

METROPOLITAN POLICE

SPECIAL BRANCH

Special Report

15 day of June 19 72

SUBJECT.....

Revolutionary

Women's Union

Reference to Papers

400/71/272

1. The following information has been received from a reliable source:

2. "The Revolutionary Women's Union held their weekly meeting on Monday 12.6.72 at Privacy The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm and concluded at 11.30 pm. There were five persons present of whom the following were identified:-

Privacy

3. The whole evening was spent in discussing the paper "Nurseries for Working Women" (copy attached), produced by the Marxist-Leninist Workers Association Women's Caucus o/o Privacy Privacy Privacy was strongly critical of the "dogmatic form" of the document and the fact that the paper called for nurseries at places of work and study, as opposed to community run nurseries. The meeting was in general agreement with her. It was felt that the nursery campaign should be intensified and a discussion on the setting up of nurseries in the Islington area will take place at the next meeting (19.6.72). It is expected that the group will draw up a petition demanding "Community run nurseries" and obtain signatures from women in the Islington area. This will eventually be presented to the Local Authority.

4. At present there appears to be very little militant action or campaigns being undertaken or being planned by the Revolutionary Women's Union. This is probably due to the fact that several members are on holiday, and student members have either gone on holidays or taken part-time jobs."

5. Special Branch references to persons and organisations mentioned in this report are given in the attached Appendix.

BOX 500

Submitted

HN294

24/2/72 Inspector

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

APPENDIX to Special Branch report dated 15.6.72 concerning a meeting of
the Revolutionary Women's Union held on 12.6.72.

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400/71/176

NURSERIES FOR WORKING-WOMEN

To achieve full equality and the economic independence necessary for their complete participation in political, social and cultural life, women must be free to enter social production on an equal footing with men, must be freed from the drudgery of housework in the individual household economy. It is not surprising that women who are isolated in, or whose main work is confined to the home tend to be politically, culturally and socially backward. Housework is almost entirely unproductive, petty and contains nothing that facilitates the housewife's development. Thus, the demand for social services that free women from housework and in particular the demand that the rearing of children be made a social responsibility, with the full provision of nurseries, is of fundamental importance to the woman's struggle.

That capitalist society has the technical knowledge and financial resources to provide these necessary social services is shown by the following figures: -

Nurseries in England and Wales

	<u>Whole Time</u>		<u>Part Time</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>No. Places</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>No. Places</u>
May 1941	34		83	
Dec. 1944	1449	68,574	106	3,546

Of the 1,449 whole-time nurseries in 1944, 100 were 24 hour nurseries for shift workers.

But what is also beyond doubt is that capitalism profits from the dependent, subservient position of women, and as the post-war figures show, the capitalist class has sought to withdraw those few amenities provided during the war and thus to maintain the oppression suffered by women. At the end of the war the Ministry of Health stopped the 100% grants that nurseries had been receiving during the war, stating in their circular 221/45 that "the right policy to pursue would be positively to discourage mothers of children under 2 years from going to work, to make provision for children between 2 and 5 by way of nursery schools and classes (which never happened! M.L.W.A.), and to regard day nurseries and daily guardians as supplements to meet the special needs.... of children whose mothers are incapable for some good reason of undertaking the full care of their children." However the large majority of these nurseries did not close down immediately. Thus in 1949 the following facilities were available: -

	<u>Day Nurseries</u>		<u>Private Nurseries</u>		<u>Child Minders</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>No. Places</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>No. Places</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>No. Places</u>
1949	910	43,395	250	6,893	271	1,703

However, in 1952 the Ministry of Health issued a further circular demanding that an economic rate should be paid by the mother for a nursery place. Mothers were thus forced to withdraw their children and 259 nurseries closed between 1952 and 1955. Thus by 1965 the number of local authority day nurseries had halved:-

	<u>Day Nurseries</u>			<u>Private Nurseries</u>			<u>Child Minders</u>		
	<u>No.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Places</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Places</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Places</u>
1965	448		21,396	2,245		55,543	3,393		27,200

We can see that while local authority nurseries have been closed down, private nurseries and child-minders have flourished. It is obvious that child-minders are being used by working mothers who can't get their children into a nursery, but what of private nurseries? The breakdown of the 2,245 private nurseries is as follows:-

	<u>Factory Nurseries</u>	<u>Hospital Nurseries</u>	<u>Others</u>
1965	54	27	2,164

The category 'others' is composed of fee-paying nurseries in middle-class suburbs. They do not cater for the needs of working mothers.

The figures for 1970 which are the most recent we have been able to obtain shows 453 local health authority day nurseries providing places for 21,581 children. As can be seen, there has been almost no change in this area since 1965. For registered private nurseries however, the increase has been startling. By 1968, there were 5,670 and by 1970 9,675. The number of registered individual child-minders had jumped to 25,345 by 1970. (In comparing this figure with the 3,393 registered in 1965, most of the immense increase is due to the campaign to have such individual child-minders registered. Doubtless there are many thousands still unregistered.)

Concerning the great increase in private nurseries, we believe it is safe to assume that almost all of this increase is accounted for in fee-paying nurseries in middle class suburbs. Unfortunately, we have not been able to obtain the breakdown of this figure into factory nurseries, hospital nurseries, and others as is shown above for the year 1965.

As was the case with infant nurseries, the 1944 Education Act, having in mind the employment of women workers, stated that local

education authorities should provide nursery schools. But the economic requirements of the capitalist class has not demanded any greater participation of women in productive labour, and indeed much less than the war levels; thus, the cut back in nursery school facilities and no implementation of the 1944 Education Act. Circular 8/60 issued by the Ministry of Health in 1960 stated "no resources can at present be spared for the expansion of nursery education and in particular no teachers can be spared who might otherwise work with children of compulsory school age." - a forerunner to Thatcher's current circular. The cut-back in nurseries has proceeded smoothly through both Labour and Tory governments. Any illusions that Renee Short or any other Social Democrat might solve the problem of nurseries should be cast aside. Labour governments have consistently shown on nurseries as on all other questions, that they rule completely in the interests of big business as do the Tories.

But women in their dependent, subservient position are to the capitalist boss a necessary and invaluable part of society, forming a pool of cheap labour that can be called upon when necessary - a part of the general reserve army of capitalism. The ideology churned out, all in the service of the capitalist bosses, tells the working class that woman's primary place is in the home as wife and mother, and that there is no superior child-rearing than that of the mother, with her "natural" love for her own offspring. That this "natural" love theory is mainly aimed at the exploited is clear in that the children of the ruling class have almost always been reared with the "unnatural" love of the hired nannies or governesses. The wide acceptance of this outlook on the position of women in society, has certain very valuable practical consequences for the boss: a) He can pay lower wages to a woman worker, excluding her from skilled work, training courses, etc. or giving her skilled work at unskilled rates, as she is thought to be unreliable, having her main interests rooted in the home. She is thus important as a source of even greater surplus profit and as a means to undercut the wage levels of male workers. b) She will perform 24 hours of unpaid domestic work necessary to maintain the bosses' male workers and rear the next generation of workers. c) The boss can appeal to her, often with great success, as a source of reaction against progressive politics or organized labour.

Roughly one third of the labour force in manufacturing is made up of female labour. (In 1911, 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of the labour force was women and in 1964 35%). Large numbers of women with young children are in the position of not being able to take up any employment outside the home and are thus forced to accept total economic dependence on their husbands or the degrading, humiliating, and precarious position of the Social Security recipient. Many who must work take part-time employment, night work or shift work that can fit in with baby-sitting by the father, grandparents,

or older children. In 1957 the percentage of working mothers with children was as follows: -

	<u>Doing Full-Time Work</u>	<u>Doing Part-Time Work</u>
with children under 5 years	7.4	14.9
with children between 5 & 15 years	28.3	43.6

Large numbers of working mothers suffer the mental anguish of having to leave their children in uncertain or even knowingly inadequate care. It is undoubtedly these women who would be most prepared to take militant action on the nursery question. To be able to go out to work feeling secure that your child is well tended, a right that society owes all women, is at present the right of very few in our capitalist society.

The above clearly indicates that the struggle for nurseries is a part of the working class struggle against capitalism, and although perhaps more difficult for him to see, it is important to the advance of the working man as the working woman. General agitation must be carried out to establish the demand for day nurseries and nursery schools as rights. The value of child rearing to the whole of society must be emphasised, and the responsibility for establishing nurseries must be placed fully at the door of the exploiting bosses who benefit from the exploitation and oppression of women. The question of nurseries is closely connected to the demands for equal pay and employment, job opportunities, equal training and educational opportunities. In formulating our demands we must clearly see this link and our basic demand must be full nursery facilities at the place of work and study at the expense of the employer and educational authorities. That capitalist society would ever fully provide nursery facilities in either the factory or community is as unlikely as the capitalist giving up his vast profits obtained from surplus labour and granting the male or female worker the full value of his or her labour. Without doubt, it is only socialist society that could fully bring women into social production, providing the social services that free women from housework and the nursery facilities for the rearing of children. Nevertheless, because of the fact that some women do form a necessary and invaluable part of the labour force and because of the precedent of the slightly more adequate facilities of the war period, effective campaigns can be fought and won. This struggle can be highly important in heightening the consciousness of women vis-a-vis their role in society, in breaking down their isolation and drawing them more actively and directly into political struggle.

and demands can be forced through militant actions.

While actions and campaigns must fit in with local factory or school conditions there are some general things that can be done for commencing nursery campaigns. Investigation should be carried out to try to find factories or other places that did operate nurseries in the past. The precedent of a nursery and its closing down should be brought to the notice of women now working in the factory and area, along with explanations of why it is correct that nursery facilities should be provided. General agitation, leaflets, and public meetings can be called on the above. Women inside the factory, transport depot, office, etc. must be won to organise and lead any action that develops, but valuable support such as picketing or leafletting, can be done on the outside and the news of any activity spread far and wide. Our actions should always pinpoint a factory or other place of work where the women are absolutely essential in the productive process, where industrial action can be effective.

If there are examples of factories that do operate nurseries, their existence should be pointed out to women in other work places and their inadequacies should be exposed.

In the school or college general agitation such as meetings, resolutions or petitions can be conducted by the students to build support for a campaign that can directly confront and put demands on the authorities. In the school or college, students should link the nursery question to the right of local women to take courses and benefit from the college facilities. Such a demand that all facilities, including nursery facilities, should be available to local women to enable them to benefit from the college courses and facilities would help build links between the students and the local working class women. Students should clearly put demands that are of benefit to the whole community. They must not allow themselves to put demands which would just be seen by local people as the selfish demands of pampered students.

All concessions made in the past by the capitalist class, have been forced by the militant action of the working class. It is at the point of production where the worker can threaten the bosses' profits, that actions can be most effective in winning concessions at this stage. Coupled with this is the fact that it is at the place of work that nurseries will be most convenient and valuable to working class women. Therefore while some effective pressures can and should be brought to bear on the local authorities, our main slogan should be -

"Nurseries at the place of work and study!"