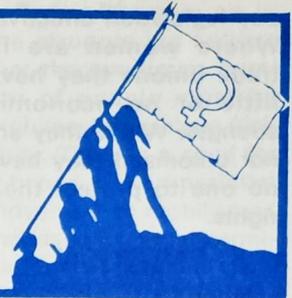




A WOMAN'S VOICE



Issued by Sinn Féin Women's Department

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PARTITION A FEMINIST ISSUE

THE PRESENT PHASE of the struggle for national liberation has gone on for 20 years. It is the longest phase in the struggle for self-determination for the Irish people. In the Six Counties Irish women experience oppression both as women and as members of a colonised people. Nationalist working class women in the Six Counties have lived, in the last 20 years, with the constant armed patrolling of their areas by the British army and the RUC.

Years of neglect have ensured overcrowding in dilapidated estates with up to 70% unemployment. Women from 17 to 70 years of age are arrested, interrogated, physically abused, thrown into jail. They are maimed and killed by plastic bullets and live bullets on the streets and in their own homes. Many of them spend their lives in endless rounds of prison visits — that includes travelling to England, to arrive at prisons only to find that the person they have come to visit has been secretly transferred to a prison at the other end of the country.

Today 20 years on, working class nationalist women continue to fight against the British occupa-

tion of their country. Their strength, courage and determination has been crucial in the last 20 years.

Mairead Farrell, a Volunteer in the Irish Republican Army, who was a victim of the shoot-to-kill policy operated by the British government, is an example of the courage and commitment of the nationalist women in the Six Counties. Mairead spent 10 1/2 years in Armagh and Maghaberry jails. She endured the dirty protest, a hunger-strike and strip-searching. She is a symbol of the spirit and strength of the women political prisoners in Maghaberry and English jails.

British interference in Ireland



has brought about the existence of two conservative states whose continued existence demands the oppression of certain sectors of society and women in particular.

The vast majority of women in the labour force are low paid, lacking in promotion prospects, discriminated against as part-time workers and deprived of the machinery which would make equal

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pay legislation effective. Where women are in trade unions they have little or no economic strength. Where they are not unionised they have no one to protect their rights.

PARTITION

Partition has hindered the development of a strong trade union movement and the development of class politics. It has weakened the forces of the left leaving working class people vulnerable to right wing attacks.

Cutbacks in the health and social services affect all working class people but it is women who bear the brunt of right wing policies.

It is women who are

expected to care for the sick children when there are no hospital beds for them, to care for the patient who has been discharged early and to look after the old person in the family who has no where else to go.

We in Sinn Fein, see the struggle of Irish women for recognition as equal citizens with equal opportunities as being interlinked with the struggle for national liberation. The victory of the struggle to end partition and re-unite the national territory is the absolute condition for any change in the social status of women as a whole. There can be no real liberation for women in a society which, North and South, is still controlled in every aspect of life by extremely reactionary forces.

Partition has led to the continued domi-

nance of the Catholic church in the 26 Counties. Its domination in the area of education has led to the perpetuation of sexism and stereotyping of women in single sex schools, traditional values, perceptions of women's place being at home as wife and mother. The domination of the Catholic church in the area of education has meant that basic civil liberties such as divorce are not available in the 26-County state.

In the last 17 years a lot of the energy of the women's movement in Ireland has been spent in the area of reproductive rights. While the struggle for contraception was largely due to the women's movement in the 26 Counties very little other gains have been made in that area. The attack on non-directive pregnancy counselling in the last few years has shown the

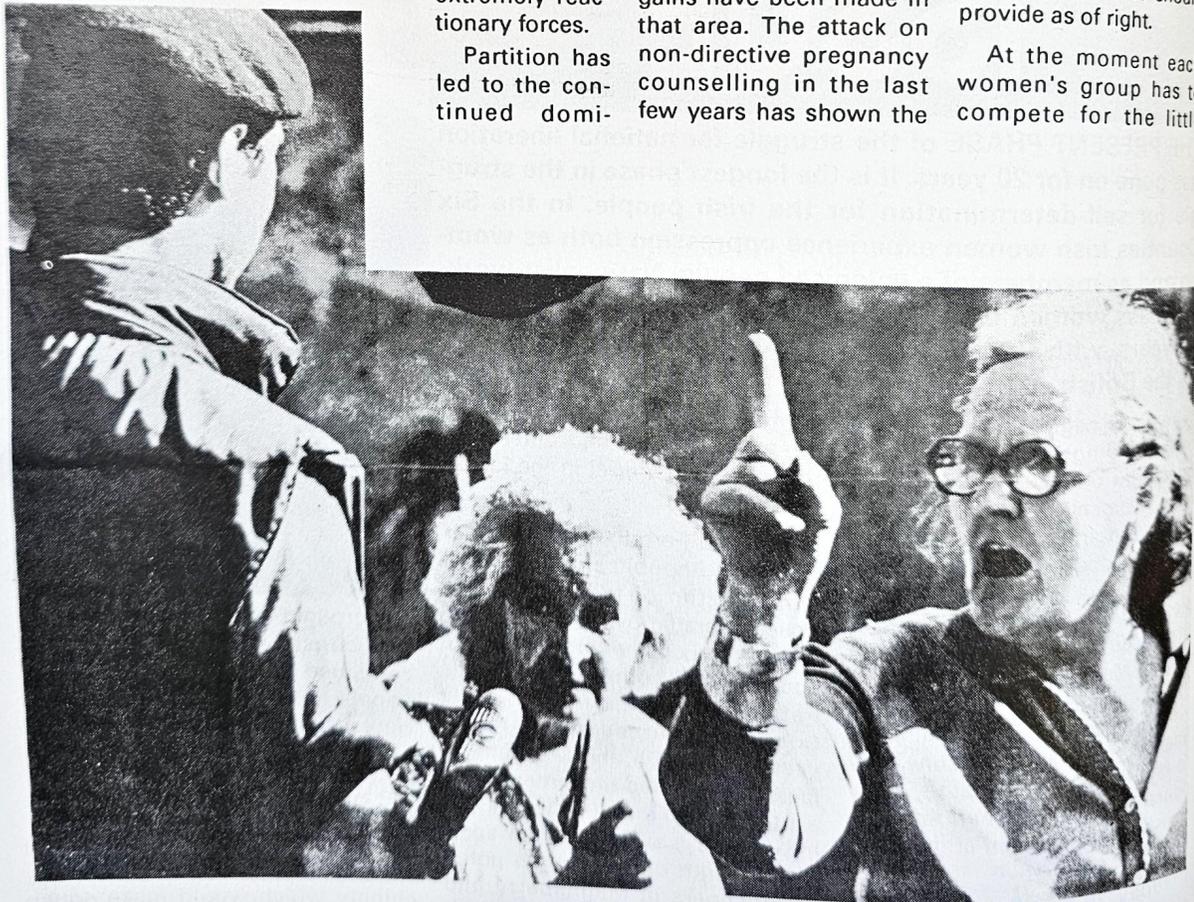
strength of the right wing ethos of the state.

While battles have been fought on equal pay and welfare very few gains have been made that have changed the lives of working class women. The majority are still trapped at home with little money because of unemployment, inadequate social welfare payments and a lack of child-care facilities.

SERVICES

In the latter half of the '70s energy from the women's movement was spent on the provision of services for women: refuges, family planning centres, rape crisis centres, health groups, and women's centres. Services the state should provide as of right.

At the moment each women's group has to compete for the little



money that the state make available for these essential services. Each women's group has to lobby for it's own particular field. This process leads to fragmentation. The old divide and conquer trick. Just recently the Dublin government announced in the budget £100,000 for the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. While this was to be welcomed, no money was given to any other crisis agency outside of Dublin.

The mobilisation of the new right has put the women's movement on the defensive in the '80s. Although new women's groups have sprung up in the towns and across the country and in local city communities women have not managed to assemble an effective opposition to the new right. The failure of the women's movement to develop is directly related to its emphasis on equal rights and equal opportunities. It has failed to address the central issue of partition. Partition sets the political face of both states, the North based on sectarian privilege, the 26 Counties deeply conservative in social terms with the strong influence of the church.

REAL CHANGE

We believe women will not experience any real change until they address this issue. Social and economic deprivation, the influence of the church, the repression that women suffer in the Six Counties are inter-related issues.

For as long as Britain remains in Ireland its presence distorts the political landscape. We believe the only solution is the ending of partition, a



● MAIREAD FARRELL

British disengagement from Ireland and the restoration of the Irish people of their right to sovereignty, independence and national self-determination.

There can be no real freedom for women in Ireland in a partitioned country. Neither can we have socialism without national liberation. Socialism can only be won by the working class developing the political power necessary to develop an economic democracy which would return the ownership of Ireland to its rightful owners, the people of Ireland.

The success of the struggle for national liberation is the pre-condition for socialism and the liberation of Irish women.

S F WOMEN'S DEPARTMENT

However we in Sinn

Fein believe women must highlight their oppression and put their demands on the agenda. In this regard women in Sinn Fein pushed for a women's department in 1980.

The women's department came out of a realisation that women had to have an organised political voice within the party. Women came together from all over Ireland to discuss their work within Sinn Fein, the problems they faced in fulfilling their roles as political activists and the need for Sinn Fein to have strong, progressive policies on issues important not just for women but to society as a whole. A women's policy document was passed at the 1980 Ard Fheis. Included in that policy is a policy of positive discrimination for women in the party. At least one quarter of the positions on the national executive are reserved

for women.

Today 20 years on in the struggle we believe that the maximum number of people must be mobilised to achieve Irish unity. There is a need for a broad anti-imperialist movement to mobilise on the issue of self-determination for the Irish people. There is a need for women to link women's self-determination with the core demand of self-determination for the nation.

In order to do this we must make this demand relevant to working class women. We must be involved in the struggles which affect a broad section of women. We must show them through involvement in their struggles on social and economic issues, which are our struggles, that their freedom is intertwined with the reunification of our country.

The ending of partition will see the dismantling of right wing power on both sides of the border and the establishment of democracy in Ireland.

In the words of Mairead Farrell:

"I'm oppressed as a woman, but I am also oppressed because I'm Irish. Everyone in this country is oppressed and we can't successfully end our oppression as women until we first end the oppression of our country. But I don't think that's the end of it. It happened before where women took the back seat. But women today have gone through too much, no way will they allow that to happen.

**Sinn Fein
Women's Dept.
March 1989**

MESSAGE FROM



MAGHABERRY

WE REPRINT below the International Women's Day message from the Women POWs in Maghaberry Jail. The message was read to a 200-strong picket who gathered at Maghaberry on March 6th in solidarity with the Irish prisoners imprisoned there.

Last year while many women from all over the world were gathered outside this prison expressing their solidarity and support for the women within it, events were unfolding in Gibraltar which were to result in the death of Mairead and her two comrades Dan and Sean. There is little we can say which would prove a fitting enough tribute to a woman who herself spent ten and a half years of her life between here and Armagh Jail. Yet we would ask women everywhere to pause for a while to think of her tireless efforts, not only to free the Irish people but also to gain equal rights and freedom for all women.

Mairead, like many of us, used her time in prison to develop and raise her awareness of all the social and political problems which affect our country. She came into prison when she was only 19 and went on to lead the women through the various protests and the hunger-strike — participating herself in the 1980 hunger-strike. Obviously, some of us were closer to her, in a personal sense, than others, but to all of us she was someone who was lively, intelligent and thoughtful with a keen sense of wanting to help others. She herself developed an interest in feminism and the various problems affecting women in wider

society. Very often through debate and discussion she encouraged others to see the importance of eradicating sexist attitudes both within the Republican Movement and society in general.

After her release Mairead (even though herself being perceived as independent) chose not to ignore the plight of women less fortunate than herself. She realised the importance of women as a whole and not just individual women and she sought to forge links with various women's groups, hoping to combat the oppression of women and the oppression of the Irish people simultaneously. It was because of her relentless efforts in both these fields that she died. She died because she refused to submit to the people who daily violate the social, political and economic rights of the Irish people. Those same people whom she had fought before her imprisonment, for the ten and a half years during it and the 18 months after her release, killed her because

they knew they would never defeat her.

● PRIDE

There is little by way of words that we can say to express the deep sense of pride we feel for Mairead, Dan and Sean and indeed all the countless others who have devoted so much of their lives and then finally their very lives to this struggle. We can only hope to draw strength and determination from their example and inspiration from the courage of their families and friends. We would ask all women of all political persuasions to take time to think of Mairead on International Women's Day and reflect on the selfless way she devoted her whole life to the struggle for the freedom of all oppressed peoples. She summed up her own determination to pursue that freedom when she said, "I have always believed we had a legitimate right to take up arms."

Maghaberry POWs.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

ON MARCH 8th 1857, in the Lower East Side of New York city, thousands of women garment workers demonstrated in the streets against their intolerable working conditions, starvation wages and 12-hour working day.

As the demonstrators headed towards the wealthy areas of New York, the police charged it, trampling several women under their horses' hooves and arresting others. Three years later, the women won the right to organise trade unions in the garment workers.

Fifty-one years later, on March 8th 1908, history repeated itself. The women garment workers in New York once again rose up to protest against their working

conditions. A fire in a garment factory had killed 146 workers and it was this that brought the women onto the streets again.

Thousands of women textile workers also joined the strikes and demonstrations. Two new demands were added to those of 1857 — an end to child labour and the right to vote.

On March 8th 1910, at the congress of the Second International in Copenhagen, Clara

Zetkin, one of the leaders of the German Socialist Party, proposed that March 8th, every year, be proclaimed International Women's Day to commemorate the struggle of the women garment workers.

In 1917, in Russia, women textile workers at Petrograd chose March 8th to declare a strike to protest against working conditions, hunger and the long queues to buy bread.

Other workers demonstrated in solidarity with the women, and the women's protest grew into the general strike which precipitated the October Revolution.

The rise of the women's movement internationally gave the celebration of International Women's Day a new dimension and now the day is an annual opportunity for women to declare their solidarity in women's struggle against oppression in all its forms.

CELEBRATING A CONTINUING STRUGGLE

THE EVENTS organised around International Women's Day celebrations this year were unavoidably tinged with sadness as women in Ireland, particularly in the occupied Six Counties, recalled the killing last year of three IRA Volunteers in Gibraltar.

The death of Mairead Farrell and her two comrades, Dan McCann and Sean Savage shocked international opinion in a way not witnessed since the 1981 hunger-strike. Britain's war against the Irish people was once again exposed in all its stark brutality. The death of Mairead Farrell hit particularly hard as it happened as women from all over the world picketed outside Maghaberry, the prison she had left only 18 months before.

Here in Ireland, as the television networks displayed Mairead's smiling face, framed by long dark hair, the gut reaction of Irish people was one of anger.

Today, Irishwomen North and South continue to pay the price of Britain's interference in Ireland. Whether as IRA Volunteers; political activists or simply participating in a peaceful protest, they run the daily risk of being gunned down by British forces firing lead or plastic bullets. They are crucified by massive financial cuts imposed by both governments in health, education and the social services. They are demoralised by escalating emigration and chronic unemployment.

IMPOSED BURDEN

Only last week Charles Haughey told over a third of people living below the poverty line in the 26 Counties that they weren't as badly off as they claimed. And, as always, in any national liberation struggle or any neo-colonial situation, it is the women who bear the brunt of state-imposed or male-imposed oppression and it is they who are to the fore-

front in challenging that oppression.

This year over 80 women from England, Scotland and Wales came to Belfast and Derry to show their solidarity with Irish women and the struggle for Irish freedom. They were officially delegated from trade unions such as NALGO, NUS (National Union of Students) and the NUT (National Union of Teachers). There were also delegates from eleven Women and Ireland groups; Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, Women's Aid, Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, Winchester Three Campaign, the H-Block/Armagh Committee in Wellington, New Zealand, the Women's Peace Movement, the IBRG, the Labour Party and New Communist Party.

Over a two-day period, Friday, March 3rd, to Saturday, March 4th, the women participated in a wide range of workshops which were organised jointly by Sinn Fein Women's Committee and the Women and Ireland Network. The undemocratic origin of the Six-County statelet and the gerrymandering of electoral boundaries was discussed while the more obvious forms of repression, the use of plastic bullets, house raids, and the suppression of Irish culture and the Irish language were outlined in detail by nationalist women at other workshops on Friday. Delegates also visited community groups such as the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group, Springhill Community House, the Falls Women's Centre, Twinbrook Naiscoil and several Sinn Fein centres.

Saturday's workshops dealt



with extradition, Lifers/SOSP's, the repatriation of Irish prisoners from English prisons, censorship, sexuality, social conditions North and South, women's health and political discrimination in education.

Several members of the delegation visited republican POWs in Long Kesh and Maghaberry Prison, where they heard first hand of prison conditions.

MAGHABERRY PICKET

But undoubtedly the most important display of political solidarity and sisterhood centered on the annual picket at Maghaberry Prison where 15 women republican prisoners are detained in what the British boast is "the most secure prison in Europe".

To say that Maghaberry is "secure" is an understatement. Its high grey concrete walls are topped with coils of barbed wire; the miles of floodlights

and countless steel grey gates patrolled by even grimmer faced prison warders make Maghaberry look like a modern-day fortress.

Smartly turned out young musicians of the Billy Reid Band led over 200 people through the car-park towards the front gates of the prison. The main banner carried by a line of women read: 'Women and Repression 20 years on'. Immediately behind it, women held cards bearing the names of the republican women POWs.

Chairing the proceedings, ex-POW Brieghe Brownlee read out a statement from the republican women POWs who sent solidarity greetings "to all our sisters throughout the world celebrating International Women's Day. We thank them for their support for ourselves and our comrades. We also send solidarity greetings to women imprisoned throughout the



● Mairead Farrell pictured during the dirty protest in Armagh Jail

world as a consequence of fighting oppression and fighting for their beliefs."

Turning to the death of their friend and comrade Mairead Farrell, the POWs continued: "at the very time you were standing here last year the events unfolding in Gibraltar resulted in the death of a woman who had spent ten-and-a-half years in this prison and Armagh. Mairead was no stranger to oppression, having experienced it first hand, both in prison and outside it. She was a woman who believed wholeheartedly in equality and was adamant that the struggle for national liberation could not be divorced from the struggle for women's rights. She courageously fought for both until her death.

"Let us, as we think today of women throughout the world who struggle, remember Mairead and all those brave women who have given their lives fighting against injustice."

ROLE OF WOMEN

The first speaker was Sinn Fein Councillor Lily Fitzsimmons. She traced the role of women like Ann Devlin and Rose Hope in the United Irishmen in 1798, Anne Parnell who formed the Ladies Land League, (which proved to be a much more militant force than the Land League); Countess

Markievicz of the Irish Citizen's Army and founder of Fianna Eireann, poets and writers like Alice Milligan and Anna Johnson who founded the *United Irishman* newspaper which had a deep effect on the cultural identity of the Irish people and many others whose names and achievements have been written out of the history books.

Today, she said:

"Women have made many sacrifices and dedicated their whole adult lives to the republican cause, most of them working away quietly as Volunteers of Oglagh na hEireann or campaigning on behalf of prisoners and their families or providing shelter and support to the Volunteers. Without the support and dedication of women like this the struggle for self-determination would be extremely difficult."

SOLIDARITY MESSAGES

Solidarity messages were received from the Chile Solidarity Campaign, Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Women's Network, the Anti-Apartheid Movement Women's Committee, Tamil Women's Group, Troops Out Movement, trade unions, Irish support groups, women's groups, councillors and many more.

Representing the delegates,

Shahidah Janjua was given a warm reception. The women in Maghaberry, she said, "represented the successes of the Irish struggle. You would not be incarcerated for years on end if the British state did not fear you. You are a formidable threat to that state which has failed to break your will and your resolve even in the face of strip-searching and virtual solitary confinement and murder. It is proof enough in itself that you will not be defeated."

It is not enough, she continued, to come to the North and not have learned from the struggle and what it is saying to British people. "It would be even worse to say that we were doing things on your behalf, like some new breed of missionary. Our sentiment of solidarity can only be tested in the arena of our struggles. You will know our solidarity is real when the British state perceives us also as a threat to its existence."

Nervous in front of so many people, recently-released POW Jackie Burke from Derry briefly thanked everyone for their solidarity and support over the years. On her behalf, Janet Muller explained that Jackie had given birth to a baby boy during her imprisonment, an event which proved very traumatic because of the callous attitude of the prison regime.

"She went through the largest part of her labour" explained Janet, "locked alone in her cell without medical supervision. She was told she would have to wait for a 'suitable' RUC escort — and as you all know you could wait a long time for a 'suitable' RUC escort! After several hours she was eventually brought to hospital where her son Patrick was born just 35 minutes later." Jackie was released from Maghaberry on February 15th after serving 18-months of a three-year-sentence.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The final and main speaker of the day was civil rights campaigner Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey, who was given a loud welcome by the crowd. Almost immediately she had everyone laughing at the fact that at the beginning of the civil rights period the female activists referred to themselves as 'girls' and were called 'girls' until they were nearly 30, by which time they started objecting! Her anecdote, she said showed that "When we started in the civil rights movement we really didn't know, very effectively, where we were going, because many, in fact all of us, felt it wouldn't last very long and very innocently we believed that we would get civil rights and some degree of justice

and then we'd go back where we came from and get on with our lives.

"The uneven development of the struggle is very clearly seen in the demands we made: 'one man, one vote', and we did so up until we got it and there was not, as many feminist sisters would now tell you, not a voice in Ireland — not even Nell McCafferty's — raised in objection to the slogan 'one man one vote'."

The prime movers in the formation of the civil rights movement before it became a marching phenomenon, she continued, were women.

"There was four years of solid work done in the main part by women and it was forgotten by us and everybody else as soon as we started marching. The women organised around the issue of housing. They were Brigid Bond, a Derry woman, and a group of ordinary women in Derry who did not see themselves as feminists, did not see themselves as fighting any great battles but fighting a very practical day to day battle. They needed houses for their children and their grandchildren. These women leaders of the early civil rights period were not people like Bernadette Devlin but people whose names were not known then and are not known now. People like Patricia McCluskey and Annie Mary Gildernew and Brigid Bond and Mary Kenny and Nancy Kenny who were ordinary women who fought their battles of evictions, taking over council property and organising protests. Indeed to this day, almost all the work of Patricia McCluskey is credited to her husband, Dr McCluskey."

As soon as the civil rights movement elected a leadership, however, only a few token women were elected onto the committee. But as Bernadette pointed out, 20 years ago we women hadn't time to fight our own repression as women. I was oppressed because of my class and because of my community, I didn't need another layer of oppression — no thanks. But after internment was introduced we grew politically as women because oppression made us. The bulk of people interned were men and the



● International Women's Day picket at Maghaberry Jail on March 8th

bulk of work done on the outside was done by women."

When the men were released from prison she said they found it difficult to deal with "such an obstreperous bunch of women. It made life difficult because the development of the struggle was uneven but we struggled on together and it developed like that over the years".

WELCOME CHANGE

She welcomed the changing attitudes of Irish feminists towards the struggle, some of whom were at the picket, saying:

"For a long time they wouldn't stand at the gates of the prison because the imprisonment of our women was not a 'feminist issue'. Why? Because somehow or another war was male and our women were only in prison because somehow they had blindly, emot-

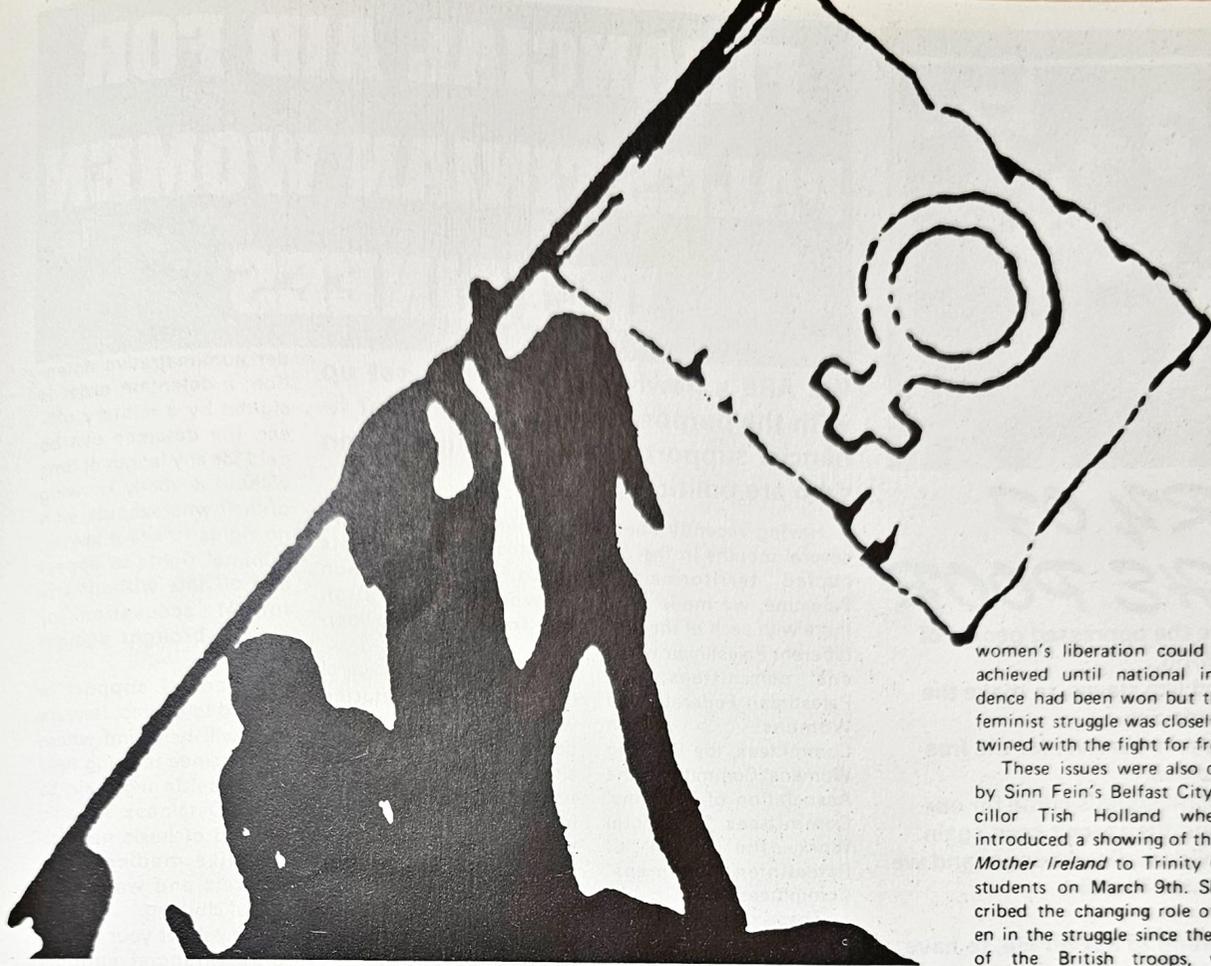
ionally followed their men. We stomached that argument sisters and we weathered it and we argued it out and those of us who were feminists and republicans stuck to that position."

She continued:

"There is nothing uplifting about either being a prisoner or doing the broad political work or taking up the military struggle — none of these women do it for kicks, or excitement or to be personally uplifted. It's because we live in a society where human beings cannot survive unless, whatever way we can, we battle to make a better life. And by God we have paid for it and we have come to the prisons and continue to bury our dead. We have built up over 20 years such tears and such sorrow, such suffering that if anybody had told us that's what lay

down the road for us I honestly think in our innocence and naivety we'd have gone home... but the single biggest testament that we have to that struggle, when we look at young women like Mairead Farrell, is that she had everything individually that would have allowed her to walk away from this struggle and walk away from her country.

"She was a bright, intelligent, articulate, beautiful young woman and she could have walked away — and she didn't. That never was easy and that is not something that we do because we don't have the sense to do anything better. We do it and she did it because in her heart she couldn't walk away: in her mind she couldn't walk away from something she was part of, from an injustice that made this country what it is."



TCD Women's Day events

A WEEK OF EVENTS commemorating International Women's Day in Trinity College, Dublin, closed on March 11th with a conference which marked the radical advances made by the Irish women's movement in recent years and its broadening perspective. The injustices done to working class and unemployed women are now seen as central and partition is regarded as a key issue for feminists.

Over 200 women attended the conference which included workshops on women in the travelling community, women and social welfare and partition. Three videos were also shown: *Mother Ireland*, *Witness to Apartheid* and *Song of the Spear*.

The double burden suffered by women travellers who have to cope with racial prejudice and acute health problems in addition to sexual discrimination has created an injustice of criminal proportions. The infant mortality rate

among children in their community is three times that of the settled children. Only 5% of travellers survive past the age of 50. They face harassment and prejudice in shops and community welfare offices and are now demanding that their community is included in the forthcoming incitement to racial hatred legislation under consideration in Leinster House.

The proportion of the population dependent on social welfare has doubled since 1966 and women, as always, have had to

bear an unfair brunt, providing for families on a government pittance. It is now six and a half years since the Commission on Social Welfare was set up and its recommendations, which are now three years old have still not been implemented. Snooping by 'fraud' officials who harass single mothers is particularly demeaning.

Mairead Keane of Sinn Fein's Women's Department led off a discussion on partition which "sets the political face of both states, the North, based on sectarian privilege and the 26 Counties which is deeply conservative in social terms with very strong influence exerted by the Catholic Church."

FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

The discussion which followed explored how the failure to address imperialism the underlying cause of poverty and oppression in Ireland, had weakened the women's movement. There was agreement that

women's liberation could not be achieved until national independence had been won but that the feminist struggle was closely intertwined with the fight for freedom.

These issues were also covered by Sinn Fein's Belfast City Councillor Tish Holland when she introduced a showing of the video *Mother Ireland* to Trinity College students on March 9th. She described the changing role of women in the struggle since the arrival of the British troops, women "who progressed from making tea to a more open role". At first women's activities were restricted to warning the community when the British army entered an area, by banging bid-lids on the ground, but after internment in 1971 they were involved in every level of the struggle.

"By 1975 women started demanding a say in what was happening," she continued. With the formation of Relatives' Action Committees to defend the POWs in 1976 women came to the fore, speaking publicly, organising white line pickets and other forms of resistance.

BREAKING THATCHER

After the election of the Thatcher government in 1979, women stepped up their pressure. "One common saying among these sisters was 'Let women deal with women - We'll break Thatcher's back!'"

Today Tish Holland's presence on Belfast City Council shows that women are leading their communities. "Although we see the national question as a priority issue, this does not deter us from fighting against sexism."



FINANCIAL AID FOR PALESTINIAN WOMEN DETAINEES

CRY OF THE POOR

We are the oppressed people of this world.

Treated like slaves, to make the landlords rich.

We fight to survive, for the freedom to live.

The death squads come for our men and they aren't seen again. Our children die of hunger and we are treated like dirt.

Is it wrong to ask for life, to have clothes on our backs.

And food in our stomachs. The soldiers are the law here
And we don't have a say.

We fight to survive. To live, as is our right.

We fight that our children may hold their heads high.

Not grovel in the dirt of the earth in the heat of the day.

We die to keep the civilised world in coffee and cotton.

We bleed for you, but you do not listen to our cry.

We cry to you to help us, to be free from our chains.

We are the poor of the world. Hear our cry!

Or, will you turn your heads and blot out the sound

Of our cry! Will you idly stand by and let us die?

Listen to our cries, echoed through this world.

Stand up for us, for we are not allowed!

— From *Poems For Freedom*.

WE ARE a newly formed group set up with the purpose of campaigning for financial support for Palestinian women who are political prisoners.

Having recently spent several months in the occupied territories of Palestine, we made links there with each of the four different Palestinian womens' committees: The Palestinian Federation of Womens' Action Committees, the Working Womens' Committees, the Association of Womens' Committees for Social Work, the Union of Palestinian Womens' Committees.

These committees are formed around the oppression Palestinians face in the West Bank and Gaza and urgently need international support and solidarity work on many different levels, wide campaigning work, solidarity actions in the form of demonstrations, marches, pickets, and on a material and financial level. All the work of the Palestinian Womens' Committees is therefore in the context of national struggle for independence. Thus, the wom-

ens' organisations are grassroots movements which links the question of womens' liberation with socio-economic liberation.

The uprising in several localities actually started with womens' demonstrations. Demonstrations and sit-ins were organised in front of the US Consulate in East Jerusalem, protesting against the US support of the occupation.

In the popular committees, women have actively participated in popular teaching and in health.

The solidarity campaign with Palestinian women political prisoners is one which desperately needs your support as currently, thousands of Palestinians are detained in the most horrific prison conditions, subjected to a mass array of physical and mental torture inflicted by the Israeli authorities with no legal rights whatsoever. Many Palestinians are held un-

der administrative detention; a detention order is signed by a military officer, the detainee can be held for any length of time without anybody knowing of their whereabouts, with no rights to see a lawyer, minimal rights to appeal and all this without any formal accusation or charge brought against them.

Financial support is needed to contact lawyers who will help find where the detainee is being held and provide legal aid to them. Detainees are also in need of basic necessities, like medical care, blankets and warm articles of clothing.

We ask for your help to raise financial support which will be sent to the Palestinian Womens' Committees and the Womens' Organisation for Political Prisoners.

To enlist your support and to make a donation, please immediately contact us at:

**The Pankhurst Centre,
60-62 Nelson Street,
Manchester M13 9WP
or
54 Pulford Road,
London N15 6SP.**

Sisters in Struggle

SINN FEIN WOMENS' DEPT.

available from

44 Parnell Square, Dublin 1

