

# Women In Struggle

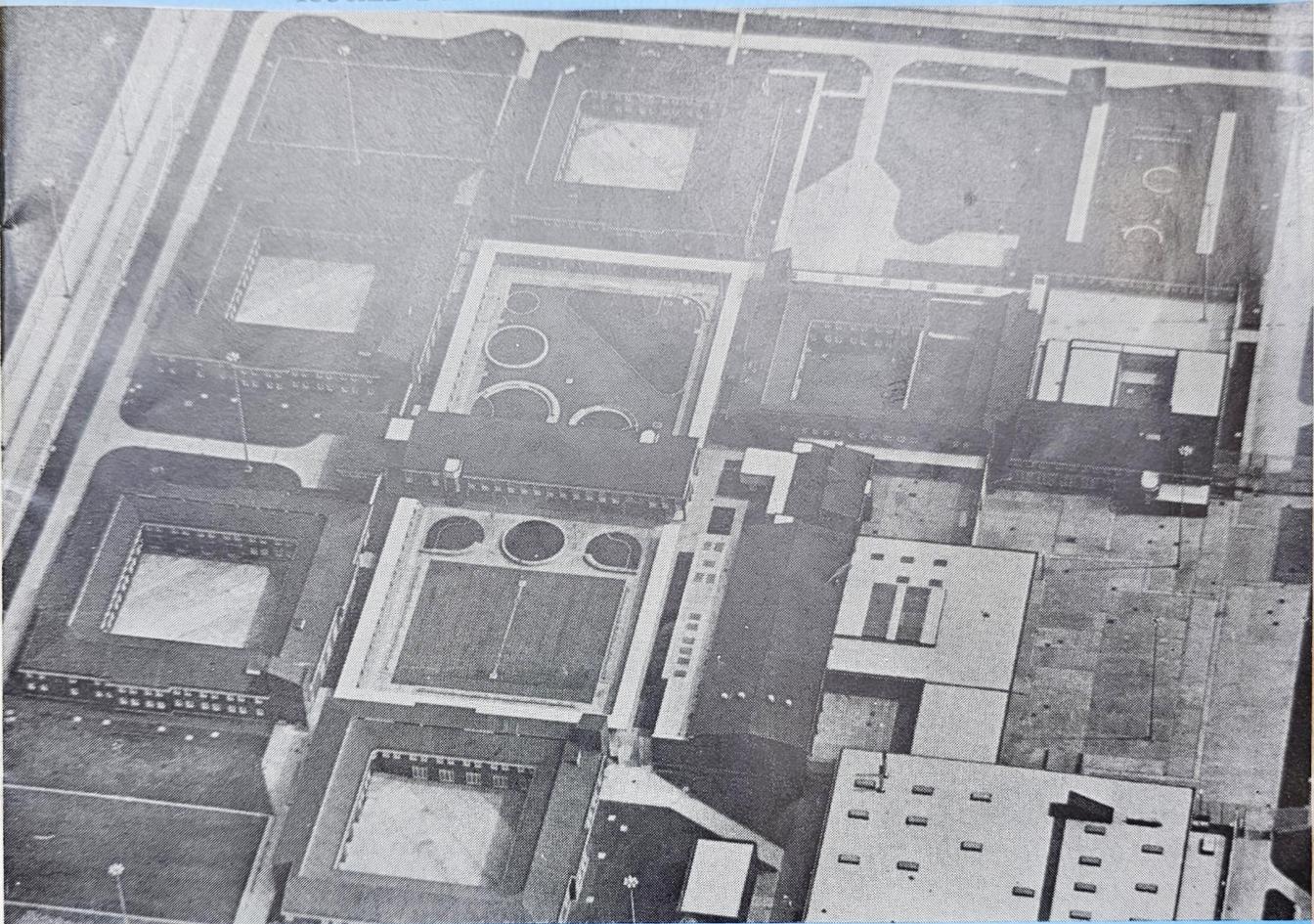
MNÁ I STREACHAILT



Volume 2

£1/\$5

ISSUED BY SINN FÉIN WOMEN'S DEPARTMENT



*"While this disgusting and perverted assault has left our bodies feeling battered and abused, our minds and resolve to continue to oppose strip-searches remains steadfast."*

Republican Women Prisoners, Maghaberry 1992

**Inside: International Womens Day 1992**

# AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF SINN FÉIN WOMEN'S DEPARTMENT

IN 1980 a new department of Sinn Féin was formed. The women's department came out of a realisation that women had to have an organised political voice within Sinn Féin. Women came together from all over the 32 Counties to discuss their work within Sinn Féin, the problems they faced in fulfilling their roles as political activists and the need for Sinn Féin to have strong progressive policies on issues important not just to women but to society as a whole.

Sinn Féin Women's Department was instrumental in putting forward the first women's policy document which was unanimously passed at the 1980 Ard Fheis. Since then, the department has continued to develop its work both internally within the party and externally throughout our communities and wider society. The department involves itself in several different areas of work.

One of the department's main objectives is to act as an organising focus for women in Sinn Féin so that they can be actively involved in formulating policy that reflects the needs of all women. It is also involved in raising the awareness of the contribution made by women in our struggle for Irish freedom and to establish and maintain contact with both male and female Irish political prisoners. It is also actively involved in the various prison related campaigns such as strip-searching, highlighting the recent case where 21 women POWs were forcibly strip-searched by male and female prison warders.

The women's department is instrumental in producing publications, papers and statements in an effort to highlight the position of women both within the movement and in wider society. Through discussion and debate with other women's groups, we hope to contribute to a wider network which has consistently challenged the gender-based divisions that permeate societies worldwide. By openly challenging those divisions we hope to be part of the process which demands equal social, economic and political rights for all women.

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# EDITORIAL

International Women's Day is an opportunity for women to declare their solidarity in women's struggle against oppression in all its forms. This year women demonstrated in solidarity outside Maghberry Jail, almost ten years after the introduction of strip-searching, to highlight the brutal attack on republican women prisoners by agents of the British government. This issue of *Women in Struggle* includes statements from the women themselves about this latest sexual assault against Britain's political hostages.

In the words of the POWs themselves *"The latest attempt in the process is the attempt to dehumanise us by forcing their way into our cells stripping away our personal clothing, invading the most intimate and private parts of our bodies, and all the while inflicting physical and mental pain."*

Included in this edition also is an interview with a woman Volunteer in the Irish Republican Army. She stresses in this interview that *"The IRA are not the aggressors in this conflict — but rather that the IRA's military campaign is a direct response to the British involvement in our country."* She says *"I do not wish to live my life in a war zone... peace can only be achieved by British disengagement from our country."*

We include also a summary of Sinn Féin's Women's Policy Document which was passed at our ard fheis (annual party conference) this year. This document is another stage in the development of the struggle of republican women to assess and plan for a society that promises both national self-determination and a just, equal and better society for women.

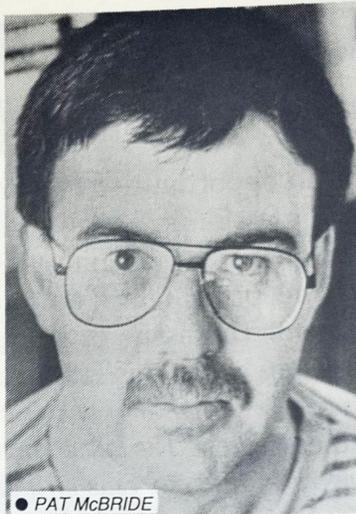
A summary of our peace proposals *Towards a Lasting Peace* are also included in this edition. The search for peace in Ireland is everyone's responsibility. It is the responsibility of women, and the women's movement to actively campaign for peace. The time has come to put partition on the agenda. Women cannot dodge this issue any more. It is indeed a pre-condition for any fundamental change in the status of women.



● Anti-stripsearching march in Philadelphia on 15th March



● PADDY LOUGHREN



● PAT McBRIDE



● MICHAEL O'DWYER

# A SAD DAY FOR REPUBLICANS

On Tuesday 4th February three people were shot dead by an RUC member at the Sinn Féin offices on the Falls Road, Belfast. Later that day the RUC member, Alan Moore was found dead in his car which was parked on the shores of Lough Neagh. Below Irene Sherry gives an assessment of that day's events and how the media presented them.

The tragic events at our Falls Road office on Tuesday 4th February, in which three people were killed and one seriously injured, seem to have been conveniently brushed aside by a British manipulated media who succeeded in turning a killer into a hero.

Posing as a journalist, Moore entered the offices and indiscriminately opened fire with a shotgun, killing Sinn Féin member Pat McBride, the voluntary doorman Paddy Loughran and a local man Michael O'Dwyer who had called into the office seeking advice.

When it was later established that

Moore was an RUC member, the RUC embarked on an exercise of damage limitation and excused away his actions by claiming that members of the force were under extreme pressure and stress in its "fight against terrorism".

The media, in typical response, immediately redirected the public's attention away from the dead and injured and instead focussed entirely and systematically, on the stressful lives led by the RUC and British forces.

People could be forgiven for believing that it was Pat McBride's own fault that he was killed — after all he was "a member of Sinn Féin". Or if Paddy Loughran had not worked as a doorman in our offices, "he would not be dead now".

If Michael O'Dwyer had not availed of Sinn Féin's constituency service his wife and children "would not have been left to mourn".

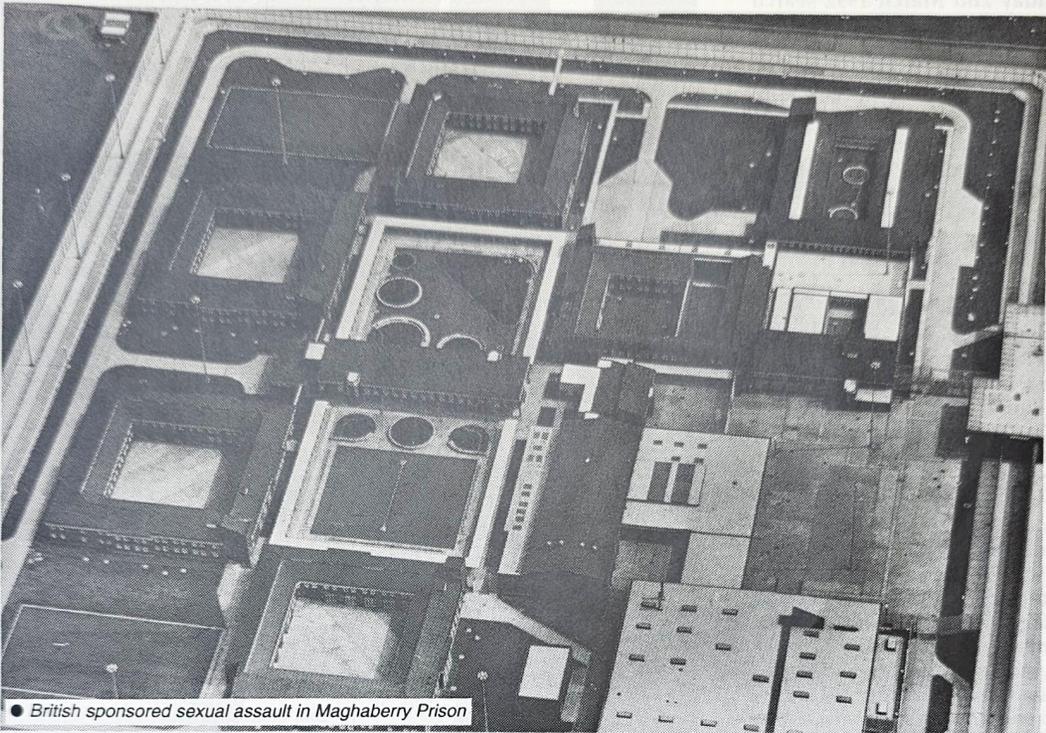
And what of their families? — It was as if they and their grief were invisible to the media who instead homed in on the shocked reaction of Moore's family.

Moore was invariably described in news reports as a "rogue cop" and as "being under stress". This reporting allowed public attention to be diverted away from the RUC's direct responsibility for these deaths. In this way the media reporting provided justification for Moore's actions.

The media is not alone in creating the climate whereby members of our party and supporters can be targeted, killed or injured. It is totally hypocritical for politicians, church leaders and others to divorce themselves from the responsibility which they all share for projecting Sinn Féin as a party which supports violence. We are not in the business of advocating violence and unlike them we desire a democratic political solution whereby violence from all sides will be made redundant. This can only be achieved when a real peace process begins.

Despite what the media reported, the events of that day will affect us all but especially their families. Every death in this conflict is tragic and the events at the Sinn Féin offices underline the urgent need to bring about a lasting peace in our country.

# WOMEN'S GREATEST FEAR



● British sponsored sexual assault in Maghaberry Prison

**Ask any woman what is her greatest fear and most will automatically answer rape/sexual assault. In any country and in any culture the answer will be the same, the fear of sexual attack is a universal one of women young and old.**

On 2nd March, 1992, 21 women were forcibly strip-searched in Maghaberry Prison. That is, each of them was held down by groups of screws while her clothes were removed. Women's bodies were exposed leaving them naked and feeling humiliated. Because this happened inside a prison does not mean that it was not a sexual assault. Neither does the fact there are laws to sanction this behaviour nor the fact that women perpetrated it, excuse this attack.

On 2nd March women who refused to obey an order to strip naked and have their bodies inspected by screws were set upon and forcibly stripped. In some instances women did comply with the order and the attackers use this fact to argue that women do not mind being strip-searched, suggesting that it is merely a minor incident in a woman's life. When it is most definitely not. This is a dangerous notion, submission is not the same as consent. A woman who submits does so, not because she wants to undress and be examined by strangers, but because she knows that to refuse means that she will be attacked by screws and stripped. She will then be charged with "disobeying an order", and will have privileges, association, remission, exercise facilities, education, visits and parole taken from her. Because some women cannot face the prospect of so much hostility and abuse, she may comply with the order, this does not mean that she volunteered to strip.

Strip-searching is violence in itself. Even when not carried out using actual physical force the threat of physical force is ever present. The psychological effects are many, women are

left fearing the next assault with nightmares about the last one.

The abused woman finds comfort and support among survivors of sexual abuse. Reassurance comes from those who are survivors and from those who challenge the attackers. Where do the attackers find support? How do they as women, who no doubt have felt vulnerable in a darkened street, who have known the fear of sexual attack perhaps even in their own homes, rationalise their actions? They are screws and can hide behind riot shields but in a quiet moment how do they justify the abuse in which they participated? Is it enough to refer to "standing orders" and feel absolved? Can passing the blame to those who gave the orders cleanse those who obeyed them?

How do our attackers feel when they hear Amnesty International denounce strip-searching as ill treatment designed to deliberately humiliate prisoners? No one should feel proud that they stood on defenceless women while they screamed in anguish and disgust as their clothes were trailed from them. No one should feel proud of their "jobs" when the civilised world raises their voices in horror.

One can only guess at the feelings of our attackers but their willingness to participate (and on more than one occasion) suggests that these people feel that it is perfectly acceptable behaviour to brutalise other women.

We as victims of the brutality find comfort in the knowledge that society does not find this behaviour acceptable no matter how "legal" it may be and that political, civil and religious groups the world over condemn the British government for its actions. Strip-searching has long been accepted for what it is, sexual abuse designed to control.

One thing that we do have in common with our assailants is that we are all women, we all fear attack, and we have all felt vulnerable, no matter where we expect the attack to come from.

— Women POWs Maghaberry

# Monday 2nd March 1992

On Monday 2nd March 1992 search teams entered the wings in Maghaberry's female prison resulting in the forcible strip-searching of 21 republican prisoners.

*"The carrying out of this practice has nothing whatsoever to do with security but merely an attempt to break the women's will as the women will not surrender their political beliefs at the behest of the NIO." — Irene Sherry (Sinn Féin Women's Department)*

Below one of the women prisoners gives an account of what happened:-

On Monday 2nd March 1992 I awoke as usual at 8am to the sound of screws coming on to the wing which signalled the morning unlock. There seemed to be a longer delay than usual and I glanced at my watch which showed 8.20am. I heard footsteps approaching and the sound of jangling keys, however the screw passed by the cell which I share with my sister Mary and stopped next door at Rosie's cell. I was sure I heard her telling Rosie that we would not be unlocked that morning due to a search being conducted throughout the jail. A few minutes later a shout from Rosie herself confirmed that this was indeed what had been said. Just as I had decided to settle down and catch up with some letter writing and Mary was sorting her books for study, another shout from Rosie told us that something was dreadfully wrong. She explained that one of the POs had spoken to her and informed her that as each cell was being searched individually, so too would the occupant(s) be subjected to a strip-search. We voiced our objections most strongly and said no way would we be complying with any such search as it had never happened or been necessary before and it certainly wasn't necessary now. However, our protests fell on deaf ears so we made a decision to resist wholeheartedly any attempts to carry out this disgusting and degrading practice. Never having been in the situation before or being faced with a forced strip-search I wasn't quite sure what to expect, though I knew from experience that the jail and its administration would stoop to any level to impose their will on us as the regime for women prisoners is particularly petty and vindictive. The memory of what followed over the next ten hours or so (which I can only describe as intense sexual, physical and mental torture) is indelibly printed on my mind.

The first assault took place at 10.20am. I listened with horror and increasing anger and frustration as riot clad screws thudded in to attack the woman occupying the cell and when it was over I was left in no doubt as to exactly what awaited myself and any other woman who 'dared' object to this invasion of her body. All day long the

onslaught continued and in between screaming and yelling words of comfort and support to my comrades I was powerless to assist. I watched male screws coming and going, on and off the wings, some of them jeering and making obscene gestures through the windows.

At 3.20pm Mary and I heard a commotion outside our cell door. We looked at each other, first with apprehension, then with determination as we realised it was now our turn!

In order to have a better chance to resist and defend ourselves we held on to the bars of our cell window with one hand and tightly clasped each other with our other hand while the cell door was blocked up. At least ten riot clad screws, some with batons drawn, charged into the cell and pounced on us, their obvious intention was to immobilise us separately up against the wall behind a shield. This proved impossible for them to do as each of us struggled wildly and somehow we ended up in the middle of the cell still holding on to each other and resisting with every ounce of strength we had in us. I can't say how we became separated but it was inevitable with such a large number of screws mauling at the both of us that it would happen eventually. They were kicking at my legs and had my arms behind my back in a painful lock as they dragged me towards the door that led out of the cell, behind me I could see that one of the screws had my sister by the

hair pushing and pulling at her head in an effort to get her onto the floor, another screw was beating at her head and neck with a baton, my screams for her to be left alone were drowned as yet another screw clamped my head with her hands to lend her weight in my removal from the cell. Once outside the door I was 'ordered' to lie down on the floor, even as I was refusing to do so. I was slammed face down on to the wing where I was held by at least four screws. The screw pressing my face into the floor yelled at me to bend my legs and for one heart stopping moment I imagined that I was to be stripped on the wing. I was panic-stricken and struggled even harder because at this stage I was unable to see behind me and for all I knew there could've been male screws present, I had certainly seen enough of them throughout the day, for this fear to be justified. After a few minutes of violent struggle the screws had succeeded in getting me in even more painful locks whereby they could carry me down the wing and into an empty cell. As I was being carried through the door I felt a deliberate kick land on me viciously. Once in the cell I was again slammed face down onto the floor and held there for ten minutes before the sexual assault on me began. During this time and in between my own screams I could hear the assault taking place on Mary in the cell I had just been taken from. After a seemingly endless wait the woman in the opposite cell shouted a



warning to me that two more screws were entering my cell, I braced myself for the final phase of the attack, resisting every step of the way. My shoes and socks were removed first, then my leggings, at this point a sheet folded into a ridiculously small shape was thrown across the lower half of my body, I still haven't worked out why this was done because as soon as my pants were removed it was lifted. Once I was naked from the waist down one screw sat on my legs as the others who had my arms 'locked' had to ease their grip lightly, just enough in fact to remove the clothes I was wearing on the top half of my body, this they only managed to do with difficulty and considerable pain to me. When I was totally naked they decided their filthy deed was finished and told me to get dressed as they left me lying on the floor — my reply to that is unprintable! At my insistence they dressed me, the four screws who had held me down re-entered the cell along with the two who had forcibly stripped me and stood looking everywhere but at me. The same two screws who had torn the clothes from my body seconds earlier now stood fumbling and avoiding my angry glare as they gathered my clothes which were strewn all over the floor and proceeded to put them on my battered body. As I was being dressed I spoke to each of my attackers in turn, called her by name, demanding explanations, not one of them could meet my eyes with their own. It was six hours later when I saw the doctor who detailed my injuries and prescribed painkillers and medicine to enable me to sleep. To add insult to injury I, who was the victim of such a violent and sexual assault, was 'charged' with refusing to obey an order (to strip naked) and 'erecting a barricade'. At the 'adjudication' I was refused legal representation. When I 'dared' to say to the governor the 'charges' hadn't been proven, his response to this was to have me ejected from the hearing! Found 'guilty' on both charges I was given various punishments, ie three days solitary confinement, 28 days loss of afternoon yard, 42 days loss of evening association and 21 days loss of remission.

Finally, I cannot finish this grim account without saying, that not one single thing was found during this carefully orchestrated and vicious attack. It is widely accepted that strip-searches forced or otherwise have no security value whatsoever, this has been proven on countless occasions. It is my belief that just as rape can only be described as an act of violence to gain power and control over women, so too can strip-searches only be described in this way.

I firmly believe that it was a further attempt by the jail and its administration to humiliate, degrade and control us women POWs by stripping us naked and violating our bodies in this way. While this disgusting and perverted assault has left my body feeling battered and abused, my mind and resolve to continue to oppose strip-searches remains steadfast.

Anger, Pain and Frustration!  
 Some of the things I feel  
 As I listen to my comrades  
 Being raped by cowards.  
 What are they going through? I don't know.  
 They haven't come for me yet  
 All I can do is cry, but try to shout through tears,  
 Tears of anger, to let my friends know they have my support  
 Now it's my turn.  
 Feelings! — Afraid, Angry, Alone  
 But I find the strength to fight  
 To let them know what I think of them,  
 They can't even look me in the face  
 As they rip my clothes off, they laugh and jeer,  
 My comrades are squealing for them to leave me alone  
 But they don't listen, they carry on  
 They've finished with me now — but it's not over  
 I listen to the women who are going through it after me  
 That's the hardest part, listening to my friends  
 Squealing and fighting for them  
 To stop their disgusting deeds.  
 Those cowards have given us something today — Strength!!  
 My comrades and I stick together, and we have  
 The Strength, Power and Determination  
 To fight  
 Every step of the way.

— Women POWs Maghaberry

**Marie Wright,  
 Louise Nash, Shauneen Baker,  
 Ailish Carroll, Patricia Deane,  
 Bernie Reilly, Karen Quinn,  
 Pat Moore, Bronwyn Mc Gahan,  
 Geraldine Ferrity, Theresa  
 Browne, Carol Cullen, Ann  
 Cavanagh, Rosaleen Mc Corley,  
 Mary McArdle, Paula Burns,  
 Maureen Delaney, Donna  
 McMenemy, Annmarie Mc Kee,  
 Teresa Malocco,  
 Frances Symington,  
 Maryellen Campbell.**

# STOP STRIP SEARCHES

The following is a letter from the relatives of women prisoners in Maghaberry Prison

Almost ten years after its introduction into Armagh Jail and continuation in Maghaberry Prison, strip-searching continues to be used by the NIO and prison administration as a weapon to try and degrade, humiliate and ultimately break our daughters, wives and sisters in Maghaberry Prison.

After the physical assault and forced strip-searching of Pauline Quinn after a compassionate visit in April 1991, the prison administration made it clear that anyone who refused to oblige with a strip-search would have their clothes forcibly removed by prison officers.

## INCIDENT ON 2nd MARCH

This threat to the women was carried out on the 2nd March when the administration through the wing PO informed the women that each of them was to be strip-searched in their own cells during a wing raid. Up until that date, all strip-searches had been carried out in the reception area of the prison. The women refused this "order" to strip and were left locked in their cells. A half hour later the prison riot squad, consisting of male and female officers and dressed in overalls and visors arrived on the wing. Between four and eight officers systematically entered each woman's cell and proceeded to forcibly remove the women's clothes.

This was achieved by four officers holding the woman down while others tore her clothes from her body, leaving the woman naked on the floor. In one incident, male officers were used to drag one woman from her cell and during this one male officer ran his hands over her legs.

During these physical and sexual assaults all the women received injuries ranging from cuts and bruises to a severe facial injury which required hospital treatment. The emotional effect that this will have on the women has still to be assessed but the following quote may go part of the way towards it:

*"To intrude and violate the very private part of a person is, I think, one of the most damaging and violating things that you can do and is therefore a very powerful way of breaking down a personality."*

— Professor Ivor Browne

We as concerned relatives and friends of the women pris-

oners would like to totally deny the NIO allegations that this was an attempt by the prisoners "to provoke the entire incident so that it could be used as a propaganda exercise at the expense of inmates, their families and staff".

We also reject the NIO allegation of an "organised, violent reaction to it (strip-searching) by a particular group of inmates".

All the women resisted this degradation of their bodies and we are proud they did so. We do not wish to see our relatives injured in any shape or form but we respect and support our relatives' right to defend themselves against this cynical attempt by the NIO and prison administration to humiliate and dehumanise them.

To add insult to injury, our daughters, wives and sisters have been charged with breaches of prison rules and as a result have been awarded the loss of various "privileges" ranging from:

- 42 days loss of association
- 28 days loss of afternoon yards
- 21 days loss of remission and
- 3 days solitary confinement

In the words of one prisoner:

"For refusing to comply with the 'order' to strip totally naked so that screws could inspect our bodies we face a variety of charges from 'erecting barricades' to 'assault'. It is almost laughable that women who endured ten hours of physical, sexual and mental torture are charged with assaulting gangs of riotous screws who, dressed in protective clothing, wearing helmets and armed with shields and batons held us down on our cell floors, stood on our naked bodies, jumped on our arms and legs then twisted our limbs into painful positions while pressing our faces to the floor".

We as a group of concerned relatives and friends urge everyone who reads this leaflet to contact their local community and church leaders to voice their disgust at this attack on women prisoners.

We also ask you to write to:  
**The Prison Regimes Branch,  
Northern Ireland Office,  
Dondonald House,  
Stormont,  
County Antrim.**

# Sinn Féin's Ard Fheis '92

At the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis on the 22nd and 23rd of February 1992, two major documents were launched which outline Sinn Féin's policy and strategy in the area of peace in Ireland and Women in Ireland.

*Women in Ireland* (Sinn Féin Women's Policy Document):

The *Women in Ireland* document is not only a comprehensive outline of our policy on women, but also defines our demand for an Ireland which recognises the full and equal role of women, in all aspects of its society.

Below is a brief summary of some of the main points of the women's document. We would encourage all activists to obtain copies of the document, to extend the debate on women's participation in the fight for national liberation.

## INTRODUCTION

The rediscovery of women's history has shown that there is a tradition of women activists from at least the end of the 19th Century who have combined republicanism with feminism in a coherent political philosophy. These women combined the fight for independence and national self-determination and the fight for the vote, women's rights to education, to work and protection from physical and sexual abuse. The Sinn Féin Women's Department is part of this heritage.

Since the inception of the "new women's movement" in Ireland, many of the obvious legal and institutional barriers to women participating fully and equally in society have been removed. These gains have been won by the action of women themselves who first defined their problems, proposed a solution then set about campaigning for change. Membership of the EC provided an added impetus for change but it did not bring those changes about.

The gains they won made a real difference to the lives of many women. There is a danger that these advances and gains may now be eroded in the changing social and political climate of the 1990s. Republicans and feminists must show that their political philosophy is relevant to social and political change. Women now face the task of protecting the gains that have been made and extending their demands into other areas.

This document is another stage in the

development of the struggle of republican women to assess and plan for a society that promises both national self-determination and a just, equal and healthy society for women. It contains assessments of developments to date while offering significant policy proposals to further the cause of Irish women in the coming years.

## WOMEN AND PARTITION

Women's lives are profoundly influenced by partition and the continuing military occupation by Britain of part of this country. While it is naive to lay all social ills at the door of partition and colonialism it is willful blindness to claim that they have not had an impact on present day Irish society.

Partition created two reactionary and fundamentalist states, one Catholic and the other Protestant. The effects of this on the position of women in the 26 Counties where the ethos of a conservative Catholic church has dominated social legislation, has been documented. Less attention has been paid to the conservative fundamental Protestantism of the Six Counties. Here women's groups have to continually fight to have progressive legislation dealing with such things as sex discrimination in employment, rape and domestic violence extended to cover the Six-County statelet.

Sinn Féin's demand for a 32-County

socialist republic is also the demand for a pluralist state in which the rights of women to full equality are constitutionally guaranteed.

## WOMEN, POVERTY AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Gender and social class are the two most important determinants of a person's life chances. In terms of income and material security men generally do better than women of the same social class. More women than men are living in poverty. Men experience poverty because of unemployment or incapacity, women generally experience poverty because of their dependant status and/or role as single parents.

Many women can find themselves living in poverty in households where the "family income" is above the official poverty line, where there is an uneven distribution of income within the family. No research so far has been carried out in Ireland on how income is divided within families. There are no figures available for women living in poverty while engaged in home duties.

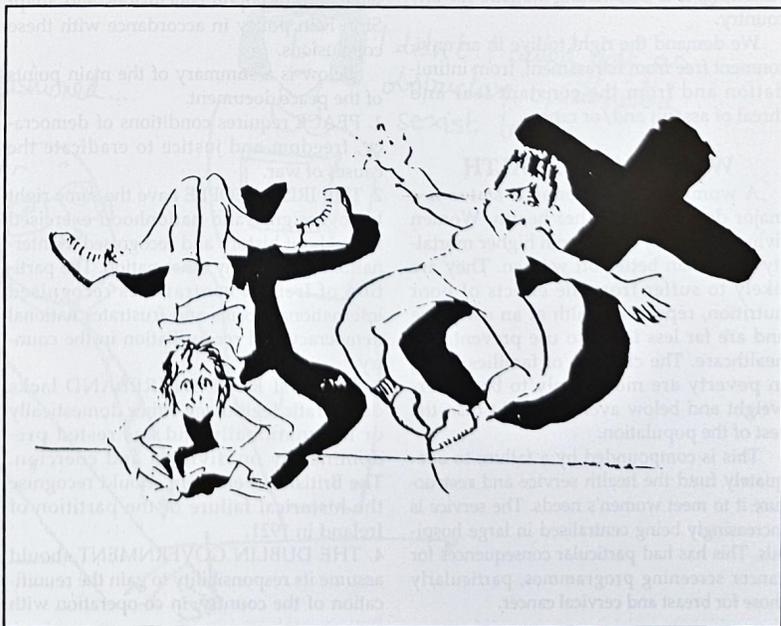
Changes in the social welfare code and an increase in the level of benefits could have a substantial and positive effect on the welfare of many women.

## RIGHT TO INFORMATION

The ban on abortion information has not stopped women seeking abortions, it has merely delayed them. It also means that many arrive in England without receiving counselling on the alternatives to abortion.

The number of women terminating pregnancies in England who gave Irish addresses averages out at just under 4,000 a year. Doctors have estimated that 40% of Irish women traveling to England for abortion give English addresses.

Sinn Féin is opposed to the attitudes and





● 1992's Ard Fheis provided an opportunity for Sinn Féin to strengthen its policy on women's issues

forces in society that compel women to have abortions, and which criminalise those who do. We accept the need for abortion only where a woman's life is at risk or in grave danger (e.g. all forms of cancer) and in cases of rape or child sexual abuse.

We believe that non-directive pregnancy counselling embodying all choices should be freely available.

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The attitudes of Irish society which give rise to violence against women cannot continue to go unchallenged. The relevance of violence against women in Irish society, whether it be rape, pornography, domestic violence or legalised state rape: strip-searching, is a frightening statistic for any country.

We demand the right to live in an environment free from harassment, from intimidation and from the constant fear and threat of assault and/or rape.

### WOMEN AND HEALTH

A woman's socio-economic status is a major determinate of her health. Women living in poverty suffer from higher mortality rates than better off women. They are likely to suffer from the effects of poor nutrition, report ill health at an early age and are far less likely to use preventative healthcare. The children of families living in poverty are more likely to be underweight and below average height than the rest of the population.

This is compounded by a failure to adequately fund the health service and restructure it to meet women's needs. The service is increasingly being centralised in large hospitals. This has had particular consequences for cancer screening programmes, particularly those for breast and cervical cancer.

Other areas which are covered in the document are, Women and Family Law, Women and Employment, Women and Education and Fertility Control.

## TOWARDS A LASTING PEACE IN IRELAND

*Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland* was presented to the 1992 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis by the Ard Chomhairle as a discussion document. Its main purpose is to inform the debate within the party and the wider public debate about how best to develop a strategy for peace in Ireland.

It aims also to formalise discussion within Sinn Féin on this issue so that at the end of a period of open and democratic debate we can agree upon conclusions and adapt Sinn Féin policy in accordance with these conclusions.

Below is a summary of the main points of the peace document.

1. PEACE requires conditions of democracy, freedom and justice to eradicate the causes of war.
2. THE IRISH PEOPLE have the same right to sovereignty and nationhood exercised throughout history and recognised in international law as any other nation. The partition of Ireland contravenes recognised international norms and frustrates national democracy and reconciliation in the country.
3. BRITISH RULE IN IRELAND lacks democratic legitimacy either domestically or internationally and has rested predominantly on division and coercion. The British government should recognise the historical failure of the partition of Ireland in 1921.
4. THE DUBLIN GOVERNMENT should assume its responsibility to gain the reunification of the country, in co-operation with

the British government or, if necessary, independently.

5. THE UNIONIST MINORITY in Ireland has nothing to fear from a united Ireland. Withdrawal of the unionist veto will open the possibility of a constructive dialogue with the rest of the Irish people.

6. IRISH REPUBLICANS are determined to play a constructive role in building a national democracy in Ireland.

7. IRELAND is a part of Europe which is undergoing an historic process of political and economic transformation. This will be incomplete while the Anglo-Irish conflict continues. The partition of Ireland and the British claim to jurisdiction over the Six Counties is a European issue. Sinn Féin seeks a democratic and sovereign Ireland which will defend the interests of all sections of the Irish nation.

8. THE UNITED NATIONS has the authority and mandate to monitor a decolonisation process in Ireland. As an interim measure Sinn Féin would propose that the UN Secretary-General request annual reports from the British government on its role in Ireland and conducts a yearly review of the consequences of the continued partition of Ireland.

#### ● *Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland*

Available from:  
Sinn Féin Bookshop,  
44 Parnell Square,  
Dublin 1.  
Price: £1

#### ● *Women in Ireland*

Sinn Féin Women's Policy Document  
Available from:  
Sinn Féin Bookshop,  
44 Parnell Square,  
Dublin 1.  
Price: £1

# Westminster Election

Sinn Féin in the recent general election lost some of the ground gained in previous elections. Most notably we lost West Belfast because of the tactical voting alliance between the SDLP and the loyalists. The symbolic importance of losing the West Belfast seat has obscured the reality that the republicans vote had held up very substantially in the face of an often murderous and unremitting attack. Sinn Féin received 70,000 votes in this election, 10% of the poll. We represent 30% of the nationalist people in the Six Counties.

Six County Director of Publicity, Richard McAuley, confirmed that Sinn Féin, the fourth largest political party in the Six Counties, remained committed to the electoral process and will continue to contest seats in any future assembly, council or Westminster elections.

## HOLLOW VICTORY FOR THE SDLP

Strategic voting by unionists in the West Belfast constituency during the Westminster general elections secured a hollow victory for the SDLP over Sinn Féin and provided the SDLP with its fourth parliamentary seat.

The SDLP strategy had been to mobilise non-voters to vote for it and to win votes from Sinn Féin. In this, it scored no successes. The increase in the turnout in nationalist areas despite a reduced register principally benefited Sinn Féin, the SDLP vote from nationalists significantly dropped.

This shortfall, however, was more than compensated for by a wholly unpredicted vote for the SDLP from the unionist Shankill Road area. With a turnout of 65% there, an estimated 8,500 loyalists voted. The Ulster Unionist candidate, Fred Cobain, polled only 4,766 votes. Consequently around 3,500 loy-

alist votes went to the SDLP thus allowing it to scrape home in front of Sinn Féin's candidate Gerry Adams by a mere 589 votes.

The SDLP's Joe Hendron claimed that its vote from the Shankill was an expression of "cross community support" but the reality is that his support lay in the most violent and extreme elements of loyalism.

During the campaign it was an open secret that the UDA, the main loyalist paramilitary organisation, was actively lobbying voters to vote SDLP. This factor alone has politically alienated large sections of nationalists from the SDLP who would not necessarily have voted for Sinn Féin, and it will undoubtedly prove counter-productive for the party in future elections.

Following the election results, and particularly in the aftermath of the West Belfast result with the loss of the 'Prestigious' Westminster seat, the media and British government spokespersons set about writing Sinn Féin's political epitaph, ignoring of course these central facts:

- In West Belfast the Sinn Féin vote held firm while the SDLP's vote from nationalists decreased.

- That Sinn Féin, not the SDLP, continues to represent the majority nationalist opinion in the constituency.

- That within Greater Belfast, Sinn Féin's total vote has increased once more.

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams, commenting at the end of the election campaign said:

"I want to thank all of our election workers throughout the Six Counties who braved harassment and the threat of death from loyalist murder gangs, and who fought a tremendous campaign.

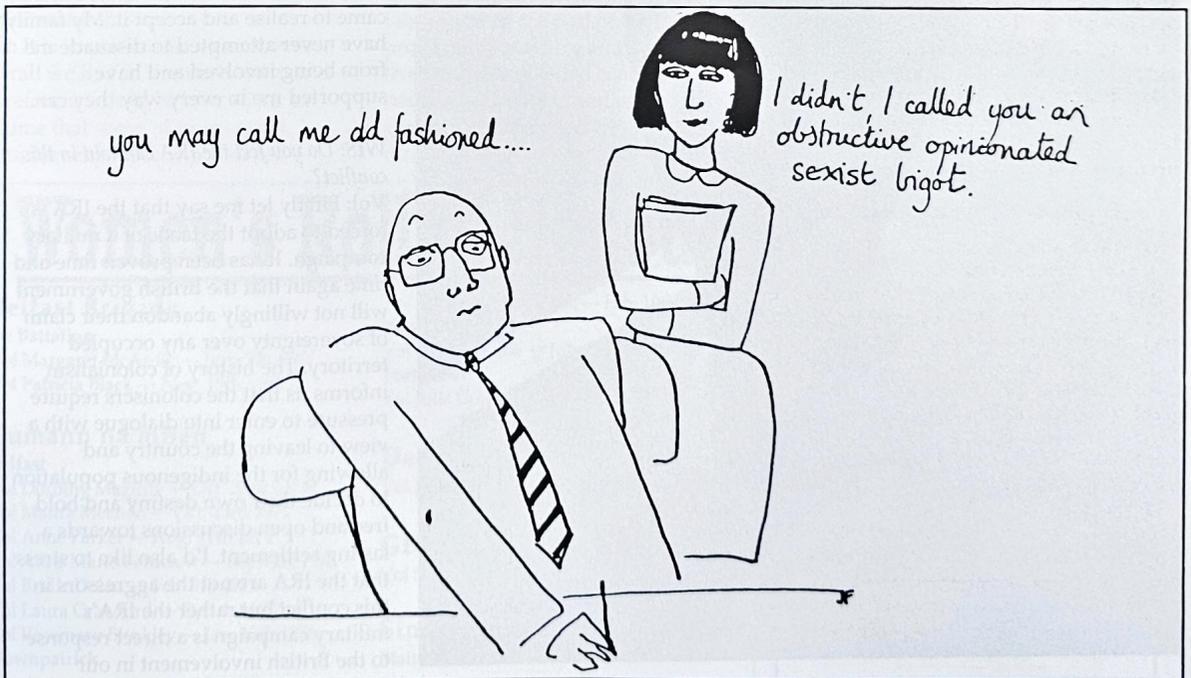
"I would also commend the many tens of thousands who voted for our party.

"In each of the 14 constituencies in which we stood a significant section of the electorate saw through the years of censorship and the empty promises of our opponents and had the courage to vote Sinn Féin.

"That our vote remained solid and in several instances increased is a tribute to our election workers and those who voted for us.

"For the last ten years there has been a sophisticated and at times brutal campaign to marginalise the Sinn Féin vote. Our vote is a clear demonstration of the failure of that strategy.

"For our part Sinn Féin will continue to develop and promote our electoral strategy and our proposals for peace which formed an integral part of this election campaign."



# Interview with a



*Women in Struggle: How did you first become involved in the IRA?*

**Volunteer:** I wouldn't say that I just took a decision one day to join the IRA. I was born into the conflict here and throughout my formative years I witnessed at first hand the way the nationalist community were treated like second class citizens. My decision to join the IRA was a conscious decision which I made due to the level of political awareness I had attained. The Hunger-Strikes had a profound effect on my political development and while I wasn't old enough to realise the whole political implications, I was aware that the Hunger-Strikers were fighting for more than improved prison conditions. The British government by attempting to criminalise Irish political prisoners sought to marginalise the republican community and demonise their leaders.

*WIS: Were your family and friends aware of your membership?*

**Vol:** My decision was not taken lightly. I had to bear in mind the affect it would have on my family if I ended up in prison or dead. At first I attempted to conceal it from my family rather than let them suffer the worry, but they came to realise and accept it. My family have never attempted to dissuade me from being involved and have supported me in every way they can.

*WIS: Do you feel the IRA can win in this conflict?*

**Vol:** Firstly let me say that the IRA is forced to adopt the tactic of a military campaign. It has been proven time and time again that the British government will not willingly abandon their claim of sovereignty over any occupied territory. The history of colonialism informs us that the colonisers require pressure to enter into dialogue with a view to leaving the country and allowing for the indigenous population to decide their own destiny and hold free and open discussions towards a lasting settlement. I'd also like to stress that the IRA are not the aggressors in this conflict but rather the IRA's military campaign is a direct response to the British involvement in our

# Woman Volunteer

country. I do not wish to live my life in a war zone and the majority of the nationalist community — and indeed the people of this island — have a burning desire for peace. That peace can only be achieved by British disengagement from our country. I do believe the IRA has the capacity, the resources, the commitment, the determination and the public support to force the British government to a settlement to bring about a lasting peace for everyone.

*WIS: Recently Sinn Féin adopted a document entitled Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland, do you think/believe that the proposals in this document can realistically bring about a lasting peace?*

**Vol:** It has to be borne in mind by people that Sinn Féin is the only party that has produced an objective analysis of the situation in this country and the only party that has called for unconditional peace talks. Every other party has set down conditions before agreeing to talk. Republican attempts to bring about peace must be taken seriously.

*WIS: Do you believe that women volunteers are given equal status to their male comrades?*

**Vol:** It is important to remember that overall we live in a sexist society and therefore it would be unrealistic to assume that some of those sexist attitudes which permeate such a

society would not overspill to a movement such as ours. However, I do not believe that the fight for women's equality can be divorced from the struggle for Irish freedom. I personally do not find my feminist consciousness and my involvement in the IRA to be in conflict with each other but rather the two complementing each other. To go back to the question of equal status I have never been in a situation whereby my gender has dictated my status within the movement. I'm not suggesting that that has not happened on occasions to different individuals but I believe the IRA are one of the most progressive volunteer armies where the issue of women's equality is concerned.

*WIS: Some of your opponents would claim that the recent bombing campaign only serves to inflict further suffering in economic terms on the Irish people. How do you view this?*

**Vol:** IRA operations are not designed to put people out of work and while loss of jobs is unfortunate under any circumstances, it is not our intention to create further unemployment. To lay the blame for unemployment on specific IRA operations is a total fabrication on the part of the British propaganda machine and a diversion from decades of failed economic policies in the Six Counties. For generations, an organised campaign of discrimination against nationalists in

the workplace has resulted in continuous mass unemployment. Partition is responsible for the economic, social, cultural and political inequalities which cause the divisions in our society. Therefore the ending of partition is a vital prerequisite to achieving a just and lasting peace for all the people in Ireland.

*WIS: Do you think you will see Irish freedom in your lifetime?*

**Vol:** Yes, I firmly believe that Irish freedom will be achieved in my lifetime. That belief is not based on any idealistic notion but more on the willingness of the people of Ireland to achieve equality and to live in a peaceful and just society. The British government, through their failed initiatives in Ireland such as Sunningdale, the Hillsborough Treaty and most recently the Brooke Talks, have proven that they have nothing new to offer the people of this island. It is only when the British have the moral courage to announce their intention to disengage from our country that a real peace process can begin.

## Women's Roll of Honour

### Belfast Brigade

1st Battalion

Vol Margaret McArdle — June 7th 1987

Vol Patricia Black — Nov. 15th 1991

### Cumann na mBan

Belfast

Vol Dorothy Maguire — Oct. 23rd 1971

Vol Maura Meehan — Oct. 23rd 1971

Vol Anne Parker — Aug. 11th 1972

Vol Anne Marie Petticrew — Sept. 1st 1973

Vol Bridie Dolan — Feb. 9th 1975

Vol Laura Crawford — Dec. 1st 1975

Vol Rosemary Bleakley — Jan. 13th 1976

Downpatrick

Vol Vivien Fitzsimmons — Feb. 10th 1973

Newcastle

Vol Pauline Kane — July 21st 1973

Portadown

Vol Julie Dougan — July 8th 1972

### Derry Brigade

Vol Ethel Lynch — Dec. 7th 1974

### GHQ Staff

Vol Mairéad Farrell — March 6th 1988

### Sinn Féin

Maire Drumm — Oct. 28th 1976

## Women of the IRA

We've heard many a song, and story too,  
of men who died with hearts so true,  
on Easter week. But there's more to say,  
about the others who sacrificed on that day.

For among the battlefield there were strewn,  
their friends and comrades among the ruins.  
They also fought and died that day,  
They're the Women of the IRA.

# Women's Movement, Feminism and Sinn Féin

Ireland in the 1990s is an island of struggle and strife. It's people have been subjected to foreign domination and political interference for centuries. There has always been resistance and women have always been involved. In Ireland for over 100 years the issue of women's rights has been bound up with the national movement, both at the level of individual involvement and through the women's movement seeking a positive response from nationalists on the major issues of the day.

In the second half of this century, specifically since the mid-'60s, nationalist, republican and feminist struggles have been on the establishments agenda. Both the London and Dublin governments have been forced to take account of republican resistance to occupation in the Six Counties. While south of the border, Leinster House politicians have been continuously pressurised by the women's movement challenging church and state domination. A lot of consciousness raising has taken place and because of this many women have come to realise the nature of both states and the impact partition has made on the lives of women.

When the issue of civil rights came up for nationalists in the Six Counties, women in the 26 Counties organised in our own interests. For some it was clear that the South lagged behind other states around the world not because Irish people were inherently backward as a people, rather

women realised it was and still is because we are a dependent and underdeveloped economy with artificial politics and religious majorities in both states holding sway. As feminists we began to define ourselves as "anti-imperialist" and "pro-republican" and began to look for ways to link the demands from nationalists and the women's movement for democratic rights. Basic solidarity between anti-imperialist women both sides of the border developed. Women joined political parties as they became more politically active. Sinn Féin during the '70s was a much more conservative party than today and this deterred many active feminists from joining.

It was the experience of the H-Block and Armagh Hunger-Strike and the mass campaign that developed which had a profound impact on anti-imperialists in the women's movement. The '80s has been the decade during which the most significant policy development among republicans

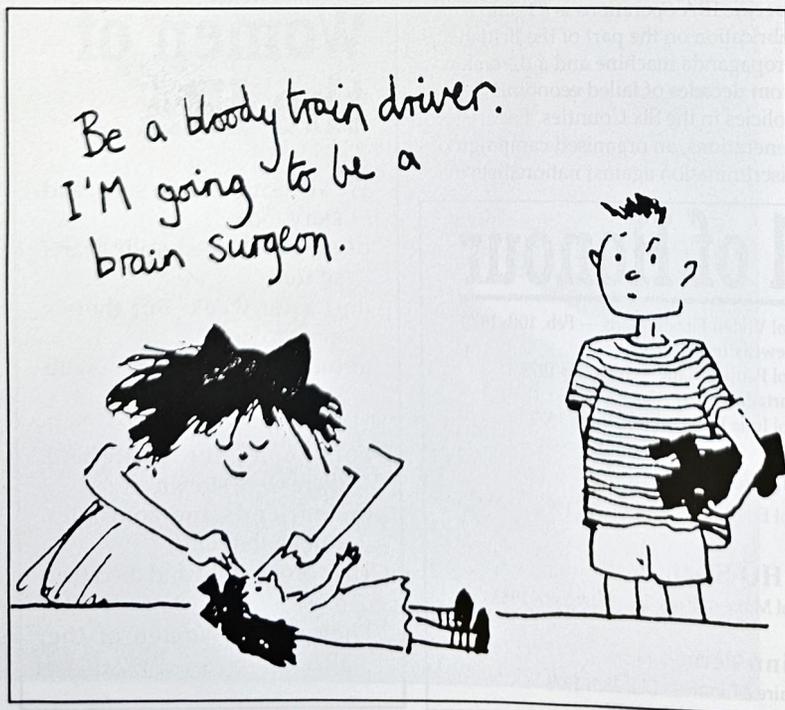
took place. This fact encouraged a layer of anti-imperialist feminists to join Sinn Féin. Internally the party began to become more "women friendly" with a policy of active encouragement of women to take up important positions and reserved seats on decision making committees, which allowed women to take part in all aspects of the party.

The '80s was also turning into a decade of setbacks for women. The two referenda (defeating a demand for divorce and giving the foetus equal rights to women) severely demoralised activists and indeed it was noticeable that the current generation of activists emigrated in despair. Every party experienced a down turn in recruitment. The radical women's movement turned in on itself and campaigning for change was left to the more conventional and middle class feminist lobby. Many activists asked themselves why they should, as women, join any party. However, the only political party standing up to the British and Irish establishments was Sinn Féin.

Since the start of the decade conditions for Irish women have worsened in many ways. The economic conditions of women are disastrous. The personal lives of women in the Six Counties are confronted with the consequences of military occupation, political repression and the reality of poverty in a state which has failed to provide equal employment opportunities for nationalists.

Many of us have come to realise the real meaning of the demand for self-determination both in a personal and political sense. The current debacle over the 1983 amendment of the 1937 constitution has strengthened the resolve of feminists to fight against all laws or political decisions which deny or erode that right. We also know that self-determination for all Irish people is a pre-requisite to securing a just solution to the national question and to exerting any lasting influence over the economic development, post 1992, on this island.

No other party bar Sinn Féin has asserted so consistently and clearly this core principle and basic need for self-determination. For this very reason, feminists have and will continue to align ourselves with Sinn Féin, to join or work alongside the party. There will be shortcomings within the party, but then there are no shortcut solutions for feminists to the obvious need to transform the thinking and political practice of those most prepared, in any country or state, to struggle for freedom.



# IMPRISONMENT

Presently there are 700 republicans imprisoned in Ireland, England and Europe. Men and women, young people and old people. Do not think that because there are less women imprisoned than men that women have not been fighting for Irish freedom nor that women have not been in the front line of prison struggle.

Mairéad Farrell (along with Mary Doyle and Margaret Nugent) took part in the first hunger strike of 1980 and the women who are held in Maghaberry today are the victims of brutal strip-searches carried out by the prison authorities.

As well as the burden of imprisonment itself there are other issues that affect republican prisoners. These are;

- 1) The campaign to transfer prisoners in English jails.
- 2) The campaign to obtain release dates for lifers.
- 3) The campaign against extradition of Irish political prisoners in Ireland and Europe.
- 4) The campaign to end forced integration in Crumlin Road Jail.
- 5) The campaign to end strip-searching in Maghaberry prison.

As well as these there are other campaigns around republican prisoners. Ones like brutality in Castlereagh, the Diplock Courts, the Casement accused, Voice of the Innocent, poor medical conditions in Portlaoise and the isolation and mental torture of Pamela Kane (the only woman republican prisoner in the 26 Counties) in Limerick Prison.

It is important that republicans outside of prison do not forget that the British are trying to repress our comrades in prison. It is also important that republicans understand that our enemies are always revising attitudes towards republican prisoners and we must be ready to oppose this in whatever form it takes.

During the past number of years the intentions of the British and 26-County governments have been to win the "hearts and



● Mairead Farrell, like the women in Maghaberry today, was a victim of brutal strip-searches carried out by the prison authorities

minds" of the nationalist people as opposed to attempting to break the will and the strength of republican prisoners.

However, when the prison authorities in Maghaberry forcibly strip-searched the women prisoners on 2nd of March this year, they were not carrying out a "routine search" — they were trying to break the women's will.

The women were stronger than their attackers because of their strength of togetherness and because of their spirit of freedom.

For these reasons it is important that republicans do not lose sight of the fundamental issues of imprisonment.

If we do not stand together with the prisoners the British government will try to break them again and again. So we must not forget that there are 700 living examples that there is something seriously corrupt about the workings of this state.

During 1992, every republican should be attempting to raise imprisonment itself and the issues that are part of it onto the political agenda.

## Faoi Ghlas

Faoi láthair tá beagnach 700 cimití poblachtánacha i bpríosúin in Éirinn, Sasana agus san Eoraip. Ta fir ann agus mná ann, daoine óga agus seandaoine. Ná bí ag smaointeamh de tháirbhe go bhfuil níos lú mná i bpríosún ná fir nach bhfuil a lán mná ag troid ar son saoirse na hÉireann nó sna líne chatha le linn agóid phríosúin.

Ghlac Máiread Farrell (chomh maith le Mary Doyle agus Mairéad Nugent) páirt sa chéad stailc ocras i 1980 agus na mná a choinneal i Príosún Maghaberry inniu — is iadsan iobairtigh de lom cuardach ag láimhe uadaraís an phríosúin.

Gan trácht ar ualach an phríosúin féin, tá ualaigh eile a bhaineann le cimití poblachtánacha. Is siúd;

- An feachtas chun cimití a aistriú ó phríosúin i Sasana
- An feachtas le dátaí scaoilte a fháil faoi choinne Saoladoirí
- An feachtas in aghaidh eiseachadh chimí polaitiúla Éireannacha san Eoraip agus in Éirinn
- An feachtas le deireadh a chur le comhthathú faoi bhrú i bPríosún Bóthar Chroimghlinne
- An feachtas le stop a chur le ionsaithe ar bhanchimí le linn lomchuardacha faoi bhrú.

Chomh maith leo seo, tá feachtais eile a bhaineann le cimití poblachtánacha ar nós brúidíúlacht, Cúirt Diplock, Casement

Accused agus Voice of the Innocent, drocháiseanna leighis i bPórt Laoise agus drocháiseanna oideachasúla do Pamela Kane i bPríosún Luimní.

Tá sé tábhachtach nach ndéanann poblachtánaigh taoibh amuigh de phríosúin dearmad go bhfuil na Sasanaigh ag déanamh iarracht ar gcomrádaíthe sna príosúin a chuir faoi chois. Tá sé tábhachtach ag dtuigeann poblachtánaigh go mbíonn ar naimhde i gcónaí ag athmheas bealaí s'acusan i leith cimití poblachtánacha agus go caithimid bheith réidh chun cur i aghaidh an phróséas leanúnach cimití a choiriú cibé cruth atá air.

Le blianta beaga anuas tá rún ag rialtas na Breataine agus rialtas na 26 Chontae 'meon agus croí' an phobal náisiúnach a bhaint in ionad iarracht toil agus neart na gcimití poblachtánacha a bhriseadh.

Afach, nuair a chur na h-údaraís i bPríosún Maghaberry lom chuadacha ar bhanchimí De Luain 2ú Márta an bhliain seo, ní raibh siad ag déanamh 'gnáthchuardach' — bhí said ag iarraidh na mná a bhriseadh!

Bhí na mná níos láidre ná na coimheadóirí mar gheall ar an neart atá ag na mná, mar gheall ar spiorad na saoirse atá acusan.

Ar na bharr seo, tá sé tábhachtach nach gcaillimid radharc ar na ceistanna bunúsacha a bhaineann le braigheanas.

Mura a seasaimid le chéile leis na cimití, déanfaidh rialtas na Breataine iarracht ar gcimití a bhriseadh arís 's arís. Dá bhrí sin ní chomhair dúinn dearmad a dhéanamh go bhfuil 700 samplaí ann a chruthaíonn go bhfuil rud éigin truaillithe go bunúsach faoi bhunú agus faoi oibriú an stáit seo. Ba chóir do gach poblachtánach, le linn 1992, bheith ag iarraidh dlúth an mbraigheanas féin agus na feachtas atá i bpáirt leis a chur ar an chlár polaitiúil.

# Repeal the Eighth Amendment

In 1983 an amendment was passed to the 26-County Irish Constitution which stated "The state acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its law to respect and, as far as is practical, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right."

While many of those who had opposed it, felt betrayed, no one imagined the real consequences it would have for Irish women. Since then this amendment has been used to censor books, magazines and counselling services; dragged students and women's clinics through the courts; forced the opinions of one church on all the Irish people; allowed no exceptions for women pregnant as a result of rape or incest; allowed no exceptions for women whose health was threatened by the continuation of a pregnancy.

The eighth amendment has been used to deny women access to non-directive pregnancy counselling and abortion information. As a result, women have been unable to make an informed decision, when faced with unplanned pregnancies, based on information and knowledge on all options. Difficulties in getting advice and information have resulted in women deciding to have an abortion under pressure, often at later stages of the pregnancy, travelling in secrecy under severe time constraints, too frightened to avail of

after care services. This undermines the basis and intent of the whole counselling process.

However, as much as women have been violated since 1983, we could never have imagined that this amendment would be used to injunct a 14-year-old rape survivor, to prevent her from travelling to Britain for an abortion. During the pro-life amendment campaign Irish people were guaranteed that the effect of that amendment was not to target or to criminalise individual women. Yet, one young girl was indeed criminalised and left to bear the burden of Irish laws. While the injunction was eventually lifted, following an appeal to the 26-County Supreme Court, the wording of the Supreme court judgment was so specific that the possibility of future injunctions still exists.

While Sinn Féin welcomes the decision of the court to allow this young girl to travel to Britain for an abortion, we recognise that this young girl did not travel in isolation. The sad reality is that thousands of Irish women are forced to travel in ignorance with information on that option prohibited. We believe that this ongoing situation must end. The 1983 amendment still exists and is still open to interpretation. The judgment taken by the Supreme Court was not taken in isolation. Thousands of women marching on the streets and the public outrage that this case caused, undoubtedly was a factor in the judgment. As long as the eighth amendment



● Sinn Féin supports the campaign for a pro-women constitution

exists situations like this one could happen again to another woman. Irish women should not be forced into a position of fear when they are faced with an unwanted pregnancy.

One outcome of the recent controversy in the 26 Counties is that the case of the 14-year-old girl has re-opened the whole debate on the pro-life amendment and how it has been used against women in Ireland. Following the outrage at the treatment of this young girl, a national conference of concerned individuals was held in Dublin, and from that the Repeal the Eight Amendment Campaign was founded. Since then this group has organised in different areas throughout the 26 Counties and is at the forefront of the arguments for immediate constitutional change. In line with an emergency motion passed at the last Ard Fheis, Sinn Féin has affiliated to the Repeal the Eight Amendment Campaign and republican activists who wish to campaign on this issue should get involved with local groups in their areas.

The upcoming Maastricht referendum will be the first step in the overall debate on the eighth amendment. As the Maastricht Treaty currently contains a protocol agreement between Ireland and other European countries, which basically copperfastens the eighth amendment, passing it will ensure that Irish women will have no recourse to Europe when their basic rights to travel and information are curtailed. The protocol agreement has to go. Neither a declaration from Europe, or the proposed wording for a future referendum on abortion information and travel is sufficient to allay Irish women's fears about the consequences of the protocol. The 26-County government is asking Irish women to trust them on this issue, how can we trust them if they have done nothing but be consistent about their attacks on women in this country.

Sinn Féin calls on the 26-County government to process the repeal of the eighth amendment to the 1937 Constitution. We believe that it was the voice of Irish women that caused the dramatic turn around in the Dublin courts. Sinn Féin would encourage all women to continue to pressurise the Dublin government for pro-women changes and a pro-women constitution. Never again can we allow women to be made second class citizens, criminalised and threatened when they face unplanned or crisis pregnancies.

MY BOYFRIEND JUST RAN OFF WITH MY BEST FRIEND... GOD, I'M GOING TO MISS HER!



# WOMEN



*The development in Ireland of what is known as the women's movement has synchronised with the appearance of women upon the industrial field and that the acuteness and fierceness of the women's war has kept even pace with the spread amongst educated women of a knowledge of the sordid and cruel nature of the lot of their suffering sisters of the wage earning class. — James Connolly*

*We cannot allow the same situation to evolve as in the past where women played a comparatively strong role in the Rising and Civil War but afterwards disappeared into oblivion, gaining little or nothing in the rights of women. We have only ourselves to blame if such recurs. It is our country, and as women nationalists active in the struggle we must not halt at the halfway mark but follow it through until we have asserted all our aims. — PRO, protesting POWs, Armagh Jail, International Women's Day, 1982*

*I've received military training and fought in battles. Men are my comrades, but deep down they don't believe I'm really their equal. — Abir who joined Al Fatah in 1978*

*All the militants agree that women should be liberated, but if one asks a militant why his wife is at home, his wife is his wife after all. Women have begun to struggle against this mentality, but how long will it take to change it? Without this struggle Palestinian women could end up in the same condition as Algerians: Algerian women are still kept in their homes just like my mother, like my grandmother. — Algerian woman active in the Palestinian resistance since 1967*

*For the revolution to triumph in its totality there must be emancipation of women. Women will never be emancipated without a victorious working-class-led revolution. — Samora Machel*

*'The ideal husband can support the ideal family' is the way the bourgeoisie look at it. But how do workers look upon a 'conscious' member of their class who shuts the eyes of his wife or girl friend to the social struggle? For the sake of individual happiness, for the sake of the family, the morality of the working class will demand that women take part in the life that is unfolding beyond the doorsteps. The 'captivity' of women in the home, the way family interests are placed before all else, the widespread exercise of absolute property rights by the husband over the wife — all these things are being broken down by the basic principle of comradeship. This principle of comradeship is basic to the ideology of the working class. It colours and determines the whole developing proletarian morality, a morality which helps to re-educate the personality of man, allowing him to be capable of positive feeling, capable of freedom instead of being bound by a sense of property, capable of comradeship rather than inequality and submission. — Alexandra Kollantai*

# Dani Visits Belfast...

## 1992 International Women's Day delegation to Belfast

### Some personal impressions...

I joined the delegation this year, having intended to go for the last three years and never quite making it. As the date approached, I grew more and more apprehensive as the temperature of the armed struggle seemed to be increasing. Knowing I would soon be there made the news stories about killings in Belfast more real — which shows how unreal the war in Ireland has become for most people living in England, even those of us who consider ourselves to be politically aware.

Reassured by the two pre-delegation meetings, we set off in the afternoon of 5th March and ended up, after a long and wearisome journey, at Paul's flat in West Belfast. Unfortunately, Paul was out, so we piled back into the taxi and went to look for him at the local pub! When we had eventually settled in, we were very well looked after there, with generous curries, warm beds and plenty of interesting information and discussion. Indeed, the whole delegation was very hospitably treated by the Sinn Féin Women's Department, who organised the weekend, and the various groups we met during our visit.

The three days we spent in Belfast were so packed that when I got back I felt as though I'd been away at least a week. The best I can do here is to pick out some of the issues we all felt were the most striking.

### Living in a War Zone...

Although everyone around us was quite used to it, I could never get over the shock of seeing army patrols on the streets. Walking past the road-blocks, and seeing the young soldiers pointing guns at passing cars and pedestrians, I could not begin to imagine what they thought they were doing there.

I had read articles about house raids and the use of plastic bullets; the house we stayed in had iron bars on the inside of the front door; we saw how obviously present the army is, and how impossible it must be for the loyalist murder gangs to get into nationalist areas without the knowledge of the army and the RUC; we heard about the effect of being under constant surveillance from cameras and patrols.

### Women Resist...

In the face of all this repression, I was constantly impressed by the strength and courage of the women (and men) we met. At a workshop, I took part in discussions about women's health, and heard about the devastating cuts hitting Belfast hospitals. Services to women being hit especially hard are ones regarding access to information about contraception, abortion and sex in general, thus life is becoming increasingly difficult for young Irish women.

We heard about a new group The Campaign for Information and Choice which has been set up to support the plan to open a Brook Information Clinic in Belfast. There is strong opposition, however, from all the churches and most of the political parties. Women in NUPE are resisting the health cuts and organising their own discussion groups about women's health issues.

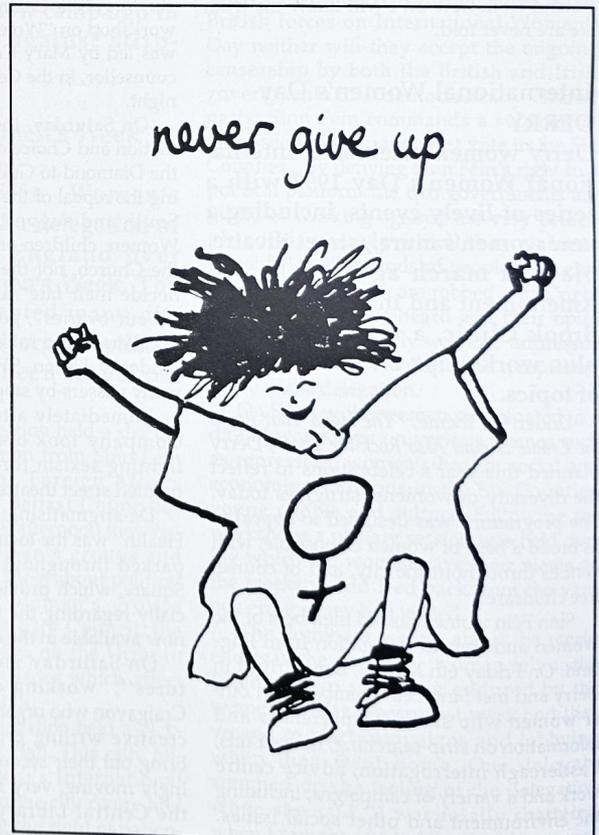
### Stop strip-searching...

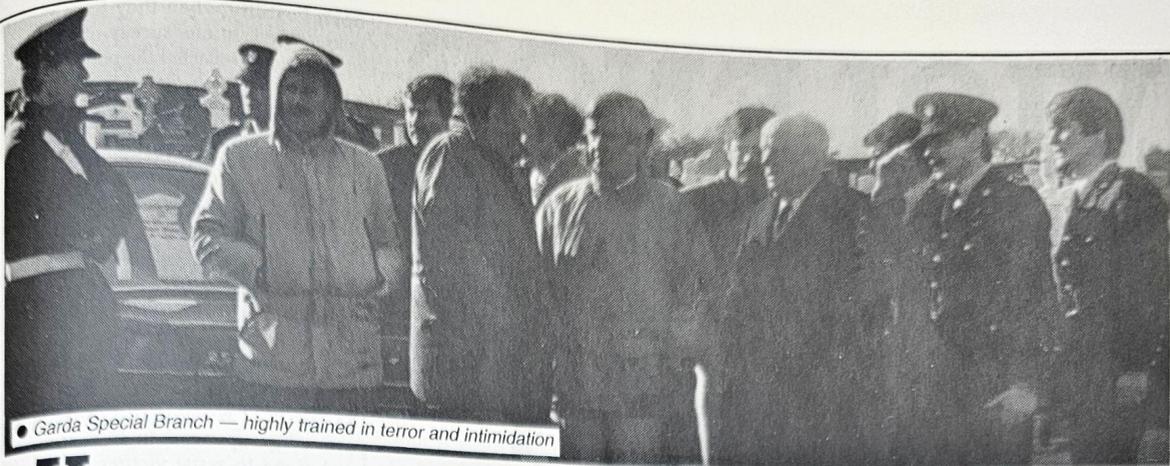
One of the shocking things we heard about during the delegation's trip was the forced strip-searching of 21 republican women prisoners. The Sinn Féin women we met were quite convinced that this kind of violation is a method of political intimidation and repression, designed to break the spirit of women prisoners, and sanctioned by the British government through the Northern Ireland Office.

All the women were strip-searched on the first day of International Women's week, by the order of the governor of the jail, Brian Gibson.

The strength and resilience of the women prisoners is incredible. We met many people who had been in prison themselves or who had loved ones in prison. Women are separated from their children for years, even for trivial offences such as shoplifting.

Women prisoners of war in Maghaberry and other prisons enjoy none of the rights and political status won by their male comrades during the hunger-strike campaign. Only women suffer strip-searching on a regular basis. We all returned to Brighton determined to raise awareness here about the conditions for women in prison in the North of Ireland and the atrocity of strip searching.





● Garda Special Branch — highly trained in terror and intimidation

# Harassment in a Police State

In the South of Ireland repression is insidiously effective in its harassment of republicanism.

This harassment is consciously and cynically used by the gardai for information gathering and frightening people out of the politics that threatens their system's status quo. One woman held recently for 24 hours on suspicion of being a member of the IRA, was told while in custody and under heavy interrogation by the Garda Special Branch that they did not believe that she was a member of the IRA at all and that they were holding her only to get her to leave Sinn Féin of which she was a member. Sinn Féin is a registered, legal and openly recognised political party. These tactics expose as false the notion that the 26-County state is an open democracy.

One Dublin woman was in Sinn Féin for a very short time when she was arrested:

"One evening after attending a local Sinn Féin meeting, I was standing at a bus stop when a car pulled up beside me. Instinct told me that it was the special branch. My heart pounded. They asked me my name and address and where I was going to. I told them that I was going home.

"They arrested me and took me to the station....I was pretty scared. The stories which I'd heard from other people about their arrests now plagued my mind.

"I made a phone call which I was hesitant to do in case that person was harassed also. They then locked me in a cell.

"Shortly afterward they took me to an interview room. The arresting officer came in and started to question me. He wanted to know who was at the meeting. I said that I was not going to answer any questions until I had seen my solicitor. The Garda told me that the meeting which I had attended was an IRA meeting.

"He and three other special branch men were questioning me. They were shouting and staring at me. I was sure that they were going to hit me. They wanted

me to make a statement, I refused.

"I was taken back to the cell after one and a half hours. I needed to go to the toilet - there was one in the cell but it was filthy and disgusting - when I asked to be taken to a clean toilet they refused.

"At about 9am the next morning I was taken to another interview room. This was much smaller than the first one. A solicitor came in and told me that everything was OK, I didn't believe him. Later a friend visited me, this left me feeling a little more confident.

"Whilst in custody, my house was searched and they removed some personal keepsakes. They read my diary in front of me, all I could think was how low they go to intimidate people. They copied all the phone numbers and addresses from my address book. Then they photographed and fingerprinted me.

"They repeated several times that I was to be charged with IRA membership. I didn't really believe them but I was still scared., how many times have republicans been framed? It is so hard to keep calm when they are making such serious allegations about you and your friends

They suggested that I should get as far away as I could from Ireland and that if I ever needed any help I could go to them — I couldn't help laughing.

"They made a final attempt to try to get me to leave Sinn Féin before releasing me 22 hours after my arrest.

"When I got home my house looked like a tip — everything was lying on the floor and the furniture had been moved."

Harassment is frightening and distressing for anybody. The state seems to be empowered to take you away for 24 to 48 hours and say anything to you and accuse you of whatever they like. It is especially distressing for women. Several men questioning her at once and shouting at her is intimidating. Many women have experienced a scenario where they are in custody with five men in the room talking

about sex and making sexual taunts. One woman was in custody when a Garda spoke about what he would do to her if he was left alone with her, as a joke with his Special Branch friends. Soon after another Garda said that anything could happen to her in the cell and no one would hear her if she screamed. They are not legislatively empowered to do this and can be legally challenged. But it is very frightening when a woman is alone and scared and facing many more hours in custody, it is deliberate terror tactics using the fact that men are physically stronger than women and use sex as a form of violence as a taunt.

It must be borne in mind that the vast majority of arrests never lead to any charges being pressed, it is an exercise in scaring people, especially women, out of politics through their bully tactics. Sometimes it works, a lot of the time it does not. It is sometimes said that republicans are well used to repression and that it is something which we just have to put up with. This is not the case. Although the state wants to see republicanism die a death there are laws on police procedure that the gardai should follow. These rules are often broken and only if we know the rules can we challenge them. We should all know our rights so that when threats are made to our right to silence we are not intimidated. When they quote laws that we should have heard of them and be in a position to challenge them.

These people are trained for a long time in terror and intimidation tactics so we should not expect ourselves to be cleverer or well able for them but we can protect ourselves if we know the law and our rights. Remember most of all that you have the right to your politics and they are wrong to try to deny you this right. We believe in real democracy with real freedom, not a carefully monitored and controlled police state. We challenge the state through our politics and we must challenge their forces when they try to deny these politics to us.

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women has been increasingly put under the spotlight over this past 15 years or so, as various women's groups and reformers have highlighted and challenged the issue and the different attitudes to it.

Women do not have a problem with defining violence but the problem is having women's definitions accepted in wider society and especially by the institutions and agencies of the state, such as the police and courts.

Presently many crimes of violence against women are not taken seriously. For example, if a woman and man are involved in a relationship and the man assaults the woman this is general regarded by society as a 'domestic' dispute and people are reluctant to become involved. Thus what is defined legally as a criminal assault is treated as a 'lovers tiff' when it is violence against a woman perpetrated by a man she knows. The definition should not change, as it does in this example, simply because of the context, ie an assault within an established relationship between the aggressor and the victim.

Other problems with defining violence arise in the case of pornography. Some

argue that it is harmless and irrelevant to violence, that its availability channels sexual drives in a harmless direction and that without pornography more sexual energy would be directed violently towards women. However, if this was correct the logical conclusion would be that the more widely available pornography was the less sexual crime there would be, but this is not the case. Pornography helps to reinforce the subordination of women by reducing them to the level of objects solely (as male property) for male pleasure.

To get to the root of the problem we need to look at explanations of violence that focus on the power relations between men and women within society. Susan Griffin argues that the use of the word rape (which already had connotations of domination and subordination) to describe violence made people aware that rape is a social act expressing male power and not some expression of sexual frustration.

Responses to violence against women have been poor. State agencies have been reluctant to become involved in cases termed domestic disputes but there has also traditionally been reluctance to take allegations of rape seriously in any circumstances. Women often report that police have treated them with disbelief and even

open hostility when they have reported being raped. In one survey of 656 women 61% of them contacted the police about violence and only 36% found this contact useful. Other state agencies such as Housing Departments and Social Services fail to inspire much confidence in women and faced with unhelpful state agencies, women must turn to voluntary agencies for assistance.

In the 1960s Women's Aid was formed in response to women's need for protection from male violence. By 1981 approximately 2,600 women and children were resident in Women's Aid refuges at any one time. Rape Crisis Centres and Incest Lines respond to the needs of women and other women powered groups work in areas such as the legal arena to assist victims of male violence. These female responses to violence are largely voluntary and often don't fully meet the demands from battered women, due to lack of funds.

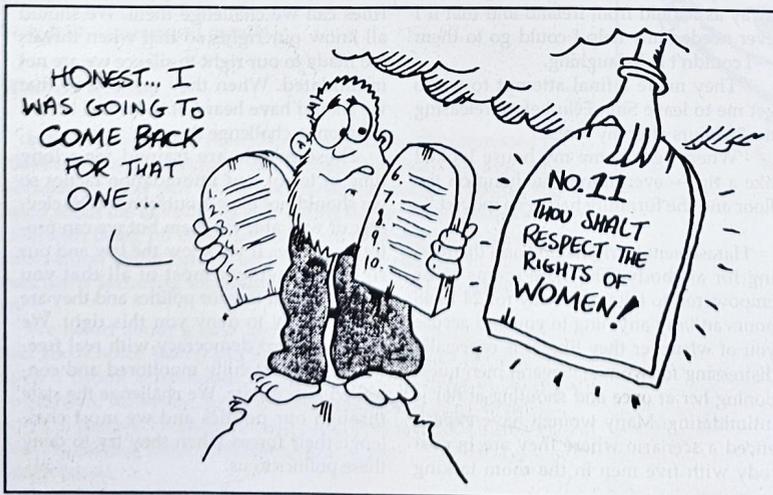
The number of women who use Women's Aid refuges is only one way of estimating the extent of violence and this only reflects part of the number of women affected. Why then isn't violence against women taken seriously? Part of the reason is because much of the violence against women is classified as domestic and legitimate. The dominant ideology about a women's place and men's right to expect certain services from their partners reinforces the idea that the home is not to be interfered with. This notion lends support to the idea that men have the right to discipline their partners and to keep them in their place (powerless and passive).

While few would be likely to endorse such a view explicitly, society's tolerance of violence against women is implicit in its complacency about the problem.

A change in any ideology only comes about if challenged by those oppressed by such an ideology. Feminism has been challenging the ideology which tolerates violent action against women. It has sought to empower women in order to be able to break out of violent and destructive relationships while at the same time it has applied pressure to the state to reform the agencies which currently fail women who are victims of violent attack either inside or outside the home.

Republican women have a part to play in this process. We must challenge those who would marginalise or silence women for opposing the harmful sexist ideologies that ensure that women's oppression is reproduced in every generation.

If we allow ourselves to believe that we must wait until 'the time is right' to discuss certain issues then the time will never be right. Republican women need to work at removing sexism within our own movement before we can expect other women to take us seriously. We must not shy away from the challenge otherwise we cannot truthfully claim that we are working in the best interests of women.



1. "When your weary, feeling small, when tears are in your eyes" .....
2. "I've got sunshine on a cloudy day and if it's cold outside I've got the month of May" .....
3. "I get up in the evening and I ain't got nothing to say, I come home in the morning" .....
4. "Don't wish it away, don't look at it like it's forever, between you and me I can honestly say that things can only get better" .....
5. "I'm in the phone booth it's the one across the hall" .....
6. "Don't worry about a thing, cause every little thing is gonna be alright" .....
7. "I want to be your lover, but your friend is all I stay" .....
8. "If I listen long enough to you, I'll find a way to believe that it's all true" .....

1. *Bridge Over Troubled Water*: Simon and Garfunkel
2. *My Girl*: The Temptations
3. *Dancing in the Dark*: Bruce Springsteen
4. *I guess that's why they call it the Blues*: Elton John
5. *Hangin' on the Telephone*: Blondie
6. *Three Little Birds*: Bob Marley and the Wailers
7. *Half Way to Paradise*: Billy Fury
8. *Kenson to Believe*: Rod Stewart

1. ... Soldiers
2. .... women
3. The ... with the .... in his eyes
4. No .....
5. It's a kind of .....
6. .... healing
7. Every ..... hurts
8. River .... mountain ....
9. Waterloo .....
10. .... Fields
11. Lady ..... Soul
12. If ..... me now
13. The ... ain't gonna ..... anymore
14. Good ... for the .....
15. Shine .. you ..... diamond

1. *The Small Faces*
2. *Honky Tonk Woman*: The Rolling Stones
3. *The Man With The Child in his Eyes*: Kate Bush
4. *No Surrender*: Bruce Springsteen
5. *It's a kind of Magic*: Queen
6. *Sexual Healing*: Marvin Gaye
7. *Every Little Bit Hurts*: Spencer Davis Group
8. *River Deep Mountain High*: Ike and Tina Turner
9. *Waterloo Sunset*: The Kinks
10. *Strawberry Fields*: The Beatles
11. *Lady Grinning Soul*: David Bowie
12. *If you leave me now*: Chicago
13. *The sun ain't gonna shine anymore*: The Walker Brothers
14. *Good year for the Roses*: Elvis Costello/Marty Robbins
15. *Shine on you crazy Diamond*: Pink Floyd

1. (a) What Billy Joel song did Barry White have a chart hit with?  
(b) Billy Joel wrote this song as a tribute to which group?
2. (a) *Bye, Bye, Baby* was a number one hit in 1975, for which group?  
(b) Who wrote this song?
3. Who sang *Come up and see me make me smile*?
4. Chris Farlow had a hit with *Out of time* but who originally had a hit with this song and wrote it?
5. Kylie Minogue had recent chart success with *Give me just a little more time*, who originally had a hit with this song?
6. 'Green' is the lead singer with which band?
7. Alana Myles had *Black Velvet* in the 1990 charts, she wrote this song in tribute to who?
8. Prince had *Kiss* in the 1986 charts — who else had chart success with this song?
9. Who wrote *New England* for Kirsty McColl?
10. *Change is gonna come* was one of the first protest songs written and performed by Sam Cooke — his daughter is part of a successful singing duo — name her.
11. Who wrote *Manic Monday* for The Bangles?
12. *I need you* and *Horse with no name* were songs written and performed by which group?
13. Talking of horses, who had the hit with *They shoot horses don't they*?
14. Which group helped to write and produce Barbara Streisand's *Guilty* album?
15. Name two famous soul singers who had parts in the film *The Blues Brothers*?

1. (a) *Just the way you are*.
2. (a) The Bay City Rollers
- (b) Phil Coulter
3. Steve Harley and Cockney Rebel
4. The Rolling Stones
5. Chairman of the Board
6. Scritti Politti
7. Elvis Presley
8. Tom Jones and the Art of Noise
9. Billy Bragg
10. Lynda Wornack
11. Prince
12. America
13. Racing Cars
14. The Bee Gees
15. Aretha Franklin and James Brown

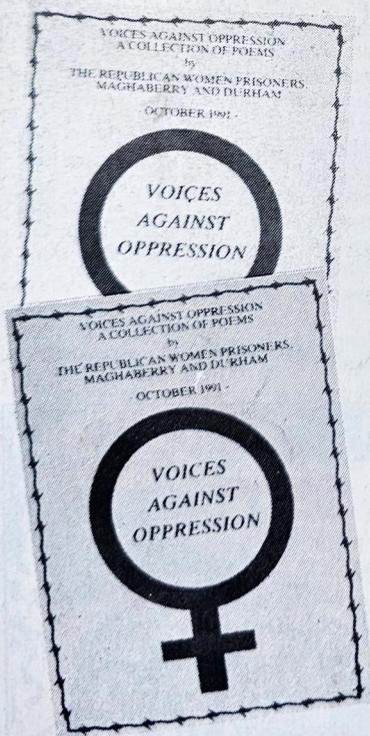


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