allowing the mother to take up a full-time job. Thus a play group operates within the ideological relations that define a woman's place as being in the home caring for her children, whereas a day nursery relieves a woman of this responsibility for enough time to enable her to go out to work. The Bentilee nursery had been envisaged as a first step towards transforming these particular ideological relations, it now seemed as though, if it were to function at all, it would have to do so within the ideological relations defining a woman's place; the implications of this are discussed below. It is noticeable that most playgroups which do rely on the participation of mothers, exist in so-called middle-class areas where the husband's income is enough to keep the wife and child/ren comfortably and there is no economic necessity for the wife to go out to work. Thus for her to take up voluntary work running or helping in a play-group does not involve a difficult choice, it is seen as an extension of her position as mother in the family and something that it is necessary for her to do for the well-being of the child, it is not in opposition to her being able to go out to work. However in working class areas it is not so easy for a woman who has only stopped work because she has had a baby and who needs the money that was previously brought in by her wage to do voluntary work, especially when by doing this work she is

allowing other women to go out to work and earn that much needed money while she is getting nothing. This was the contradiction that the nursery group was faced with and it seemed as if it could be an insurmountable problem. The existing playgroup on Bentilee also faced this problem, it was run mainly by one woman and volunteers were very hard to find even for only one morning or afternoon a week.

The solution to this problem was not an easy one and even when the nursery opened there was still a shortage of voluntary helpers for a while. Because the women most actively involved in the campaign were those who would leave their children in the nursery when it was open and find a paid job it was clear that reliable help would have to be found from elsewhere. The voluntary services liason officer who was concerned with the voluntary groups in the area had close contacts with social services and was able to help in the field of volunteers. Through her a couple of people who did voluntary social work regularly became involved in the nursery campaign and for a time it was thought that church bodies etc., might be able to provide some help for the nursery. Thus the nursery group saw a solution to this contradiction lying in recruiting voluntary workers from areas outside Bentilee itself and from among people who were not necessarily coping with young children at home and not wanting to take up a paid job. This set off the search for people who might welcome the chance to do some work of this kind. Later on in the campaign it was found that some women from Bentilee would be willing to work for a short time in the nursery, but seeing their friends able to leave their children and go to work and earn money soon led them to seek work also.

The people who did form the core of the volunteer helpers were those women who were at home with young children but whose husbands were earning enough to keep them and the children without hardship, and these were women who lived not on Bentilee but on a neighbouring private housing estate. They were also working class families but were on the whole rather better off than the families living on Bentilee.

It might also have been possible to involve retired people in the running of the nursery. This, as well as solving the staffing problem, would have played a very important role in making the elderly feel wanted and useful members of the community. However certain problems in the case of the Bentilee nursery have prevented this happening in a general way, although a retired widow helped out for a while and said she found it very rewarding.

At the second meeting held to try and work out a rota for staffing the nursery several more women came which meant that there was sufficient woman-power to provide a skeleton staff for the nursery. At this stage the workforce consisted of someone to prepare meals, enough helpers to look after the children, and a nursery nurse to have overall responsibility in the nursery itself. The enthusiasm was such that if the registration and planning permission had come through the nursery could have opened, but it was at this stage that the campaigners were dealt a blow by the delay in obtaining planning permission; the registration would prove to be an even greater problem.

After the anti-climax of the failure to get planning permission and the registration through in time for the proposed opening of the nursery a lot of momentum was lost and many people

dropped out of the campaign. The nursery nurse left the campaign and many of the mothers who had wanted to put their children in the nursery at the beginning of the campaign were no longer interested in it. This was nearly always because their child would soon be starting school and it would not be worth starting them at the nursery only to send them to school a few weeks or months later when they would have to adjust to another new situation. However the nursery group had learnt to be cautious in fixing opening dates and although a date in May was tentatively aimed for nothing was fixed. The registration of the premises with social services was taking a very long time. Part of the registration procedure required each helper to fill in a health declaration form and return it to social services, this clearance of volunteers was supposed to take three to four weeks, in fact it was taking two months and the delay meant that people who had been cleared in the beginning were dropping out because their circumstances had changed and they no longer wanted to be involved in the nursery. This meant that it took a very long time to reach a full quota of volunteers who had been cleared by the Social Services. An even longer delay was caused by the person in charge of the registration of day nurseries at Social Services. She had to pay the nursery group a visit to assess their competence and give her approval for the registration to go ahead. The application for registration was submitted in October 1975 and this routine visit did not occur until June 1976 - four weeks before the final opening date of the nursery. In fact the registration had still not been officially granted by the following October in spite of the fact that the nursery was functioning as a day nursery.

In effect, the non-cooperation of the social services caused such delays that in the end the nursery had to take a gamble. It had to open, even though it was illegal because it was not yet registered with social services, and run the risk that it would be discovered and closed. If the opening had been delayed any longer all the credibility of the campaign would have been lost due to the series of false starts that had been made, and the momentum of the campaign would have again been dissipated.

In May another article appeared in the local paper appealing for volunteers and again the response was very good (see Appendix 5). Most of the helpers who had been interested five months previously had lost interest in the campaign and new volunteers were urgently needed. It was at this stage that women from the neighbouring housing estate became involved and they were the ones who were to prove reliable and stable volunteers. They were women who were at home looking after their own children and they enjoyed coming to the nursery once or twice a week to help out. They were prepared to do this without getting any payment for it and were on the whole less badly off than most of those living on Bentilee.

The nursery group was now set to open the nursery in July by which time it was anticipated, the registration would have come through. A publicity week was organised with posters plastered all over the estate, a member of the nursery group posted in the Community shop to answer questions and register children for the nursery, a questionnaire being taken round from house to house and a repeat performance of the publicity day which had been so successful at the beginning of the campaign.

The questionnaire was designed to find out whether the publicity of the campaign had been successful in letting people know that it existed and in contacting those people whom it concerned, and also to build up a list of people who were then or would in the future be interested in using a nursery and to find out the attitude towards nurseries in general. The people who took the questionnaire round also asked if people would be willing to help out in the nursery and more volunteers were found in this way. A house to house survey was a very effective way of reaching those people who were at home with young children all day. Many of those contacted in this way subsequently became involved with the nursery, either as helpers or as parents whose children attended the nursery. There was universal approval of the idea of a nursery and many of the older women only regretted that their children were now too old to attend. Childminders also approved and one came to help out in the nursery as a volunteer. The publicity of the campaign had also been successful, most of the people with nursery-age children had heard of the campaign and those that hadn't were all people who had no children or whose children were too old to benefit from a nursery. (See Appendix 5 for copy of questionnaire).

By the end of the publicity week several more volunteer helpers had been found and many more children had been registered. The nursery had the use of the hall rent free for the first month which allowed a certain leeway to assess the viability of the project without incurring too large a debt. The registration had not come through when the decision to open the nursery was taken but everyone involved was prepared to take the

risk and felt that more would be lost if it again failed to open than if Social Services found it out. This lack of official registration had one serious drawback, the nursery could not be publicised and advertised through the local paper and radio without the social services intervening to close it. Thus publicity had to be confined to posters and thousands of leaflets pushed through every door of the estate. This was unfortunate as previous experience with forms of publicity had shown that people responded more rapidly to something that they had seen in print than to posters and leaflets handed out locally.

The delay with the registration was due to the fire officer's report which was not submitted until a few weeks after the nursery had opened. A delicate situation ensued with the opening of the nursery - officially it was a Mothers and Toddlers club, a place where mothers could come with their children to chat to other mums while their children played. This type of arrangement does not require official recognition provided that the mothers remain with their children. Unofficially the nursery was a nursery and was in fact operating as such. But every time an official came to inspect the mothers and toddlers club every adult there had to become the parent of at least one of the children so that all adults and children present were matched up! An awkward situation arose when the nursery nurse and one other helper were looking after ten children and the woman in charge of the registration arrived unexpectedly. The nursery nurse told her that the mothers were normally there but as it was going to be a nursery very shortly she had seen no harm in getting the children used to being there without their parents and consequently she had allowed all their mothers to go and have their hair done! The social

services woman was not very pleased but luckily by this time (August) all the reports necessary for the registration had been received by her and so even though the certificate of registration had not been made out the remaining procedure was a mere formality. Some of the confusion caused by this delay can be seen from the newspaper article in Appendix 5 which was unable to make plain that the nursery was in fact a nursery!

The economic crisis affecting the whole of Britain at that time and the rapid increase in unemployment did not leave the nursery untouched. There were ten children registered to attend from the opening day but only two of them arrived. It was found that the reasons why these children had not come were either that the father had been made redundant or that the mother was unable to find a job but was still looking. However despite the unfavourable situation as regards unemployment the number of children attending the nursery crept gradually upwards. Several Bentilee women who had been helping in the nursery temporarily managed to find jobs and this eased the situation as far as numbers of children was concerned; but it made the problem of finding helpers more acute! For the first few weeks after the opening of the nursery the situation as far as helpers and children went was touch and go. Because there was no further grant forthcoming from anywhere it was imperative that the accounts balanced at the end of each week and in order for this to happen, even without the rent being paid, more children were needed to attend the nursery. The nursery group held a series of fund-raising events to ease the financial situation and make up the deficit and gradually the number of children attending the nursery rose and the situation became less

desperate.

The general economic crisis also made itself felt in the lack of any grant from social services for the nursery. It had therefore to be entirely self financing and rely completely on local initiative and effort to keep it going. It eventually managed to overcome its financial teething problems and succeeded in becoming a viable project. This success is especially significant as it occurred at a time when the government was cutting back public spending and closing down many nurseries, and has provided valuable evidence that in a working class area if people come together and work for specific aims, such as the provision of nursery facilities, even in a time of economic crisis when all the odds are supposedly against success, it is possible to achieve these aims through struggle.

From this account of the nursery campaign certain fundamental problems emerge which have to be confronted if political work amongst women is to achieve any degree of success.

All the major organisational problems that confronted the women's group during the course of the nursery campaign arose from the concrete conditions of the women on the estate. Because the women whom the nursery group was trying to reach were those women with young children at home the problems were enormous. It is difficult for these women to get out of the home because of their position as housewife and mother, the very situation which the women's group was attempting to transform. Thus forms of organisation had to be evolved which took this situation into account, such as day time meetings in the women's homes where the children could come along. It was also difficult to keep up interest in the campaign. Those who

thought a nursery was important because it would enable them to go out to work often needed an immediate solution to their child-care problem. Thus, although the women's group could see the day nursery in a long-term perspective, for most of the women on the estate it was a much needed facility now. And in the event of its non-existence alternative solutions were found. This fact, that solutions were available for women with young children who wanted to go out to work, was not fully appreciated by the women's group. However unsatisfactory child-minding appears it is a real solution to the problem of child care for women who work outside the home. This option, far from freeing women from the home, operates within the framework of the dominant ideology of a woman's place as statements from the Department of Health and Social Security make clear. The extensive reliance on childminders ensures that women are enabled to cope with their 'domestic duties' as well as a job outside the home, but it remains firmly rooted in the notion that a woman's first duty is to her home and family and her job outside the home is secondary.

The ramifications of this ideology and its effects on the working class have been examined above. In Bentilee although the nursery group set out to transform these ideological relations in the end it had to operate within their framework. To staff the nursery it had to rely on women who were happy to stay at home, or go to the nursery, to look after their own and other people's children in order to free other women to go out to work. Thus the very relations which were the point of attack of the women's group in the end determined the form that the day nursery would take.

This brings to the fore the question of whether the nursery campaign succeeded in achieving its aims, and indeed whether providing a facility such as a day nursery can, on its own, achieve women's liberation. To answer these questions it is necessary to return to the theoretical position developed earlier (chapter 4) and elaborate the way in which it relates to the nursery campaign.

It was said above that one of the aims of the nursery campaign was to provide a nursery so that women would be able to go out to work and take part in production, a necessary condition for women's liberation. Government policy on women workers and child care permits women to participate in the work force but differs from the approach of the nursery campaign in that it is based on the retention of the existing sexual division of labour and woman's role as housewife and mother. In this way male-female divisions within the working class are maintained and reproduced. The Bentilee Day Nursery was intended to be a step towards the freeing of women from the home in order to permit their full participation in economic life and make their independence, in economic terms, a real possibility. How does the Bentilee Day Nursery actually fulfil these specifications? It is open from 7.30 am to 5.00 pm. which ensures that women on the estate whose children attend the nursery are able to take up full-time employment. The children are provided with a main meal at midday which relieves the mother from the necessity of cooking one in the evening. (See Appendix 5 for leaflet giving details of the nursery). In this way the nursery has taken over some of the responsibilities that are usually left to the mother and has contributed to the freeing of her from

these particular 'domestic duties'.

However, the provision of a day nursery was not the only aim of the women's group. The short term aim of the campaign was, indeed, to provide a day nursery for the women, and men, of Bentilee. However the long term aim was to transform the ideological relations which confine women to the home, and such a struggle clearly involves more than the successful setting up of a day nursery. The day nursery campaign was seen as a beginning in the struggle to involve women not only in production but also in proletarian politics. Because the campaign did not go beyond the setting up of the day nursery it was forced to operate within the dominant bourgeois ideological relations rather than challenging their very existence. Thus the short term aim of the campaign was achieved, a day nursery was established. This is important both because it provides a means whereby women can go out to work and because much was learnt by the women's group and by the local women during the course of the struggle. One of the lessons learnt was that the bourgeois division of labour which separates mental from manual labour denies the working class the tools with which to challenge the operation of ISA's such as local authorities. In the case of the nursery campaign it was necessary to apply for planning permission and so on, and this required among other things, the ability to fill in complicated forms. Here the skills of the women's group were invaluable, without them the nursery campaign could easily have been silently stifled. Another important achievement was that the women involved gained confidence in their own ability to organise and to fight to achieve their aims.

However the long term aim of the campaign was not achieved, and this is where a political position derived from Marxist

theory differs from one that does not. Instead of seeing a day nursery as a solution in itself for certain women it is seen as part of the struggle for revolution. From this perspective the aim of involving women in proletarian politics was part and parcel of the aim of freeing them from certain tasks that they have to undertake within the bourgeois family. The limitations of a local campaign are clearly underlined if the problem is approached from this perspective. A nursery by itself is not enough to transform the bourgeois ideological relations of the family, it does not transform these relations as they exist within the trade union movement, the work force etc. These relations have to be transformed at all levels of the social formation. As we have seen above, ideological relations are reproduced throughout the social formation by means of practices at every level. So the whole social division of labour needs to be transformed in order to really overcome the oppression of women. This does not mean, as it seems to for the General Council of the TUC (p.228 above) that we are condemned to inactivity on specific issues because the problem exists on a wider scale. On the contrary, struggles such as those for day nurseries are important and must be waged because it is only through such struggles and transformations that the social formation will be changed. However if such struggles remain isolated they remain unable to transform the ideological relations which confine women to the home; such relations continue to be reproduced. For instance, if a day nursery is available some women can go out to work, but when their children reach school age they are forced to give up full-time work because school hours do not fit in with a 40-hour working week, and so

if they work at all it very likely has to be in a part-time job. Thus other practices are constantly forcing women back into their place. Clearly ideological practices at all levels of the social formation have to be changed in order to really transform the sexual division of labour. This can only be achieved if it is part of a revolutionary process which puts the proletariat in power and challenges the bourgeois social division of labour by instituting new proletarian practices.

Within the women's group the people who were most actively involved in the nursery campaign were actually working with this perspective, but they did not have the backing of a revolutionary organisation, links with trade unions were very weak or non-existent, and the political work was not carried through but ended with the gaining of the nursery. This was a problem of personnel and organisation, not theory, and reflects a profound weakness of political work within the women's movement. The women's group, as the broader women's liberation movement, is an alliance of Marxists, Marxist-feminists, and non-revolutionary feminists. Thus although the whole women's group would, and did, support the struggle for a day nursery, (this is one of the demands of the women's movement), when it came to taking the struggle further that support vanished. Clearly the fact that the nursery campaign existed without the support of a revolutionary party meant that it was very difficult to carry it through consistently in order to achieve its long term as well as its short term aims. Another factor which slowed down the development of the campaign was the lack of knowledge, on the part of the women's group, of the actual conditions on Bentilee.

Thus, a struggle such as the nursery campaign, guided by theory could go further than the Bentilee struggle if greater care was taken to establish the concrete conditions within which the campaign was to be conducted, and if it was part of an overall struggle for revolutionary change.

A non-marxist theory, such as feminism, would not see the struggle for women's liberation as part of the revolutionary struggle and so would be condemned to partial victories and a non-alliance with the proletariat. I would argue that the struggle for women's liberation is part of the proletarian class struggle and can only be successful if seen in this perspective rather than as something that can be achieved on its own. This is a crucial distinction from feminist positions which hold that the struggle for women's liberation is wholly 'autonomous' and is to be conducted against patriarchy, whereas the class struggle is conducted against capitalism. Any link that may arise between the two in practice is thus fortuitous. As long as the struggle for women's liberation takes place on its own it is condemned to partial victories, for instance the 'winning' of equal pay for women. This 'victory' means that some individual women are entitled to equal pay, but the majority of women continue to be paid much less than the majority of men, and the sexual divisions which produce this situation of 'inequality' continue to be reproduced in other forms. The existence of the day nursery on Bentilee has not succeeded in transforming the ideological relations against which it was struggling but has been forced to operate within the dominant ideology. Clearly the struggle has to be conducted at all levels of a social formation and must be aimed not at achieving

'equality' at work or within the family but at transforming bourgeois ideological relations. Some feminists believe that women's oppression originates within the family, and that changes within this unit, such as sharing the housework and child care, will relieve women of their 'domestic duties' and mean that they are no longer oppressed. But such a sharing of tasks does not change the relations which constitute the bourgeois family, and the sexual division of labour within the family is constantly reproduced by practices at other levels of the social formation. Unless these practices are tackled at all levels of the social formation the sexual division of labour will continue to be reproduced.

In conclusion it can be said that the theoretical analysis outlined above, and the political position developed on its basis, permits a comprehension of the significance of the limitations of the Bentilee struggle and points the way forward for the women's movement and the proletarian movement. It is essential to struggle on all fronts against bourgeois ideologies, and it is essential for the liberation of women that the proletariat seizes state power. Without such a revolutionary act the bourgeois social division of labour, and along with it the sexual divisions of labour, will continue to be reproduced.

Postscript

An interesting phenomenon was observed by the nursery group on Bentilee: at the end of June 1976, just before the nursery opened, the foundations for a nursery school, which had been part of the original plans for Bentilee, were laid. In a time of public expenditure cuts, arguably the least favourable

time since the building of this nursery school had first been planned twenty years ago, the plans had been implemented and Bentilee was to have its long promised nursery school. The local paper reported that it was due to the pressure of public opinion on the estate in favour of the nursery. Could it have had anything to do with the nursery campaign? It is possible that it had, and although it was a nursery school which was being built and not a day nursery the existence of the nursery campaign was clearly putting pressure on the local authority.¹⁵

Even though the provision of a nursery school is very important for the children's education and many more of them are needed it does not provide the same services as does a day nursery. Because its hours of opening are the same as normal school hours it does not cater for both parents going to work full-time, one parent has to have a job that will fit in with school hours and the parent who normally has to restrict their job opportunities in this way is usually the mother. Thus from the point of view of releasing women from their 'domestic duties' and enabling them to enter the labour market on equal terms with men a nursery school is not as effective as a day nursery.

15 Pressure had also been brought to bear on the DES to build this nursery school by the Department of Psychology at Keele University. The nursery school is no ordinary nursery school but a laboratory for a research team investigating child development in different situations. It has a circular observation room at the centre with a room all round it where the children are. The observation room has one way mirrors so that the observers can watch their "guinea-pigs" without being themselves observed and without getting in the way. This nursery school opened on September 1st 1977.

Conclusion

A Woman's Place is in the Home; Bourgeois ideology? ✓

The argument presented in the preceding pages has been guided by a certain theoretical position, that ideologies existing in class society are class ideologies and that they exist in the form of, and are reproduced through, material practices. This thesis flows from the conception of the state as an apparatus of class rule which arises out of class antagonisms and exists so as to control and regulate class conflict. The power of the state ultimately rests on force - the standing army, the police, the courts - which constitute the repressive state apparatuses. But it depends also on the existence of ideological state apparatuses which maintain and reproduce class rule through ideological means. The ISA's reproduce ideological social relations within a social formation through material practices, thus they contribute to the reproduction of the bourgeois social division of labour which constitutes one of the conditions of existence of capitalist relations of production. They are also crucial to the formation of labour-power which constitutes part of the forces of production. Thus ideologies exist in material practices within the ISA's which are an important part of the bourgeois state apparatus in so far as they reproduce the ideologico-social division of labour. The bourgeois social division of labour is the means by which the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over a social formation is ensured; hegemony, and hence the social division of labour, is thus one of the conditions of class rule.

The ideology of a woman's place being in the home as it exists in the British social formation constitutes a bourgeois ideology. This is because it acts so as to maintain and reproduce socio-sexual divisions within the working class. Any ideological divisions within the proletariat, such as race, mental/manual labour, skilled-unskilled etc., are a form of the bourgeois social division of labour and tend to prevent the unity of the proletariat as a class. Since the unity of the proletariat is essential for it to seize state power, ideology and ideological practices which reproduce divisions within it are working in the interests of the ruling class.

My analysis of certain regions of the British social formation has concentrated on the forms of existence of the ideology of a woman's place being in the home and its effects in terms of the class struggle.

The distribution of women in the work force clearly shows that a marked sexual division of labour pertains which restricts women to the low paid unskilled sectors of the labour market. Women are often concentrated in areas which have come to be known as "women's work" and they constitute a very high proportion of low paid and part-time workers. They are often seen as temporary members of the work force and the work pattern forced on them, leaving work on the birth of their first child and not returning until the youngest is at school, serves to reinforce this ideology. A woman's real role in life is seen as that of wife and mother, any work she does outside the home is secondary. This ideology finds representation at all levels of the social formation. An examination of Social Security law reveals that woman's prime social duty is seen as that of wife

and mother whereas a man's prime social duty is to go out to work to support his wife and family. Women, when they do work outside the home, are not treated in the same way as men in terms of the National Insurance system, their job outside the home is clearly regarded as secondary to their job inside the home. This ideological basis of Social Security legislation has important effects for the working class. Women, because of the practices of Social Security, are not seen as permanent members of the work force but are treated as housewives and as economically dependent on men. Thus legal practice actually reproduces a situation of economic dependency for women and ensures that the sexual division of labour within the bourgeois family and within the work force is maintained. Protective legislation is also firmly rooted within the ideology of a woman's place being in the home, and its operation ensures that this situation remains a reality. Women are kept out of many so-called 'men's' jobs on the basis of the protective laws and so the sexual division of labour within the work force is reproduced.

Government policy on women workers is based on the same ideology. Thus although policies since the second world war have generally been aimed at encouraging women to enter the work force this has been done in such a way as to maintain a woman's centrality to the home. Part-time work has been increased to enable women to look after their home and children and to go out to work. Married women, along with 'immigrants' and other weak sectors of the labour force, are clearly regarded as a reserve labour force. They can be pulled into employment when needed but will return to the home in periods of high unemployment. The increase of women in the work force has not resulted

in a broadening of the jobs that they do or an improvement in their position relative to men. Thus government policy is formulated within the ideological social relations which tie women to the home and has in no way challenged those relations.

The function of the bourgeois family as the child rearing unit has remained intact. This is clearly shown by examining the policies of government on the provision of child care for pre-school age children. It is based on the notion of a 'normal' family where the husband goes out to work and the wife stays at home looking after her children until they are of school age. Because these policies are based on the assumption that women, once they are married, belong in the home, no alternatives are provided which could help to change the situation. For instance the number of day nurseries has decreased considerably since the war. Thus because the practical policies pursued by government are based on women staying at home, fulfilling their 'domestic duties' first and foremost, this situation is in fact perpetuated. This affects the types of jobs women do. They are restricted in their choice of work by the school hours of their children and can therefore often only take up part-time work. They are forced to leave the labour market in order to have and rear a family and thus their job careers are broken. This means, among other things, that it is difficult for women to undertake a training for skilled work. Thus the distribution of women in the work force is greatly affected by the ideological practices pursued by government.

Within the trade union movement, both historically and contemporarily, strong ideological divisions along male-female lines are clearly evident. Historically competition for jobs

within the working class often led to the exclusion of women from trade unions in the hope that this would ensure jobs for men. It did not succeed in keeping women at home and away from work however, on the contrary, such exclusive practices led to the formation of women as a cheap, unorganised sector of the work force concentrated in low paid jobs. It also meant that women became an important part of the relative surplus population. Thus practices and policies, which on the surface aimed to protect men's jobs and to protect the 'fairer' sex from the harsh realities of working life, ensured that the working class was divided and cheap female labour was often used in preference to the more expensive, because organised and skilled, male labour. These divisions weakened the struggles of the working class because women were to a large extent excluded from the organised labour movement.

In the trade union movement today ideological divisions between men and women are evident in the membership of trade unions, the posts filled by men and women trade unionists, attendance at meetings and so on. The proportion of male workers that is organised is higher than the proportion of women, men occupy most of the official posts in trade unions and men are generally more active in the movement as a whole. However this is not because women are 'not interested' in trade unions but because of the constraints of their 'domestic duties' which are reinforced by practices within the trade union movement. These practices serve to reinforce ideological divisions rather than attempting to transform them. Thus the trade union movement, because its practices reproduce ideological divisions, is weakened by the operation of the ideology of a woman's place. Many

women workers are not organised into trade unions, and many that are are prevented from being active members by a whole series of practices based on the notion that a woman's place is in the home.

By means of this analysis it has been demonstrated that the ideology of a woman's place functions so as to maintain a divided working class. It also functions so as to minimise the effectiveness of working class struggles. This has been illustrated by my examination of the struggle for equal pay and the Bentilee nursery campaign. In both these cases the struggles have not broken through the confines of bourgeois ideology and have therefore not fully achieved their aims. In the case of the Equal Pay Act equal pay of women with men has not been achieved. This was due to the divisions that rent the working class on the issue and prevented men from uniting with women to secure real equal pay; these divisions allowed the ruling class to manipulate the Act in such a way that in practice a few individual women succeed in their claims for equal pay but in general the pay of women remains considerably lower than that of men. The case of TRICO, where equal pay was won by the women, demonstrates the importance of a unified work force for the successful outcome of such struggles.

In Bentilee the struggle for a day nursery was aimed at transforming the material conditions of women on the housing estate by providing facilities which would release them from some of their 'domestic duties'. However the struggle came up against the very ideological relations that it was attempting to transform. The women were constrained by their position as mothers and housewives and they had to find a solution within

these ideological relations. At every point in the struggle the ideology of the family and practices within the family threw up barriers which could not be overcome by the nursery campaign.

Both these struggles show how the ideology of a woman's place operates against the working class. In the case of the Equal Pay Act men and women were divided so the ruling class was able to manipulate the Act and its effects were minimised, in the case of the nursery the ideological relations of the family and woman's place, as they exist in material practices, ensured that the nursery operated within the confines of those relations rather than succeeding in transforming them.

Thus bourgeois ideology prevents the working class from struggling successfully and uniting to transform the bourgeois ideologies which divide it.

The thesis that ideologies are maintained and reproduced through practices at every level of a social formation implies that struggles aimed at transforming ideologies must be based on transforming practices. Thus practices which reproduce ideological divisions and the bourgeois social division of labour must be the object of any ideological struggle. If material practices are left unaltered, as has been shown by the Cultural Revolution in China, then the bourgeois social division of labour will continue to be reproduced. The implications of such a position in terms of the political practice of both the Women's Liberation Movement and the revolutionary movement are clear. The analysis of the ideology of a woman's place has revealed its divisive effects within the working class. Thus it constitutes a bourgeois ideology and it is in the interest

of the proletariat as well as the women's liberation movement to conduct the struggle against it. For the working class to ignore this issue is to allow the continued reproduction of sexual divisions within its ranks and to prevent its unity against the bourgeoisie. And for the women's movement to ignore the class nature of this patriarchal ideology is to condemn itself to partial victories. As long as the bourgeoisie retains state power the bourgeois social division of labour will be reproduced by the ISA's and the sexual division of labour, which is one of its forms, will also continue to be reproduced. Thus to struggle against the bourgeoisie is to fight for the conditions in which the transformation of the ISA's and the ending of women's oppression will become real possibilities.

Given the bourgeois character of the ideology of a woman's place the proletariat must take up the issues that are important for women, if they do not women will be lost to the revolutionary struggle. For the proletariat and organisations of the working class to ignore the ideology and ideological relations that confine women to the home means that bourgeois divisions of labour will continue to be reproduced and consequently the proletariat will remain divided along sexual lines.

The ideological relations which make the home the central concern of women prevent them from contributing to the revolutionary class struggle and so weaken the forces of the proletariat. In December 1973 an article in Red Flag put the situation baldly:

'Women make up half of the population and therefore are a gigantic revolutionary force. Without their participation our socialist revolution and construction cannot succeed.' (Croll 1974. P.105).

Thus for the proletarian class struggle the question of women's liberation is crucial because without confronting the ideological relations which confine women to the home the forces for revolution are divided and weakened; thus it is part of the class struggle of the proletariat to fight for women's liberation.

The women's movement has an interest in allying itself to the revolutionary movement because the proletariat is the only class which has an objective interest in the liberation of women. The interests of the bourgeoisie, on the contrary, rest in maintaining women as an oppressed group because the ideological relations constituting women's oppression divide the working class and so maintain the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, which is crucial to their retention of state power.¹

The socio-sexual division of labour exists throughout the British social formation. To transform it a transformation of the material practices which reproduce it must be undertaken. It is not enough to proclaim equality, the material barriers which reproduce women's oppression must be destroyed, and this can only be done through a long and consistent struggle to transform bourgeois ideology through the proletarian class struggle.

1 It is significant that rightist tendencies in China have always argued for a strengthening of the family and woman's place within it, for instance Liu Shao Chi said that: 'It is also a revolutionary task to look after your household and your children.' (Broyelle. 1977. P.160). This is an attempt to remove women from production and political life and re-constitute them as a potentially reactionary force subsumed under the ideology of a woman's place being in the home.

Appendix 1

In an article entitled 'Phallic power' and the psychology of 'Women' A Patriarchal chain (Plaza, 1978) Monique Plaza suggests that Freudian psychoanalysis consists of 3 separable levels of theory. A general analysis of the structure of the unconscious in which 'the psychic apparatus does not have a sex.' (Plaza, 1978. P.20). A second level is the theory of culture presented by Freud, he

'describes the (patriarchal) structure and the (repressive) functionings of the cultural order, thus giving us a sort of reconstruction of the symbolic patriarchal order of society. He proposes that the domain of sexuality is that on which 'culture' is based, exacting from the individual a renunciation...and a submission to the Law of the Father.' (Plaza, 1978. P.20).

The imposition of the patriarchal order takes place through the 'violent' character of the 'process of sexual identification'. At this level of psychoanalysis individual identity and sexual identity merge, are forced to become confused, so that women remain in their oppressed place as women and are not seen as the 'general individual' as are men.

'If we summarise what psychoanalysis - on balance - teaches us, one can say that there is no anatomical sexual difference which is primary or of the order of feeling. There is an anatomy which the child symbolises in the functioning of the imaginary schemes which are imposed on him, schemes of the Difference-hierarchy.

'In a non-patriarchal symbolic system, the dimension of sex would have 'its' place. The particularity of individuals would not then be summed up by their sexual identity. Moreover, psychoanalysis also teaches us that in the present framework the fusion of individuality and sexed identity is not total: in earliest life the child becomes an autonomous subject independent of every reference to his anatomical sex.' (Plaza, 1978. P.22).

She takes as the 3rd element Freud's analysis of female sexuality, his 'portrait of "woman"'. She says that

'This description of "woman" that Freud develops in his articles on 'female sexuality' is a coarse fabric woven of elements of the theory of culture, of statements from analytic practice (erected on normal and normative laws) and of traditional misogynistic stereotypes.' (Plaza, 1978. PP.22-23).

This portrait of woman forms part of the patriarchal system and thus

'justifies the oppression of women (which has been denounced since the beginning of the nineteenth century) and it establishes it inescapably: it conceals that which psychoanalytic theory otherwise demonstrates, the knowledge that woman is not only woman, a being made marginal and inferior, she is also the general individual.' (Plaza 1978. P.23).

This notion of the general individual seems to me to be important, she explains it further:

'The danger of psychoanalytic discourse (and its practice) is to make out that castration defines women, and summarises their psychic existence. Now the castration fantasy is a violence towards women which tends to break their identification as a 'general being', to impose on them the signifier 'woman = castrated' to define them. As for penis-envy, it is nothing other than the expression, in the terms imposed by the patriarchal symbolic order, of woman's desire to be something other than 'woman' ("woman = castrated"). It only signifies 'being like man' to the extent that the androcentric social organisation confuses general and masculine.' (Plaza. 1978. P.25).

She argues that the present feminist tendency to assert woman's difference from man is to remain trapped within the patriarchal structure which is based on the notion of 'difference'. She posits that the way forward for the women's movement lies

'in, at one and the same time, revealing women's specific exploitation, and affirming their existence as 'general' individuals...' (Plaza. 1978. P.26).

This is a far cry from Mitchell's notion of a specifically feminist movement consisting of women alone (with a few exceptions)

as, presumably, if the 'general individuality' of women is to be asserted then women too are subject to class exploitation in a class society and will operate accordingly. This theory thus opens a space for the introduction of a Marxist analysis and an ultimate linking of the two theoretically, and politically in terms of the proletarian movement and the women's movement. Plaza does not herself draw these conclusions, but Mitchell does take her theory to its ultimate conclusion which is that patriarchal ideology defines women as women and hence determines their political practice and links them across all other divisions.

Appendix 2

Some comments on Althusser's Ideology and Ideological
Apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)

If a close examination of Althusser's essay is undertaken it becomes clear that his text is uneven. In the first part he theorises ideologies as being class ideologies existing in certain ideological apparatuses and practices within concrete social formations and constituting part of the conditions of existence of the economic base or mode of production. However, the other parts of his essay are seriously marred by a reliance on the notion of 'subject' to form the basis of his theory of ideology, and thus, he does not depart from the grounds of those whom he is attacking remaining a prisoner of a subjectivist theory of ideology and an empiricist theory of knowledge.

Ranciere comments on this, Althusser presents

'as the surprising and paradoxical discovery of research ('I believe I am justified in advancing the following thesis.... This thesis may seem paradoxical...') this truth about the dominant character of the educational ideological apparatus, which was produced in such a profoundly un-ambiguous manner by the mass movement. ¹
In this way, Althusser can bracket together in the same text analyses produced by two conflicting problematics (a problematic of subjective illusion and a problematic of State Apparatuses);
(Ranciere. 1974. P.11).

His reliance on the notion of subject is clear in his central thesis which states that ideology represents the imaginary relation of men to their real conditions of existence. He writes:

1 Ranciere is here referring to May '68 in France and the Cultural Revolution in China.

'It is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' represent to themselves in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there. It is this relation which is at the centre of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world.' (Althusser. 1971. P.153).

Ideology, for Althusser, represents a lived relation to the conditions of existence and this relation is imaginary. He asks the question

'Why is the representation given to individuals of their (individual) relation to the social relations which govern their conditions of existence and their collective and individual life necessarily an imaginary relation?' (Althusser. 1971. P.155).

Although his answer to this question is not clear it can be seen that his position is governed by an anti-empiricism. The imaginary modality of living is necessary because the conditions of existence of subjects are not given to them in experience. That is, material reality does not contain a knowledge of itself within itself which has only to be seen or experienced by a subject to become knowledge. Thus there is a distinction between the real object and the thought object, this is epitomised in the famous phrase, "the concept dog cannot bark". There is no automatic correspondence between an individual's experience and the material conditions of existence, ideology mediates and represents to the subject his/her relation to the conditions of existence. The imaginary representation is, for the subject, a necessary and livable representation.

Clearly Althusser's problematic is constructed in terms of an anti-empiricist position. The empiricist theory of knowledge posits that knowledge of the real exists within the real and can be perceived/experienced by a subject. Thus the

structure of the real is transparent. Now Althusser takes up a position in opposition to this and argues that the real, or to use different terms, the conditions of existence, are never transparent, they can never be spontaneously known - by a subject. Thus ideology is necessary to men to enable them to live their relation to their conditions of existence and so ideology will always exist even in a classless society. Now, even though Althusser takes his position against an empiricist theory of knowledge we can see that the central category of subject which forms the pivot of the latter also constitutes the terms of his argument; for Althusser ideology exists in relation to subjects who live in and through ideology. Subjects must live in ideology (read illusion, real illusion) because the real conditions of their existence are not spontaneously knowable. Thus the transformation of the definition of ideology from being the "representation of men's real conditions of existence" to "representation of men's relation to their real conditions of existence" does not escape the dependence on the notion of a subject, to whom this relation to reality is represented

Ranciere writes:

'In fact, by struggling against ideologies of alienation, caught in the dilemma of transparency (idealist) or opacity (materialist), Althusser is led to fight on the ground of his opponent. The characteristic of the para-Marxist theories he criticises (Lukacsian, existentialist, and the rest) is to identify the Marxist theory of ideologies with a theory of the subject.' (Ranciere. 1974. P.9).

The notion of a 'subject' occupying such a nodal pattern in a theoretical framework is significantly outside the framework of historical materialism. Within the latter problematic the

notion of a process without a subject is crucial and marks the break that was made with ideology and the constitution of the science of historical materialism. Thus Althusser is taking a retrogressive step when he posits ideology/ies not in terms of the class struggle but in terms of the functions they perform for the individual subject in making life livable!

Althusser also posits that ideology has no history. This should not be taken to mean that particular ideologies do not have a real history within the social formation in which they have their existence, it means that ideology in general has a structure which is not specific to any social formation or historical period just as production in general can be said to have certain characteristic features, although neither production in general nor ideology in general exist. However, in Althusser's discussion of the structure of ideology we again find the notion of subject playing an obviously central role. Balibar comments on the problematic nature of the reliance on the notion subject,

'...the theory of fetishism can never truly think that 'subject' is an ideological notion (elaborated first of all within juridical ideology). On the contrary, it seems to make the notion of 'subject' the 'scientific' concept of ideology. Assuming that these schematic suggestions are correct, it is on this point too that Althusser's text cited above (2) should be examined for in it the problem is not perhaps solved in an absolutely clear fashion.' (Balibar, 1973. P.59).

Ideology also has no history in the sense that there will never be spontaneous knowledge of the conditions of existence through experience, thus ideology will exist in every social formation because this is the only sphere through which subjects

2 He is here referring to Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (notes towards an Investigation.) (Althusser, 1971).

can live; here again we find that the notion of subject is central to Althusser's thesis.

Clearly Althusser's text is uneven. In the first part he analyses ideologies in class terms as part of the system of state apparatuses, but when he attempts to analyse the structure of ideology he relies on the notion of the 'subject' and thus falls into a subjectivist problematic which he shares with Mitchell and other feminists.

Appendix 3

Numbers of women entering the work force

Although there has been an overall increase in the numbers of women in paid employment over the last fifty years there are variations in the distribution of this increase between different branches of production. In the service industries generally there has been a growth in the number of women employed, an example is given in the following table:

Table 1 Women in the work force, percentages.

Industry	1961	1971	Increase
Distributive trades	53.2	56.1	2.9
Professional & scientific services	66.0	68.0	2.0
Public administration and defence	29.3	33.2	3.9
Banking and insurance	46.4	52.8	6.4

Source: CIS Report, Women under Attack.

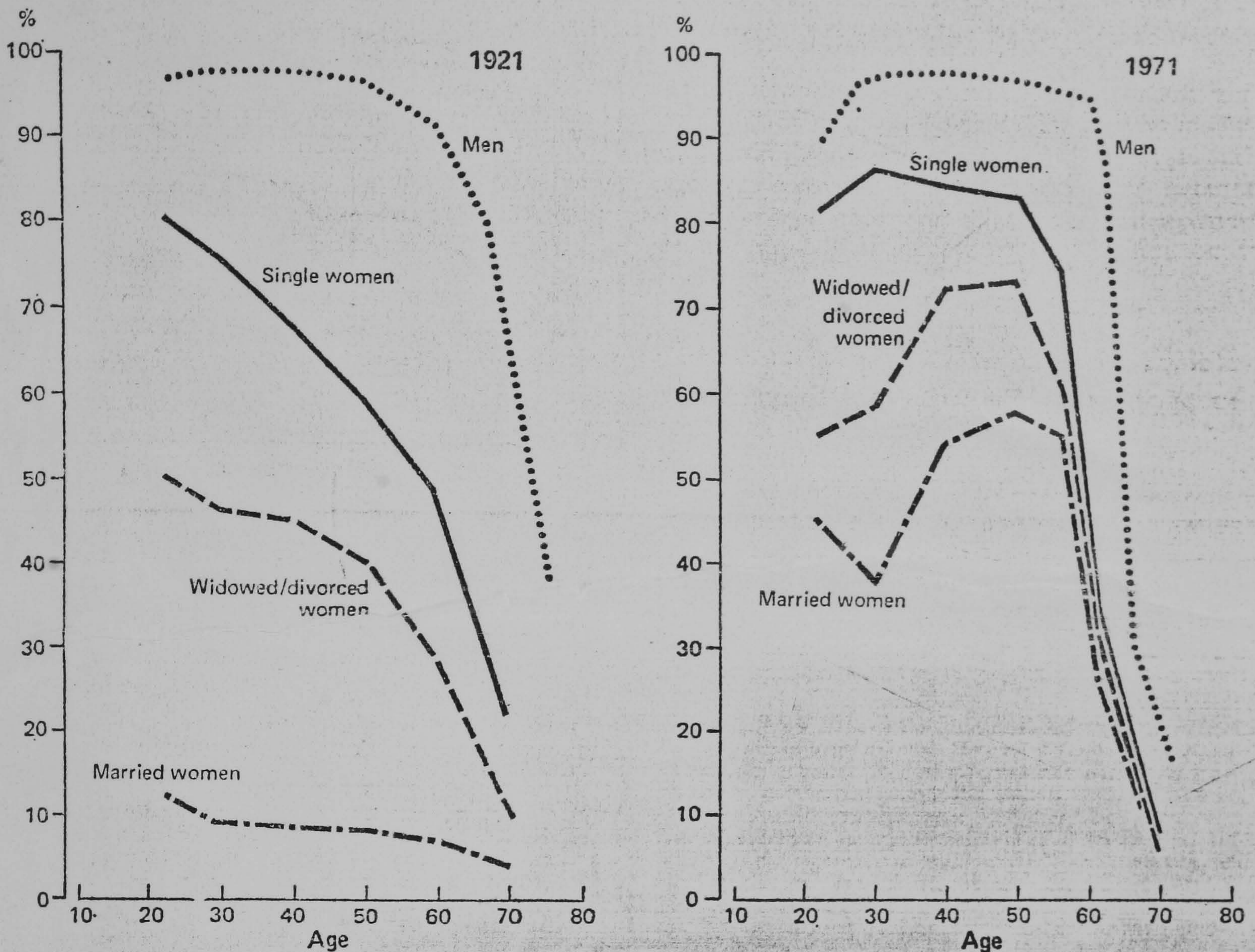
In the manufacturing sector this picture is somewhat different, the employment of women in this sector declined by 2% between 1961 and 1971.

Activity rates of women according to marital status

The graph below shows the changed economic activity rates from 1921 to 1971 for married, single, divorced and widowed women and men.

Table 2

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY RATES



Source: Censuses of Population 1921 and 1971

Source: Economic Progress Report No. 56 November 1974.

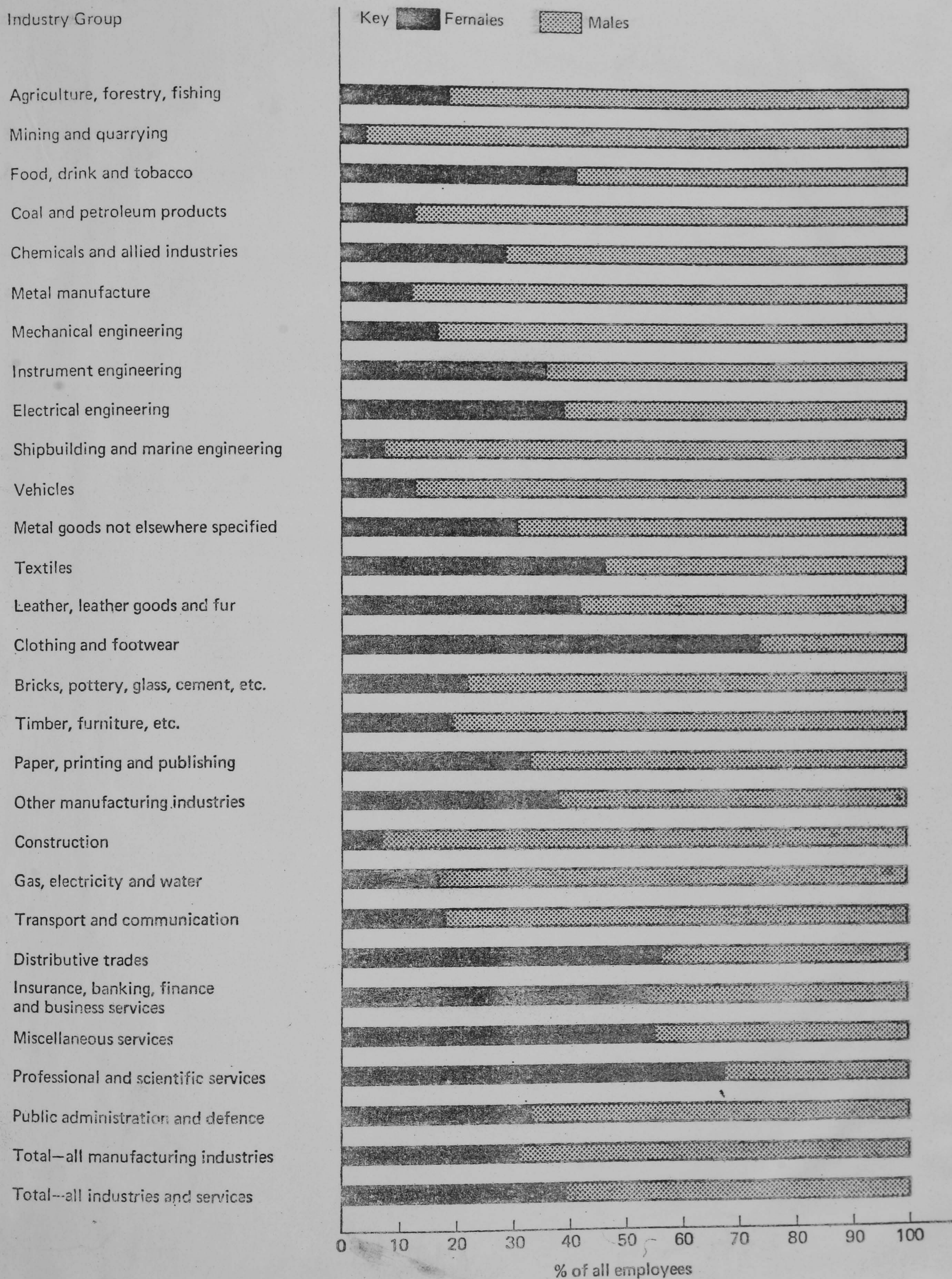
The report comments on the activity rates of the single women:

'The most striking difference in the economic activity rates of single women between 1921 and 1971 is not at the beginning of normal working life but in the later age groups. The proportion of single women at work in their twenties was already eight out of ten in 1921 (the actual percentage was a little higher in 1971). Whereas in 1921, however, the older they were the less likely they were to be working, in 1971 the proportion of single women in the work force, full-time or part-time actually went up in the later twenties (on completion of education and training) and thereafter maintained a relatively high level right into the fifties. Whereas fifty years ago only $\frac{1}{2}$ of all single women of that age were economically active, more than $\frac{3}{4}$'s of them were in 1971'. (Economic Progress Report No. 56 Nov. 1974, p.2).

For married women the chart indicates that in 1921 just over one in ten of young married women were at work whereas in 1971 this proportion had risen to almost half. There is also a continuous increase in the economic activity rates of married women between the ages of thirty and fifty, after fifty it declines as does the men's. The report goes on:

'What the chart does not illustrate is the much greater numerical importance of married women in all age groups, but especially the twenties and early thirties, in 1971 compared with 1921, reflecting the lower average age of marriage compared with fifty years ago and the higher proportion of men to women in the population as a whole' (Economic Progress Report No.56, Nov. 1974, p.2).

Table 3 Employees, by industry. Male/female shares, 1971.



Source: Women & Work, a Statistical Survey, 1974, p. 18.

Table 4

Great Britain—Occupations of Female Employees in Manufacturing, May 1967

Industry	Total female employees			Apprentices and others being trained ^a			Others being trained		
	of whom part-time			Female apprentices			Over 18 years		
	'000 (1)	Per cent (2)	Per cent (3)	Total Number (4)	Per cent (5)	Total Number (6)	Per cent (7)	Total Number (8)	Per cent (9)
<i>Food, drink and tobacco: Total</i>	296.1	28	41	150	4	1950	54	1580	38
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	68.1	12	40	50	38	820	76	230	24
B skilled operators	27.3	20	22	100	3	430	39	380	28
C mainly semi-skilled	69.0	32	61	—	—	530	66	700	60
D others	131.7	35	43	—	—	170	27	210	36
<i>Chemicals and allied industries: Total</i>	126.4	18	27	30	0.5	1520	58	1500	23
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	60.6	8	34	30	4	920	62	820	20
B skilled operators	3.9	16	5	—	—	20	7	40	7
C mainly semi-skilled	22.4	19	26	—	—	490	73	500	34
D others	39.5	34	33	—	—	90	53	140	40
<i>Metal manufacture: Total</i>	63.7	17	11	190	1	1230	26	920	12
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	33.8	6	27	170	8	1150	59	770	20
B skilled operators	15.3	16	5	20	..	80	5	150	4
C mainly semi-skilled	14.7	44	11	—	—	—	—	—	—
D others	542.1	16	26	840	0.8	7480	47	12790	30
<i>Engineering and electrical goods: Total</i>	205.5	8	30	480	2	4990	77	4320	25
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	13.2	11	2	360	4	50	1	190	2
B skilled operators	247.6	17	49	—	—	2170	50	7990	52
C mainly semi-skilled	75.7	36	25	—	—	270	33	290	21
D others	102.9	11	13	210	0.6	1440	35	1430	16
<i>Vehicles: Total</i>	53.7	6	25	180	2	1300	82	930	28
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	1.6	6	0.7	30	..	100	10	60	2
B skilled operators	29.0	8	15	—	—	40	11	370	15
C mainly semi-skilled	18.7	29	14	—	—	—	—	70	16
D others	175.4	21	33	500	3	2740	36	3730	23
<i>Manufacture of metal goods: Total</i>	44.4	11	39	370	19	1210	72	1020	29
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	6.0	23	5	130	1	300	11	230	4
B skilled operators	82.6	21	47	—	—	920	34	2200	34
C mainly semi-skilled	42.3	31	37	—	—	310	55	280	26
D others	338.7	16	51	710	15	4530	67	2440	43
<i>Textiles: Total</i>	40.5	8	41	100	27	600	76	240	30
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	96.5	13	47	610	14	1920	60	820	35
B skilled operators	149.6	17	65	—	—	1820	79	1270	58
C mainly semi-skilled	52.2	22	40	—	—	190	39	110	28
D others	351.3	12	75	610	28	15710	86	3300	79
<i>Clothing and footwear: Total</i>	37.2	3	57	40	36	440	83	100	33
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	238.0	12	80	570	27	13530	86	2650	81
B skilled operators	48.0	11	85	—	—	1690	92	530	100
C mainly semi-skilled	28.0	20	58	—	—	50	31	20	50

[Continued overleaf]

Table 4 (continued)

Great Britain—Occupations of Female Employees in Manufacturing, May 1967

	Total female employees			Apprentices and others being trained ^a			Others being trained		
	'000 (1)	of whom part-time		Female apprentices		Under 18 years		Over 18 years	
		Per cent (2)	Per cent (3)	Total Number (4)	Per cent of all apprentices (5)	Total Number (6)	Per cent of all others being trained (7)	Total Number (8)	Per cent of all others being trained (9)
<i>Bricks, glass, cement, pottery: Total</i>	69.8	12	22	5	1340	40	870	22	
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	22.0	7	33	13	470	62	170	15	
B skilled operators	17.1	8	20	4	630	38	290	20	
C mainly semi-skilled	9.6	14	16	—	90	19	160	18	
D others	21.1	21	20	—	150	31	250	49	
<i>Timber, furniture, etc.: Total</i>	47.8	16	19	—	730	16	920	23	
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	19.8	14	37	—	290	47	140	22	
B skilled operators	13.2	10	11	—	280	9	510	18	
C mainly semi-skilled	5.8	10	41	—	140	29	230	62	
D others	9.1	34	16	—	20	3	40	17	
<i>Paper and boardmaking, etc.: Total</i>	79.1	17	37	8	2030	57	1070	35	
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	17.1	11	38	8	290	76	120	17	
B skilled operators	13.4	13	25	8	950	59	470	40	
C mainly semi-skilled	31.9	17	52	—	730	57	470	48	
D others	16.5	30	30	—	60	21	10	6	
<i>Printing and publishing: Total</i>	112.0	14	30	8	5990	76	1450	39	
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	48.1	10	40	21	1260	73	430	34	
B skilled operators	46.3	8	24	8	4440	80	840	42	
C mainly semi-skilled	5.4	17	57	—	130	65	80	53	
D others	12.2	50	26	—	160	40	100	36	
<i>Other manufacturing: Total</i>	120.0	21	39	2	910	53	1060	30	
of whom A administrative, technical and clerical	28.8	12	40	15	340	68	100	13	
B skilled operators	8.4	10	14	—	150	31	180	18	
C mainly semi-skilled	40.5	29	40	—	400	66	720	45	
D others	32.4	29	46	—	20	17	60	35	

^a Already included in the Total in Column (1).

. . . Less than 0.5 per cent.

— Nil.

NOTE:

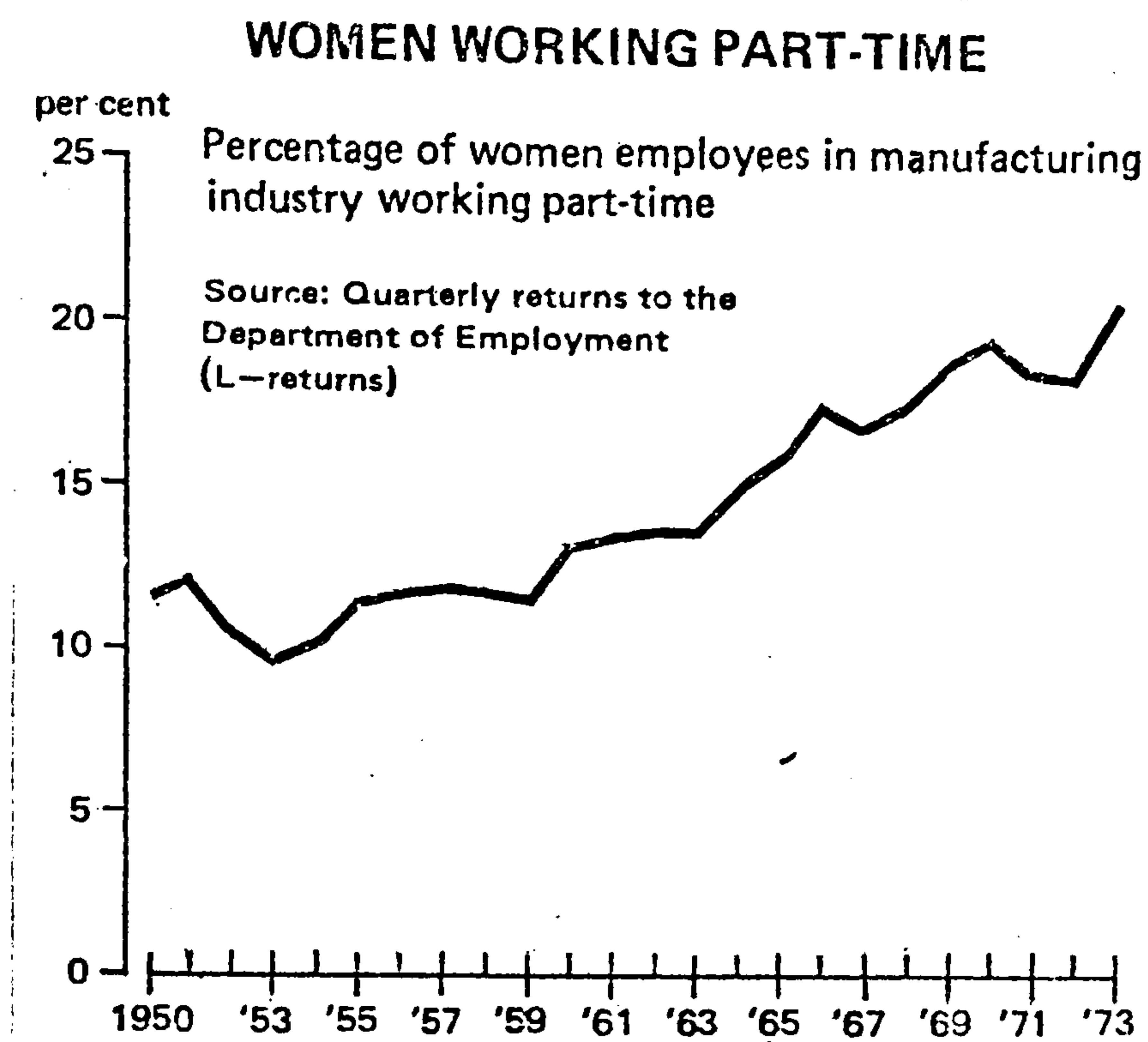
The following industries have been omitted, shipbuilding and repairing (employing 6,000 women), marine engineering (2,500) and leather, leather goods and fur (21,000).

Source: Pinder, 1969, pp. 648-651.

Part-time women workers

The increase in part-time working in the so-called manufacturing sector in the last 20 years is shown in the diagram below.

Table 5



Source: Treasury's Economic Progress Report. No.56 Nov. 1974.

In 1971 the professional and scientific services accounted for 30.2% of all part-timers, the distributive trades for 21.4% and miscellaneous services for 17.5%, together accounting for 69.1% of all part-time employees. To look at it another way, 39.2% of all female employees in the service industries were part-time compared with 20.1% of female employees in the 'manufacturing' sector. (Women and Work, a statistical survey. 1974). Klein comments:

'In most countries, the postal, telephone and telegraph services now make quite extensive use of part-time workers. Otherwise, the main field of part-time employment for clerical workers is short-hand-typing. (Klein 1965. P.48).

Where there is part-time work there is a relatively high proportion of women in the work force.

The retail trade is another area of employment where there are a lot of women employed and also a lot of part-time work. The retail drapery, out-fitting and footwear trades are,

'estimated to employ about 253,000 women (75% of all employees) in some 47,000 shops. 38% of them worked part-time (in this instance working less than 34 hours a week instead of the more usual 30 hours); a fifth of these, many of them school girls and other teenagers work on Saturdays only. (Unusually 13% of men worked part-time, 60% of them on Saturdays only.)' (Pinder, 1969. P.571).

Again we find the pattern of few women occupying the top posts, and also the smaller the retail establishments the greater the proportion of women in lower ranges of earnings.

In the National Health Service part-time workers constitute almost a quarter of the nursing staff. Pinder elaborates on this:

'in a sample of 535 hospitals in Great Britain at the end of 1967, part-timers made up rather under $\frac{1}{4}$ of all the nursing staff (male and female trained and untrained) with much the highest proportion in small and long stay hospitals. It [a Prices and Incomes Board report] concluded that industry had made a much greater and more successful effort to recruit part-time staff than had hospitals and that the key to attracting part-timers lay in organising shift work to fit in with family commitments; it recommended a planned recruitment drive.' (Pinder. 1969. P.559).

That family commitments have an effect is indicated by the fact that 40% of trained full-time nurses were married, and the senior posts which carry more responsibility and therefore require more commitment, have a much lower proportion of married

women filling them. In 1964 9% of NHS matrons were married and 16% of deputy matrons and sister tutors. The correlation between marriage and part-time working is clear:

'More than 60% of the women working in miscellaneous services are married, and most of those employed in the local authorities services as well as nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ of those in the National Health Service work part-time. With the local authorities part-timers average under 16 hours a week; with the National Health Service they do just short of the average for all part-timers in industry, 21.5 hours.'
(Pinder 1969. P.581).

Even though the number of part-time female workers has increased in the NHS their conditions of work and rates of pay have not improved:

'In the NHS part-time manual workers outnumber any other group. Between October '74 and October '75 their number rose from 68,059 to 102,319. But while part-time women manual workers have increased in proportional importance in the NHS, their average hourly earnings have fallen in money terms against the average hourly earnings of full-time men and full-time women, and they still get less than youths and boys.' (CIS report. P.21).

Appendix 4

The Working Women's Charter

1. The rate for the job, regardless of sex, at rates negotiated by the trade unions, with a national minimum wage below which no wages should fall.
2. Equal opportunity of entry into occupations and in promotion, regardless of sex and marital status.
3. Equal education and training for all occupations and compulsory day release for all 16 to 19 year olds in employment.
4. Working conditions to be without deterioration of previous conditions the same for women as for men.
5. The removal of all legal and bureaucratic impediments to equality e.g. with regard to tenancies, mortgages, pension schemes, taxation, passports, control over children, social security payments, hire-purchase agreements.
6. Improved provision of local authority day nurseries, free of charge, with extended hours to suit working mothers. Provision of nursery classes in day nurseries. More nursery schools.
7. 18 weeks maternity leave with full nett pay before and after the birth of a live child. 7 weeks after birth if the

child is still born. No dismissal during pregnancy or maternity leave. No loss of security, pension or promotion prospects.

8. Family planning clinics supplying free contraception to be extended to cover every locality. Free abortion to be readily available.

9. Family allowances to be increased to £2.50 per child, including the first child.

10. To campaign amongst women to take an active part in the trade unions and in political life so that they may exercise influence commensurate with their numbers and to campaign amongst male trade unionists that they may work to achieve this aim.

Appendix 5

Bentilee Nursery campaign:

1. Leaflet distributed through schools at beginning of campaign.
P.437 (reduced)
2. Regulations relating to registering premises for use as a
day nursery. Pp.438-443 (reduced)
3. Application forms to be filled in when applying for planning
permission. Pp.444-449 (reduced)
4. Newspaper articles about the nursery campaign. Pp.450-452
5. Questionnaire used in the survey carried out in July 1976.
P.453 (reduced)
6. Leaflet giving details of the day nursery. P.454 (reduced)

DO YOU WANT THE
KIND OF NURSERY
WHICH MEETS THE NEEDS
OF YOUR FAMILY?

Is a nursery needed at
Bentilee?

BENTILEE: THE FACTS.

APPROX. 2,000 WORKING MUMS

APPROX. 1,000 CHILDREN UNDER SCHOOL AGE

Existing facilities cannot cope with this.

1 pre-school playgroup open two days a week.

2 school nurseries full to capacity and with a long waiting list.

A long term (very) plan by the Council to build a nursery.

Nowadays it is becoming necessary for many mums to go to work. Perhaps you too would like to work and naturally you would want to know that your child is being looked after by qualified and caring people.

A community controlled nursery would be an answer if you are prepared to use it and help organise it with other mums in the area.

We would like to get some idea of what people feel about this idea so if you could help by filling in the form and returning it to the school we would be very grateful.

1

1. Do you think there is a need for a nursery in Bentilee?
2. Would you use a nursery for your child?
3. Would you be willing to help organise a campaign for a nursery?
4. Would you be willing to offer voluntary help to run a nursery?

Name. Mrs. J. Gibbons

Address. 1. RENOWN CLOSE

EATON PARK BERRYHILL

.....

Issued by . Bentilee Nursery Action Group, c/o Bentilee Information Centre.

BENTILEE NURSERY CAMPAIGN - Survey

We plan to open a day nursery soon. It will comply with Social Services regulations and will provide a large play area for kiddies with carefully selected toys. The children will be able to mix with others of the same age group and will be supervised by qualified staff.

This survey is to find out how many parents will use the nursery when it opens.

(1) Have you heard of the plan to open a nursery in Bentilee?

Yes/No

(2) Will you use the nursery when it opens? Yes/No
If YES how many of your children will come to the nursery?
If NO please tell us what you think about nurseries
and why you will not use this one.....

.....
.....
.....

(3) Are both husband and wife employed?

Husband
Wife

Yes/No
Yes/No

(4) Have you any other comments or views on the nursery campaign?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Name.....

Address.....

Bentilee Nursery Campaign, 477, Beverley Drive, Bentilee,
Stoke-on-Trent.

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	2nd September	1969
	3rd September	1969
	16th September	1969
	24th September	1969
	30th September	1969
	9th October	1969
	13th October	1969
	14th October	1969
	3rd August	1971
	3rd September	1971
	31st December	1971
	17th January	1973
	18th April	1973
	20th May	1973
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