

Special Report

SPECIAL BRANCH

2 pages

27 OCT 1972
OF 2231

28 day of September 1972

SUBJECT Women's

Abortion and

Contraception

Campaign (WACC)

Women's Liberation
Movement

Reference to Papers

400/72/92

BOX 500

The following information has been received from a reliable source:-

1. On Saturday 9th September 1972, the Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign (WACC) held a meeting at the Students' Union, Queen's Road, Bristol. The meeting had been organised by [Privacy] Bristol (tel Bristol [Privacy]), and had been called to arrange a national conference of all WACC groups.

2. Also the same day at the same location, although in a different room, the National Women's Conference Committee of the Women's Liberation Movement held a meeting to discuss final arrangements for the next National Women's Liberation Conference. Although persons moved to some extent from one meeting to the other, broadly speaking the former was attended by an energetic socialist and well-meaning group of women, whereas the latter was attended in the main by the disorganised and libertarian element which has dominated recent women's liberation conferences.

3. The meeting called by WACC lasted from 10am until 7pm and was attended by some thirty persons, all women, representing groups from London, Nottingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Southampton, Kidderminster, Bristol, Birmingham and other towns.

4. There was no chairwoman as such but the discussions were kept in order principally by [Privacy] (Bristol) and [Privacy] (Nottingham). [Privacy] opened the discussions by outlining the work done so far by the WACC in Nottingham, the founding group. The campaign had been started in October, 1971, following the Women's Liberation Conference in Skegness. Since then groups have been formed all over England. There had been demonstrations throughout the country attacking the Abortion Act 1967 and the Contraception laws. There had also been meetings and teach-ins and in January 1972 the National Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign had been formed. Its policy was that it should be the right of every woman to choose whether or not to have a child and that free contraception should be available to every woman under the National Health Service. Abortion was viewed as a woman's right and any woman unwilling to continue her pregnancy should have that undisputed right. [Privacy] went on to suggest that an anti-abortion national demonstration should be held in the near future and called for a firm policy on the anti-population control question. The WACC were strongly opposed to population control and it was proposed this subject should be discussed fully at the WACC national conference. The group agreed.

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5. [Privacy] outlined the considerable work which had been undertaken by the Bristol group. They had produced a somewhat alarmist booklet entitled 'Enough' (copy attached) in which they outlined the experiences of women who had undergone unwanted pregnancies, back-street abortions or had been refused applications for abortions on the National Health Service. The Bristol group had also been working in close co-operation with the Bristol Family Planning Association and it was their intention to form a Women's Health Centre eventually. Such a centre was envisaged as providing advice on contraception, abortion and child birth.

6. A representative from the London WACC (not identified) [Privacy] outlined how her group had distributed 1,000 questionnaires to distribution points in different parts of the country, including various Women's Liberation groups, Claimants Unions, Tenants Associations and individual social workers. From these sources 111 completed questionnaires had been returned, 103 from women who had had experience of abortion and eight from women who had failed to get an abortion. The 103 had been analysed by computer and the figures had been given in a section of a booklet entitled 'Women and Abortion'. (Copy attached) Details of the other eight women were also included. She also mentioned that on 14 October 1972 this group would be sending representatives to present a paper to the Lane Commission, based on the information in the booklet, in an attempt to prove the inefficiency of the existing Abortion law.

7. Another member of this London group then spoke of the simplicity of performing an abortion if performed in the very early stages of pregnancy. She claimed it was so simple that it could be done in a few minutes in any outpatients or clinic. She then produced an instrument called a vacuum aspirator and explained in some detail how it operated. In brief it was a hand-operated syringe which sucked out the contents of the womb. This method was viewed with much apprehension and it was eventually decided that more research should be undertaken to prove its effectiveness.

8. [Privacy] announced that the WACC would be bringing out a 'newsletter' and that any suggestions for the conference should be forwarded to her by 15 November 1972. The venue and date for the conference was debated but nothing was fixed save that it would be held in Liverpool after Christmas. It was decided that full co-operation be maintained with the Women's Liberation Movement and support would be given to its activities and its forthcoming conference (see later).

9. As yet, although the majority of the women present were socialist inclined, no political group has emerged within the WACC. The ages of those involved range from 23 years to 53 years and they are generally well educated and from middle-class backgrounds. It was also evident that many of the women had experienced abortion and many had children but not all were married. They also gave tacit support to the Gay Liberation Movement.

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[REDACTED]

10. As indicated previously, a meeting of the National Women's Conference Committee of the Women's Liberation Movement was also held. About 20 women were present at this meeting and they discussed final arrangements for the next National Women's Liberation Conference. This Committee had been elected to make these arrangements at a meeting in Birmingham some two months earlier. It was also apparent that most of the major decisions had already been taken.

11. It emerged that the following details had already been agreed. The conference would start at 5.30 pm on Friday November 3 and would continue until the evening of Sunday 5 November - the venue being Acton Town Hall. The proceedings were being organized by the National Women's Conference for Liberation, London WC2V 6X. A registration form (copy attached) had been designed and duplicated and would be sent to all Women's Liberation, Gay Liberation, WAGG and Socialist Women's Groups. On application women would be sent conference tickets and on admission to the conference they would be required to hand-in these tickets. Each woman would then have the back of her hand marked with a rubber stamp thereby allowing her to gain re-admission should she leave the conference at any time. No sales or members of the press would be admitted to any part of the conference or the social planned for Saturday evening, also in the Town Hall.

12. Although there was no chairwoman in the formulation of these arrangements [Privacy], the National Co-ordinator, took the leading role in making suggestions and rejecting what she felt was unacceptable. The other main activists in the meeting were [Privacy], [Privacy] and [Privacy] - all known lesbians.

13. After such discussion on various ridiculous and improbable proposals a number were eventually accepted as follows:-

- a) The admission fee would be £150 per woman. It was anticipated that some 1,000 - 2,000 women would attend.
 - b) The conference would be advertised in all the main leading women's magazines, eg 'Woman', 'Women's Weekly', 'Woman's Own', 'She'.
 - c) At least three free meals would be provided at the conference, which would be prepared in the kitchens at the Town Hall by the organisers and some of their friends (a number said they would therefore be taking sandwiches.)
 - d) A large notice board in the main entrance hall would carry a map of the building showing the scene of the various activities. Apparently [Privacy] had a contact within Acton Town Hall from whom she could obtain such a plan.
 - e) The agenda would be fixed on the first morning of the conference.
- [REDACTED]



14. There was a long discussion as to whether "transsexuals" would be admitted and it was eventually decided that they should not be.

15. It was also established during exchanges, that the Women's Liberation Workshop had no money at present and appeals would be made to all women's liberation groups for contributions towards the Social evening planned for the Saturday. It was decided that £100 would be spent on alcohol and if money was not forthcoming from the groups, 'The Morning Star' via [Redacted] Privacy would be asked for a loan to assist the conference.

16. The whole tenor of the meeting was childish, disjointed and unrealistic, especially as the main organisers were self-confessed lesbians and extremely antisocial. There appeared to be no organized political group on the committee despite the fact all members had been involved previously with the National Women's Movement. Their role, if any, would only be described as disruptive. Clearly, if the anticipated number of women attend this conference there will probably be difficulties with accommodation. There was a suggestion there should be a spontaneous demonstration sometime during the conference. Nothing further was said of this but no demonstration will occur."

17. Special Branch references are given in the attached appendix.

1

HN348

VDC

Submitted:

2

HN294

[Redacted] Inspector

Conrad Dixon
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT





A P P E N D I X to Special Branch report concerning a Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign (WACC) meeting and a National Women's Conference Committee of the Women's Liberation Movement meeting, both of which were held at the Students' Union, Queen's Road, Bristol, on Saturday 9 September 1972. Persons mentioned in relation to the first meeting are marked *, whereas those mentioned in relation to the second are unmarked.

Privacy

No trace

RF 402

Privacy

RF 405

No trace

Privacy

RF 402

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Mentions re Women's Liberation

RF 402

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