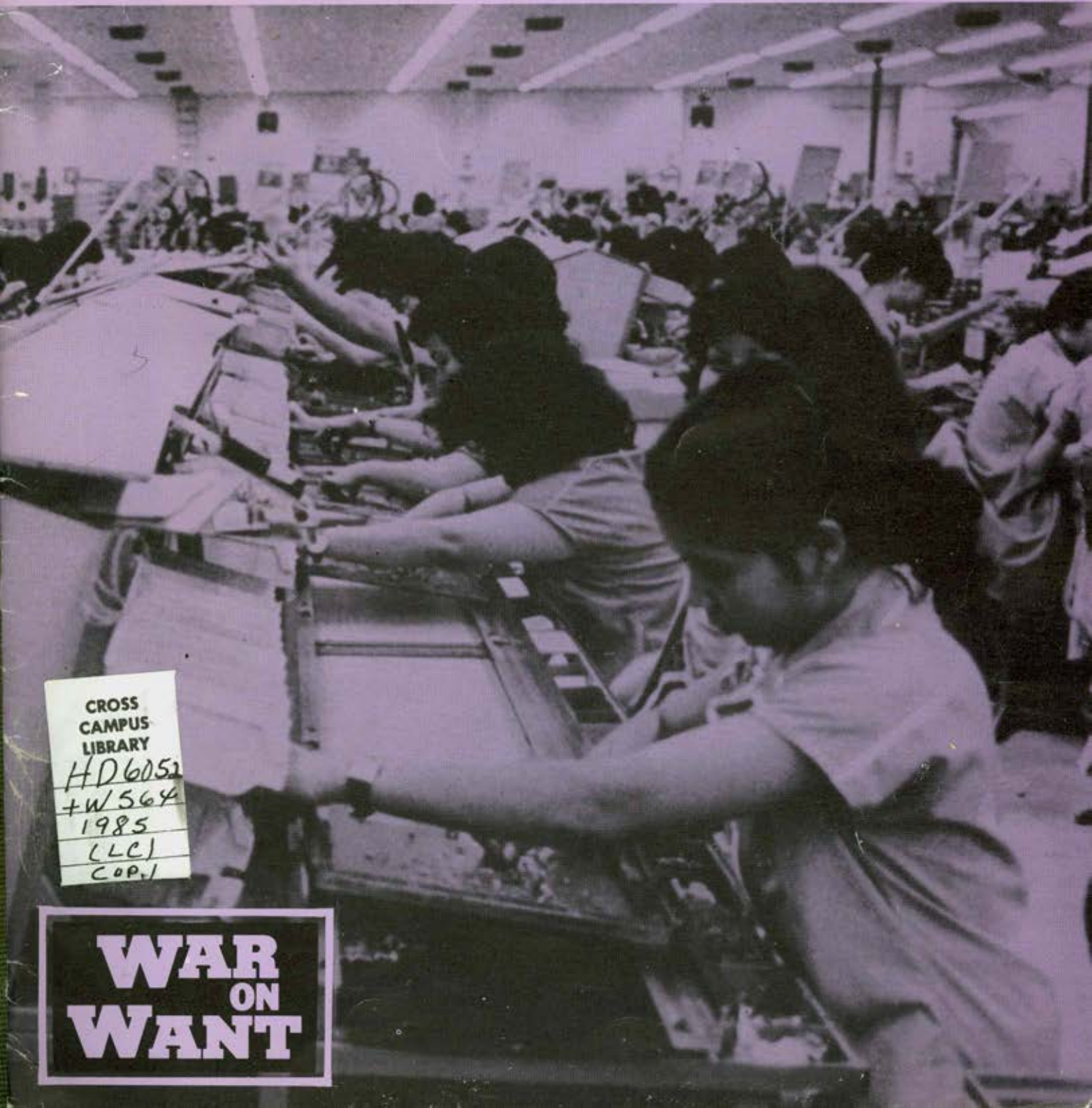


Women Working Worldwide

The International Division of Labour
in the
Electronics, Clothing and Textiles Industries



CROSS
CAMPUS
LIBRARY
HD6052
+W564
1985
(LC)
COP.1

**WAR
ON
WANT**

Introduction

CONTENTS

Introduction	
The international division of labour	1
Enterprise Zones and Free Trade Zones - who benefits?	3
Multinational strategies - the international boss, the games he plays and how to outwit him	6
Women's work - unequal opportunities	9
Violence against women - health and safety at work	11
Women organising - do trade unions help?	13
New Technology - our future or our fate?	15
Homeworkers - the hidden labour force	18
International links - working together worldwide	21
Conclusion	23
Resources	23

*Cross Campus
HD6052
+W564
1985
LC1
cop.1*



Women Working Worldwide, a one day conference on the international division of labour in the clothing, textiles and electronics industries, was held on Sunday, 24 April 1983 at County Hall in London. The conference was organised by a group of women mainly from War on Want and Archway Development Education Centre and was attended by over 170 women and men from the labour, trade union and women's movements and development agencies. Speakers came from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Philippines, Holland, Scotland and England.

Taking as case studies the clothing, textiles and electronics industries, all of which employ mainly women in low paid jobs, the conference looked at the international employer and the economic, social and political factors determining women's employment. Workshops were held on the following topics:

- Enterprise Zones and Free Trade Zones - who benefits?
- Multinational Strategies - the international boss, the games he plays and how to outwit him
- Women's Work - unequal opportunities
- Violence against Women - health and safety at work
- Women Organising - do trade unions help?
- New Technology - our future or our fate?
- Homeworkers - the hidden labour force
- International Links - working together worldwide

The views expressed in this report are those of the conference participants and organisers and not necessarily those of War on Want.



*Conference workshop on the electronic industry
(photo: Loren Grant)*

The conference was intended as the starting point for a greater international exchange of information and the creation of international links between women working worldwide.

In this booklet, instead of simply reporting the conference proceedings, we decided to gather together information and ideas from the whole day under the headings of the eight workshops. In this way we hoped to produce a more useful and comprehensive resource document for future campaigning work.

Note: in the interests of brevity and easy reading we have used many shorthand terms, for example, 'the west', 'multinationals', 'black' and 'the third world'.

The International Division of Labour

Diane Elson

From the Levi Strauss jeans factory in Tennessee, USA, to the Levi Strauss jeans factory in Glasgow, to the Levi Strauss jeans factory in Manila, the Philippines; from the micro-chip plants in Silicon Valley, California, to the micro-chip plants in Silicon Glen, Scotland, to the micro-chip plants in the Penang Free Trade Zone, Malaysia; women are working worldwide on a global assembly line.

In the industrialised countries of the first world, and the industrialising countries of the third world, more and more of us are being integrated into the circuit of international capital; more and more of us are being caught up in the seamless web woven by business firms in pursuit of profit, not just in their own backyard, but globally.

The last fifteen years have seen a growing internationalisation of industries which have traditionally depended heavily on women's work: the textile and garment industry, the electrical and electronic goods industry, and 'miscellaneous manufactures', which includes toys, sports goods and fancy goods. This has taken place in several ways.

Large, multinational firms, like the big American jeans manufacturers, have made decisions about the location of new plants on a global basis, comparing productivity and costs around the world in order to find the most profitable production sites. The large electrical and electronics firms, such as Phillips (Dutch), Motorola (American) and Sony (Japanese), have done the same. They have relocated

much of their production: within the USA, from northeast to southwest; outwards from the USA and Japan to lower cost European sites, such as Scotland and Wales; and out of the first world altogether, to a select group of third world countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, North Africa and Southeast Asia.

Wholesaling and retailing firms in the first world, such as large department stores like C&A, have made decisions about the sourcing of their goods on a worldwide basis, scouring the globe to find lower cost suppliers. Small firms in third world countries have been subcontracted to produce articles to the specifications of the retailer.

Quite small European and American firms have sought opportunities to 'put out' part of their production to small firms in lower cost countries. This is particularly the case in the garment industry, where cloth cut out in the USA is machined in Mexico, and cloth cut out in West Germany is machined in North Africa.

Established, locally owned firms in the newly industrialising countries of Latin America and Southeast Asia have turned from supplying their domestic markets to producing for export. Some of these firms, particularly garment firms from Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea, have prospered so much that they are now beginning to operate like first world multinationals, and have opened up factories in even lower cost third world countries such as Sri Lanka.



Electronics factory, Brazil (photo: John Humphrey)

This process of internationalisation has been encouraged by governments in both first world and third world. For instance the US government introduced 'offshore assembly provisions' into the system of duties that have to be paid on imports into the USA. The result is that no duty has to be paid on the value of components made in the USA, assembled in the third world and re-imported into the USA much to the benefit of the US electronics industry.

Governments of many third world countries have also played an active role. Many have set up free trade zones to attract the 'offshore assembly operations' of multinational corporations and have encouraged local firms to produce under subcontract for first world firms. China has now joined the long list of third world countries to set up such zones. Young Chinese women will soon be assembling colour TVs under the direction of Thorn-EMI-Ferguson.

The development experts have a description for all this. They call it 'the new international division of labour'. Many of them see it as evidence that the capitalist economic system does benefit third world countries. They argue that closer integration into the international capitalist market will enable third world countries to 'catch up' in the way that Japan has done. One reason for scepticism, however, is the way in which this 'new international division of labour' divides up knowledge and skills. Take the case of the micro-electronics components industry. The work of designing and fabricating the chips is retained in first world countries. It is the labour intensive process of assembling the chips into wiring harnesses to make components which is relocated to the third world. The capacity to initiate technological change in the industry remains largely in USA and Japan.

The global assembly line is more appropriately seen as the latest phase of imperialism. Imperialism has always involved the continual re-division of labour. It should not be seen as necessitating economic stagnation and lack of industrialisation in the third world. The core of imperialism is the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of ruling groups in a few countries. These groups police the world, to try to make it safe for profits. They have always recruited ruling groups in subordinate countries to assist in this task. They have always sought to divide the workers whose labour makes profit possible.

Today, for women working worldwide in labour intensive factory jobs, divisions

are created by the ever-present possibility of jobs being relocated. If you don't accept the wages and conditions we offer, and produce the output we require, says management, then we will lose orders; we will close down; we will move elsewhere. The bogey of 'cheap labour' is conjured up - the spectre of workers willing and eager to work twice as hard for a fraction of the wages. American women are set in competition with Mexican women; Mexican women pitted against those in Southeast Asia; those in Southeast Asia against those in China. The irony is that women everywhere are denigrated as 'cheap labour' in comparison to men; are regarded as less skilled (though they do have 'nimble fingers'); are supposed to be more docile (though they do have 'hysterical' outbursts, and had better be discouraged from joining unions 'just in case').

Though the global assembly line does in some ways divide women, it also gives women working around the world some things in common: the same pressure of the international pursuit of profit bearing down on their lives; the same kind of oppressive sexual division of labour in the factories; the same patriarchal ideology of women as merely 'secondary workers'. They suffer the same health and safety hazards; the same problems of sexual harassment. Women on opposite sides of the world now often work for the same boss. The multinational corporation that tries to make women compete can also provide women with a common cause. Women working in different plants may begin to make contact, to exchange information and learn from each others' experience.

The challenge that faces working women worldwide is to build on those elements we have in common so as to overcome the divisions that the international pursuit of profit makes among us. This requires women in the first world to recognise the extent to which we benefit from imperialism. It's hard to see this benefit when you have just lost your job because your firm is relocating production to the third world, and you have no prospect of another one. But think how much worse your plight would be if a similar thing happened to you in a third world country, with no welfare system, with much greater unemployment and poverty, and under a much more authoritarian state.

Women are exploited on the global assembly line, but they are not simply passive victims. Women all around the world are resisting that exploitation in courageous and resourceful ways. The question is - how can we strengthen and support those struggles? How can we build links between women working worldwide?

Enterprise Zones & Free Trade Zones

-who benefits ?

Free Trade Zones are production enclaves strategically located for the processing of goods destined for export for sale on the 'world market' or for further processing. They are specific government-established industrial development areas within which the country's normal legislative powers do not apply. Often located in remote or 'underdeveloped' parts of the country, it is usual for them to be fenced in and guarded by special security forces or personnel.

Typically, the companies operating within these zones are almost wholly foreign-owned (western or Japanese) and enjoy a wide range of concessions such as:

- exemption from customs duties and taxes
- income tax exemption for a specified period, e.g. ten years
- a period of reduced rates on other taxes and services
- no foreign exchange control
- preferential financing facilities

In addition labour protection codes, if they prevail elsewhere in the country, do not apply within the zones. All of this provides international capital with a very attractive package. It is a package which has been strongly promoted by the most influential and powerful western-dominated financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. A prime force behind it, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), established a model for FTZs in the 1960s which is still being followed.

Because they have been closely associated with very recent third world development, most of us at the conference were surprised to learn that the first FTZ was set up in the 1950s at Shannon Airport, Ireland.

That first zone was essentially a response to a need to maintain an important area of employment under imminent threat. Since then FTZs have become a significant feature of newly industrialising countries so that they now number close to 100 and employ nearly 1 million people. At least half of the FTZs (also called Export Processing Zones) are in Asia, which also has the largest zones. Up to 85% of their employees are young



Electronics factory in Singapore (photo: Jenny Matthew)

women. About half of these women work for electronics companies, almost as many for garment and textile factories, while a small number make light manufactures such as toys and sporting goods - all products which consumers in the first world ('the world market') see and use every day. They are rarely sold back to the country in which they are made. It is also not unusual for the production process to be fragmented between factories in different countries, thus creating what has been called 'the global assembly line'.

Some of these factors were well illustrated by a slide set on an Indonesian FTZ shown to workshop participants. The workshop was also given details of a certain British-owned company operating within the Bataan Export Processing Zone in the Philippines. The following excerpt from the text helps point out the relationship between the conditions and pay of the women working in the zone and British consumers.

The company produces women's outwear (e.g. jackets and raincoats) which goes to supply Debenhams, Littlewoods, C&A, Kendalls, John Collier and Hepworths. Brand names include Barracuda, Target (Australia), Keynote and Allander. Nearly all the goods produced are exported to the UK, taking up most of the Philippines' export quota to the UK. The plant was set up in 1974 and was bought by a British firm in 1978. In June 1982 it expanded its operations with more factory space. All materials used in production (cloth, buttons, zippers, thread, etc.) come from Hong Kong, only the labour is Filipino.

In December 1982 the company employed 1300 workers including approximately 400 probationary workers. Ninety-five per cent of the workers are women machinists. Their average age is 22. The basic wage for a full-time employee (probationers get less) is 19 pesos per day (less than £1.40). This is the legal minimum wage of 18 pesos plus 1 peso which the union obtained through a bargaining agreement so that take-home pay for a 40-hour week is about 95 pesos (less than £7).

The advantage for this garment manufacturer is clear: at least ten Filipino workers can be had for the price of one British worker.

In the discussion that followed sisters from the Dominican Republic were able to draw parallels between what we heard from the Philippines and what they have experi-

enced in their own country. Then a speaker from Sri Lanka talked about her work among women from a FTZ there:

Since the change of government in 1977, the country's economic policy has been based on foreign trade and export oriented industries. In 1978 a large area was declared a FTZ. It now has forty-seven factories in operation.

Of the workforce in the zone 89% are women, all under 25; 80% of them are single. They have been recruited from surrounding rural areas and although they cannot travel home each day the company provides no accommodation. They have to live in overcrowded boarding houses where they pay the equivalent of 50 to 70 pence per day, about half their daily wage. Their working and living conditions are appalling. They work long hours without breaks, sometimes standing all day (8-12 hours). Their wages are so inadequate that they need to work overtime or are forced into overtime because production targets within the factories are set so high. Most of these young workers are treated as casual labour so that the fear of losing their jobs makes them work even harder. Inadequate transport services to the boarding houses mean that they get home late with no time left for themselves.



Living accommodation of Free Trade Zone workers, Colombo Sri Lanka (photo: Jenny Matthews)

At the plant, negotiations between workers and employer are usually handled by 'workers' councils' which in fact are controlled by the management. It is extremely difficult for trade unions to be formed inside the zone. Women would be penalised or lose their jobs if they did try to organise. Only outside the zone is it possible to organise openly and then not without hindrance.

Before we think that FTZs have nothing to do with Britain, we should take a good look at the present government's proposals for a similar development in the form of Enterprise Zones and Freeports. Enterprise Zones are being promoted with the declared aim of relocating ailing industries and attracting new international firms, thus creating more jobs.

Enterprise Zones are not unlike FTZs in the way that concessions are granted in the form of reduced taxes, waived planning permission and other normal legal obligations, and the provision of plant facilities. Original plans for lowering health and safety standards and the removal of statutory employment protection have so far been held off but possibly not for long. More anti-union legislation is being drafted which will bring to the UK many of the anti-union practices of the third world.

With these present government plans for Britain, British workers should be interested to learn that many third world governments are now seriously questioning the value to their national economies of FTZs. The costs of setting up such zones are enormous whilst benefits are minimal because of the many concessions given. Many FTZs are actually creating an overall financial loss to the economy, forcing governments into an ever-increasing dependence on international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank.

It seems that the only benefit accruing from the zones lies in the provision of jobs. However, even this benefit is dubious. In the case of Enterprise Zones in Britain no new jobs are being created since the companies that move in have usually already been in operation elsewhere in the country. But most importantly, as various speakers from different countries pointed out, the cost to workers locally, nationally and internationally is very high. Poor wages, working conditions and health and safety standards are permitted in FTZs for the sake of higher profits. As the value of the labour of third world workers, particularly women, is deliberately lowered by government policy and company practice,

it is these workers rather than the governments and companies who are perceived as a threat by other workers in other countries.

The Free Trade Zone Carrot For Foreign Companies



The conference concluded that it is crucial for women workers and trade unions to recognise that FTZs and EZs are, above all, an attack on the potential collective strength and bargaining power of workers, be they women or men.

The main point of EZs and Freeports, just like FTZs, is that they are a testing ground for attempts to destroy the collective power of trade unions. Should British women workers in EZs be asked to accept the fate of their Asian sisters in FTZs? Or should women workers worldwide together demand something better for all?

Celia Mather

Multinational Strategies

-the international boss, the games he plays and how to outwit him

In January 1983 Timex Dundee announced the closure of one of its watch and micro-computer plants in Dundee, Scotland; 1900 jobs would be lost. The company complained that industrial relations in the plant were poor and that the high cost of labour made its products uncompetitive. Production was to be relocated to France and to Taiwan.

The experience of workers at Timex Dundee vividly portrays the relationship between workers and their bosses in the 1980s. The growth of multinational companies - companies which operate across national boundaries, subject to no one set of laws - and the development of new technology have together worsened the balance of power between workers and employers, creating a new international division of labour.

WHY MULTINATIONALS?

The conference looked at the arrival of multinational companies on the economic stage in the 1960s. The comparative boom years of the 1950s and 1960s led to high levels of employment in most industrialised countries and placed workers in a strong bargaining position for higher wages, shorter working hours and better conditions. Meanwhile in most underdeveloped countries rural poverty, the drift to the towns and high unemployment increased. The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation and the World Bank saw industrialisation on a massive scale as the key to the advancement of the third world. In this way the problems of third world countries - high unemployment, shortages of foreign exchange, lack of technology and technical expertise - could be resolved. But the development of third world countries was clearly secondary to the advantages accruable to western capital. Hard pressed by rising levels of labour costs and sharpening national and international competition, western companies were eager to explore new ways to minimise their costs, maximise their profits and, above all, increase their market share.

THE IMPACT OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

The objective of maximising profit and reducing costs was greatly facilitated by the development in the mid-1960s of micro-technology - 'new technology'. Not only did a whole new industrial growth area emerge - namely the production of micro-electronics parts and products - the production processes of many manufacturing

industries, for example clothing and textiles, were completely altered and international telecommunications were revolutionised. Fragmentation of production made relocation easier, so companies moved part of their operations - usually the most labour intensive - and became multinational. Production mobility meant that from now on companies could follow supplies of cheap labour - yesterday Puerto Rico, today Mexico, tomorrow the Philippines.

The power of multinational employers to relocate overnight has reduced labour to a mere component in the production process. Job security has become a thing of the past and with it the hard-won gains of workers in the west. This new added imbalance between boss and worker was, everyone agreed, one of the most crucial issues facing all workers today. Cases were quoted of workers faced with a 'choice' between accepting lower wages or redundancies. Usually where workers 'chose' wage reductions redundancies followed soon afterwards anyway.

The management technique of 'if you don't like it we'll move our operations elsewhere' has since the mid-1970s been aided and abetted by governments. In the industrialised world governments faced with national economic problems due to the world recession and anxious to encourage (or retain) multinational investment have adopted anti-union policies and passed legislation curbing union activity. Governments in third world countries have established Free Trade Zones where trade



Electronics factory, Brazil (photo: John Humphrey)

union activity is severely restricted or prohibited and basic workers' rights violated and where exploitation of an 80% female workforce is not just condoned but assisted. The industrialisation of many third world countries is at the expense of its exploited young women.

MULTINATIONALS AND WOMEN

Young women in third world countries have provided the most ready and amenable workforce for multinational employers. The skills acquired in domestic work within the home, for example sewing, are just those required for assembling silicon chips and making jeans and shirts. These skills of manual dexterity are clearly recognised by host governments, who advertise them as an additional incentive, and by multinationals, who eagerly employ young women, fully aware that only a very short training period will be required. Ironically, when it comes to job status and pay these same 'skills' are played down and rewarded with minimal wages.

Poverty in third world countries has forced women workers to take and guard any jobs they can get - therefore high production targets, long working hours, low wages, harsh working conditions and management techniques characterised by patriarchy and racism are all, for the most part, 'patiently and docilely' endured.

It is no coincidence that most women in paid employment worldwide are in low paid, 'unskilled', part-time work. Women's low status and domestic and family responsibilities ensure their role as the reserve army of labour in the highly industrialised countries and as the vast pool of cheap labour in the newly industrialised and developing world.

NEW DIVISIONS - MOBILITY OF CAPITAL

The conference recognised that a whole new set of rules had emerged in the international division of labour. Ease of relocation, new technology and national economic problems had all given the multinational boss the upper hand in playing off one country against another and one group of workers against another: men against women, white against black, north against south, skilled against unskilled, national against immigrant and migrant, factory-based against homeworkers, young against old. The conference felt that we need to challenge these categories in both in our own analysis and in terms of how women workers validate their own work and how they relate to each other. One of the important connections made by the conference was between the mobility of capital in its present phase, seeking its most profitable location, and the use capital has made of labour in the past, particularly the use of migrant labour in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. Capital adapts itself to different situations and

we must provide for ourselves a response which takes into account these various strategies.

RESPONSES

How can women workers respond to these divisions and multinational strategies? How can women workers in the UK and Europe faced with redundancies relate to women workers in third world countries faced with institutionalised exploitation?

Responses to date from organised labour in the UK and Europe have been characterised by retrenchment and calls for protectionism. Jobs are scarce, therefore they must be defended at all costs, therefore they must be reserved for the male breadwinners, therefore we must have protection against foreign imports, therefore we must retreat behind national boundaries. Groups of workers have staged sit-ins to defend basic trade union rights and the right to work.

When the VF Corporation (Lee Jeans) announced in February 1981 that it was going to close its factory in Greenock, Scotland, the workforce of 240, mainly women, occupied the factory. The sit-in lasted for 5 months and received national and international support.

Calls for import controls have been another response. On the surface the basic philosophy of protection sounds plausible and appeals to many workers faced with immediate job loss. But the policy only carries meaning in an economic structure composed of national entities. We are living in an economic system where multinational companies transcend national frameworks.

While the conference respected workers' rights to defend their jobs in whatever ways possible, it also recognised that demands for import controls should be linked to demands for greater control by workers over their labour and what they produced as well as job security. The conference felt strongly that protectionism was limited in its value to workers as long as the current divisions exist between workers internationally.

Yet another response of organised labour in the UK and Europe when faced with factory closures and redundancies has been the establishment of co-operatives. Redundancy money and government grants have led to the creation of many successful co-operatives, for example clothing co-ops in South Wales. But in the long term small co-ops are dogged by crippling competition from the major manufacturers and often workers are faced with the artificial choice of low wages or high selling prices.

All of the above responses are beneficial in bringing workers together to

attempt to control their labour, and all understandable in the circumstances. But they are inadequate in a world economic system dominated by multinational capital and an internationally divided workforce.

While workers in the west have been attempting to defend their jobs, workers in third world countries are organising to gain basic trade union rights and tolerable working conditions. The conference heard of many successful actions which had taken place in recent months, such as the strike organised by women workers at the Polytex factory in Sri Lanka in December 1982 for better pay and trade union recognition; the numerous strikes in the Bataan Export Processing Zone in the Philippines organised in defence of basic trade union rights; and the struggles of textile workers in Brazil. Despite the repressive labour legislation in force in many third world countries and the heavily patrolled and controlled industrial zones, workers continue to organise and fight for their rights. The importance of international solidarity for these struggles cannot be overestimated.

Hearing the news of such determined and successful strikes and actions provided both encouragement and ideas for action. It was clear to everyone that the key to successful actions against the multinational boss lay in looking at the very workings of multinational capital itself. Multinational companies operate globally and have information from the many parts of their operations ready to hand at all times. Organised workers in the industrialised world and the newly industrialised and underdeveloped countries must also share information in order to gain control of their labour. Although responses come out of specific local situations we must not forget or underestimate the value of information.

Women workers in the Philippines armed with information on the practices of their multinational boss based in Merseyside - on UK rates of pay, working conditions, union recognition and bargaining powers - can be in a more powerful position in their struggle for the basic rights of organisation and adequate pay and conditions. Women workers in Scotland armed with information that their company plans to relocate to Malaysia can put their efforts in to achieving higher redundancy terms rather than wage increases.

An understanding of how multinational capital operates - how the parts fit together - is essential for workers to organise with confidence and with a sense not of isolation but of the potential of international solidarity. However, different wage levels and work conditions un-

doubtedly operate against easy international solidarity actions and for easy divisions among workers internationally. Companies in the industrialised countries before the current economic recession were willing to pay better wages and offer better conditions as profits were high and the cost of raw materials low - thus workers in the industrialised countries benefited from the exploitation of underdeveloped countries. Now workers in the third world are used to undermine workers in the industrialised world. It will take time to overcome this legacy of divisions and competition. The conference did not underestimate the difficulties involved in international information sharing and organisation. At present the monopoly of international communication lies with multinational capital both in information technology and financial and political power.

In considering possible means of communication the conference emphasised the value of both formal trade union and organised labour movement connections and the networks of the women's movement and the development lobby. Everyone recognised the shortcomings to date of international trade unionism at the top level but saw trade union structures, despite their inherent sexism and failure in many instances to take racism seriously, as a vital way of sharing information between workers internationally.

At the same time it was unanimously agreed that the women's movement was at least an equally important way of linking workers and sharing information. The women's movement is free from some of the often restrictive procedures, hierarchies and diplomatic sensitivities of 'top level' international trade unionism. As such it has a major role to play in helping to spread information and in creating worker links across national boundaries based on an understanding of common situations and problems and a recognition of differences and inequalities.

It was clear to everyone that workers in the industrialised countries had a lot to learn from workers in the third world, particularly about international consciousness. Workers in third world countries see themselves as part of the international labour force and as tied inextricably into a global economy controlled by the west. Workers in the industrialised countries are often quite unconscious of their place in the global economy and identify themselves very much with national industry. It is essential to break through these national psychological boundaries as a first step to creating greater international labour solidarity.

Women's work -unequal opportunities

It is a curious coincidence that in both one of the oldest and one of the newest industries, clothing and electronics, women constitute the majority of the workforce. Curious too and contrary to left wing orthodoxies that women's massive participation (80% of electronics workers) in these world market industries has hardly altered their status and decision-making power within either their communities or trade unions.

Why is it that multinational electronics companies not only prefer to employ women in their factories but are also increasingly making use of homeworking? Why is an advanced technology being coupled with a pre-industrial form of labour? Why do women, irrespective of their level of education, get recruited into low skilled and low paid jobs?

These were some of the issues that the workshop on Women's Work tried to confront. Participants pointed out that it is crucial to recognise that women's position in the job market is different from the outset from that of men. The value of women's work is defined by an ideology which circumscribes their role in the family and by male definitions of femininity.

Whereas men are given the status of 'real' workers outside the home, the 'breadwinner' role which renders them the titular 'head of the household', women's work and activities are restricted by their supposed primary roles as mothers, wives and carers. Even many of their professional roles - in schools, hospitals and the social services - are seen as extensions of these. Although they are vital tasks in any society, they are generally undervalued and underpaid. In this way women's subordinate position is sustained through their financial dependence on a higher male income.

Despite the fact that most women go out to work, that in many countries a high proportion of households are headed by women (30% in England, 70% in Jamaica) and that more of their income than men's goes to maintaining the household, they are still generally considered to be 'supplementing' their husband's income.

Seeing women's real role as domestic also helps to justify inadequate education and training facilities and lack of promotion for women. Women are supposed to

not mind doing boring and repetitive jobs and to be unsuited to the acquisition of 'technical' skills. Skills that women do acquire through conventional training in the home tend to get downgraded. In electronics, for example, the ability to sew constitutes a skill significant to certain operations such as darning with copper wire, wiring harnesses and some forms of soldering and welding. Rather than seeing this as a skill acquired through training and many years of practice it is usually put down to some vague, 'naturally' feminine endowment or, more particularly, to questionable racial characteristics specific to females of that 'race'.

The manual dexterity of the oriental female is famous the world over. Her hands are small and she works fast with extreme care. Who, therefore, could be better qualified by nature and inheritance to contribute to the efficiency of a bench-assembly production line than the oriental girl?

- FTZ promotion advertisement
(emphasis added)

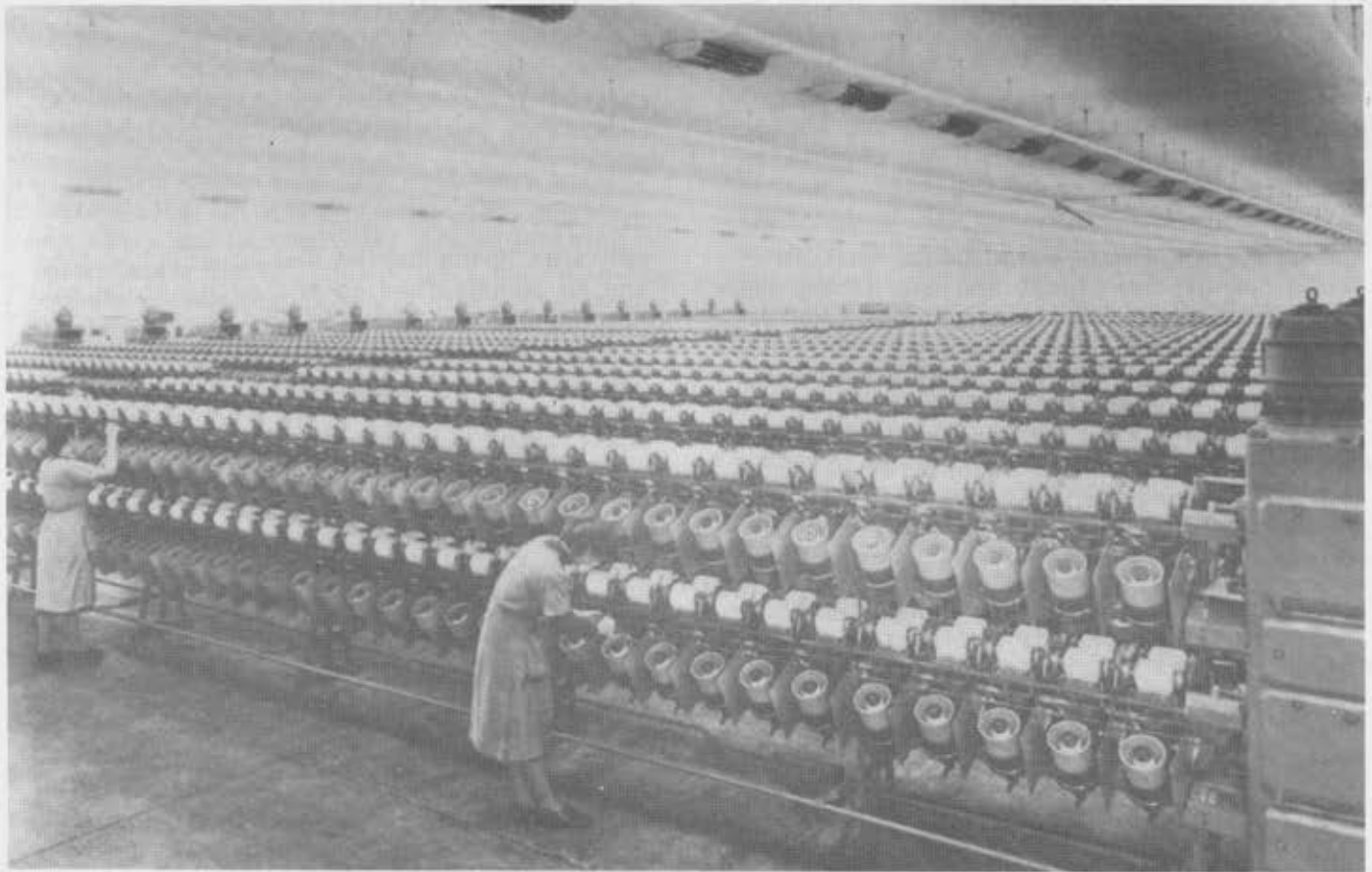
The same workshop discussed what is defined as 'work', how much of women's work is undervalued because it is a skill developed within the home or work which is not generally bought and sold on the market. These are some of the views expressed:

Women have been bypassed in industrial and technological history because:

- they have not been technologists and scientists
- they are becoming unskilled, semi-skilled and de-skilled
- women do not decide which products to produce

Multinational companies collude happily with the patriarchal system they find locally. As Swasti Mitter pointed out:

Employment policies of multinationals shamelessly take advantage of the sexual power relationships within the home. A lot of women are deliberately recruited by multinationals as daughters whose fathers have a stake in their working. The men, who want or need their daughter's or sister's pay, will allow poor wages and working conditions to prevail as long as managers supervise the girls and keep them 'pure'.



Automation in the textile industry, Germany (photo: ILO)

We heard of examples where male workers played disciplinary and oppressive roles against women workers - during an industrial dispute at Control Data (South Korea) and at Levi's in Tennessee where fathers, husbands and older brothers oversee women workers. A speaker from Sri Lanka told the conference how during the recent industrial struggles within the FTZ 'Men were not interested in the same demands, being already higher paid themselves. They sold out in the end and allowed women to be prevented from taking "skilled", i.e. higher paid, jobs such as cutting. They didn't want to meet with women and would humiliate them by making them kneel on the floor.'

The sexual division of labour makes women's interests different from those of men workers. It is in women's interest to unite across national boundaries, to exchange information. Equipped with information women will be in a stronger position to organise a struggle.

Swasti Mitter

In Malaysia and other countries multinationals feed happily on the desire of young women to escape the harsh conditions of rural life and severe parental control. They and their agents aggressively promote themselves as paragons and providers of modernity, individual freedom and an attractive western life style. They invite cosmetics sales agents into the

factories, organise beauty competitions and disco-dancing. Besides promoting a western consumerist notion of what it is to be emancipated and feminine, these 'generous offers' represent in fact a highly sophisticated means of controlling the workforce. They manage to defuse any collective sense of discontent and solidarity among women workers. A worker from Timex told us that now these and similar methods are also being introduced into factories in Scotland.

Against all odds women do manage to organise themselves and when they do they act with impressive militancy. In the FTZs of South Korea, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, massive strikes have been successfully organised by women. This ability to take effective collective action is now being undermined by the disturbing trend among multinationals towards using homeworkers. Never before, it seems, has the struggle against the domestication of women been so important.

We were aware that there were specific management strategies which have been employed to split workers from each other, to stop them developing consciousness by emphasising their individualism and femininity. We need to challenge these divisions both in terms of how women workers validate their own work and how they relate to each other.

Ruth Pearson

Violence Against Women

-health and safety at work

There are many ways in which working in industry adversely affects women's health. Dangerous machinery, poisonous chemicals and dust, sexual harassment, stress and overwork are just some of the difficulties that many women are faced with everyday. Women's work however is not usually seen as dangerous since women are rarely involved in spectacular or heavy accidents.

Employers will inevitably try to get workers to put up with dangerous and stressful work as it will mean more profit for them. Those who end up with the worst jobs are more often than not women - particularly black women in Britain and women in the third world.

Over the last few years there has been much more action and information on working with substances which cause disease. This has meant that a combination of public awareness and union action has brought about better safeguards in some factories, but not for women workers in weaker, less organised sectors. Small non-unionised factory workers, homeworkers and women in factories in newly industrialised countries are usually denied both information on processes and the right to organise to improve their conditions. In most third world countries there are virtually no health and safety regulations. In Hong Kong, for instance, only 12% of factories have any medical facilities at all.

Frequently multinationals will move processes which have been classified as dangerous to a third world country, or ignore safety regulations enforced in the parent country. According to the Centre for Education and Documentation in Bombay, India,

Some multinational corporations have taken advantage of our lax enforcement of occupational health standards. In mid-1981, New Scientist reported on poor working conditions in the asbestos units with multinational corporation connections. Though they took every precaution for workers' safety and health in their own countries (asbestos workers in the west have been very active in pressing for more stringent regulations), the units in India had taken very few anti-pollution or dust control measures.

The same group also reported the trend in India, as in Britain, to farm out dangerous parts of the process to small works or homeworkers unaware of the hazards.

As one woman said:

'For many third world women electronics is a prestige occupation. They are unlikely to know that in the US the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has placed electronics on its select list of "high health-risk" industries.'

A typical example of management attitudes to dangerous jobs was related at the conference by a woman who worked in a small factory in London:

In September 1980 I was asked to solder some strands of wire. I did it. I felt hot and sweaty. By the time I had done ten I felt so hot that I couldn't concentrate. I had a headache. I went to the toilet and collapsed. I was taken to hospital and I was out of work for two weeks. The doctors said I was suffering from hypertension. So you see people like me can suffer from hypertension too! The factory doctor said the fumes from the solder caused it. When I went back to work I refused to do that job. I contacted the Health and Safety Committee and they took up the case with Management, but Management wanted me to do that job. They took no notice.

In addition to the chemical danger to women workers themselves, some substances can damage children in the mother's womb. In very few places of work are women moved to safer processes while they are pregnant. A more likely response is for a woman to be sacked for being pregnant. This is the case in most Free Trade Zones in Southeast Asia, as women with children are regarded by management as being less 'dedicated' than single women.

Most factories in Free Trade Zones are kept very clean, especially electronics plants. This is not out of concern for the workers but to keep the products, i.e. micro-electronics components, clean. In fact, in most zones the health risks are so great for workers that most women are laid off when they are about 25 years old

because they are worn out. 'New' 16- to 18-year-olds are employed in their place. Women who have worked for just a few years in such occupations as microscope worker in an electronics factory are often called 'grannies' as they almost all wear glasses. In a study done in 1981 on electronics workers in Hong Kong, it was found that 90.2% of those using microscopes had eye-strain. They were all women.

Makibaka! published by Friends of the Philippines, Holland, reports that 'many workers not only hurt their eyes but get stomach ulcers from doing such detailed work all day long.' According to another report, on the Ricoh Philippines Watch Company 'the death rate among 16- to 30-year-olds is very high; the most common cause being stomach ulcer and heart attacks.'

So it seems that stress-induced illness is a major hazard for women production line workers. This is because the work is very repetitive and exacting (skilled); women are rarely allowed to stop for long periods; and women are on low wages and long hours; in addition to which they often work overtime and managers are always pressing them to work faster.

Women in Free Trade Zones are almost always denied the right to organise to lower these pressures upon them. Therefore we have heard reports of outbreaks of 'mass spirit possession' or 'hysteria' in response to increased pressure of work in a factory. As Jude Connors said, the myth of hysteria

helps to cover up what are the real hazards of work. In 1982 in a factory in Barnsley making tennis balls, 50 women workers were poisoned by chemical fumes. Six hundred altogether were affected, 24 taken to hospital. One woman aged 29 died a year later. Management, their medical advisers and the press called it mass hysteria. Scientific and medical reports later showed that situation to be caused by the fumes the women were exposed to. The women, eventually through their union, demanded improvements before agreeing to go back to work. This example shows the difficulties of being taken seriously on top of normal male obstacles women meet when they want to raise issues about health.

Sexual harassment is also a major hazard for women at work. It is a very useful weapon for male managers to make female workers feel inferior and weak and therefore less capable of working to improve their own conditions.

[Sexual harassment] can take many forms - repeated comments about your body, your hair, or your clothes, unwanted physical contact or a general 'putdown' of how women do their jobs. Sexual harassment is used by men who feel inadequate or threatened by women and who need to show their power over women. It is not 'just a bit of fun' as it has serious effects on women's work.

*Tess Gill
(Women and Work Hazards Group)*



Christine Roche

In the Philippines, 'Sexual abuse of women by the male managers and supervisors is common given that they control the employment of the workers, and the number of abortions and abandoned babies is on the increase. At Mattel, a toy-making firm, for instance, sexual harassment is so rife that the workers call it "Motel".'

Women who are made redundant from factories at a young age are often unable or unwilling to return to their families and remain in the areas around the zones. Many of them are forced into prostitution as their only means of survival. Thus they enter another dangerous stressful occupation.

It was clear from the conference that women themselves must exchange information on the health risks of work as the information is rarely available from management, and that health and safety standards are central to workers' demands.

Women Organising -do trade unions help?

Organising and taking collective action around work and related issues is the only way forward for women workers. How women should organise was sometimes the basis for ideological or strategic debate at the conference but the feeling was clear that collective action is a necessity.

Many participants, themselves trade unionists, saw unions, as a structure and as a movement, to be useful in varying degrees, the problems lying more with what they have been historically than with what they could be. In the words of one workshop leader: 'They still reflect the values of the male-dominated 19th century in which they were founded.'

The same speaker described how in the clothing industry - with an overwhelmingly female workforce - her own union has been dominated by men both on the shop floor and on the executive. Designed for men without domestic responsibilities, unions have discouraged and prevented women from participating in numbers that reflect their industrial contribution. As a result their jobs have been devalued or undervalued, their needs have not been made union demands and they remain in lower paid, lower status jobs, skilled or not.

Although women in such unions are formally organised this description did not differ much from another given in the case study session on textiles: in Brazil, where very few (about 10%) women workers are organised, 'the trade unions are dominated and run by men who will only take up limited issues for women, usually those which also affect them, for example, accidents.'

In the Women Organising workshop we heard a case which highlights the problems faced and overcome by women who, whilst fighting for their unions to be recognised, are also being oppressed by their union 'brothers'.

In Sri Lanka it's harder because trade union access to Free Trade Zones is restricted and talking about it is discouraged. High unemployment means jobs are sought after and the workers want to keep them - they are threatened if they join a trade union. They can't participate in work stoppages because of lost pay and in the end negotiate with management themselves. There are phoney 'workers' councils' but really it's management. If there are no trade unions then they must organise outside the

factory at the Women's Centre to let them meet women who have already organised - some Free Trade Zones have trade unions outside the zone. Women must share experiences and organise together. Because Free Trade Zones are 90% women then women must be the organisers. Men are not interested in the same demands, being already higher paid. They sold out in the end and allowed women to be prevented from taking 'skilled' jobs, e.g. cutting. They didn't want to meet with women and would humiliate them by making them kneel on the floor, like punishment at school, preventing them from working.

For trying to organise, women would be sacked on the pretext that they were not able to meet artificially high production demands. Now women are agreeing production limits amongst themselves to prevent this happening. Men are not interested in what women say, so women must organise themselves.

A speaker from Sri Lanka

These women did most of their organising at a women's centre outside of work, a tactic which might be useful for women who need a kind of structure and support which trade unionism has so far failed to provide.

In Northern Ireland, according to Colette, a participant from Derry, 'women have long been wage earners because of the shortage of work for men, yet women are still unorganised and are now forced into part-time work.'

Women and minorities will have to make their own inroads into the movement. In Britain and most other countries many women face the additional imposed inequality of racial discrimination. Some women described the total lack of understanding towards black women and their communities. Is the answer then to organise separately? Most thought not; that it would only disperse our efforts as worker activists. In recognising our own and each other's strengths we can organise successfully. As Colette said: 'First analyse and understand your own positions and then form a strategy for action' - as women, as minorities, and as trade unionists.

There is an apparent contradiction between the need for women to organise locally on issues at hand and the need for international worker solidarity. This can be largely overcome by considering local issues in an international perspective, for example the relationships between current UK wage and job cuts, the movement of capital and the exploitation of

workers elsewhere. The value of trade union internationalism was also discussed in the workshop on Multinational Strategies:

A lot of discussion on the workshop centred on what the response of the British labour movement was to the present situation, and how one introduces any degree of internationalism into the strategies of a labour force which is defensive, trying to defend its own position working with British capital and with international capital in this country. I think this question was quite catalytic in this respect as it seems quite obvious that when we are looking at demands like import controls we have got to realise that there is the danger that we are falling into the trap of capital and are fighting for one set of workers' interests against another. We are also aware that import controls, as an isolated demand, are not necessarily going to guarantee anybody's job but they may very well guarantee profits for firms in the short run.

Ruth Pearson

In this respect trade unions could be playing a more innovative role in looking at alternative forms of organising and working at changing the relationship between labour and capital, and in recognising the value of work that has hitherto gone officially unrecognised or undervalued because it is done by women. This includes all forms of domestic work in addition to industrial homeworking.

Homeworkers have not been a priority concern for most labour organisations. Because they do not share a common workplace they do not fall easily within the scope of conventional trade union tactics. Attempts at contacting, let alone organising, homeworkers have been fraught with difficulties. In cases we heard from Holland, South London and India the obstacles to organising often stemmed from the very situations and conditions which make this type of work the only alternative or the only apparent alternative for some women. Homeworking is not a new phenomenon and conditions for homeworkers are not getting any better. Support for better conditions and regulations could exist if more labour organisers made it a priority.

Despite strong criticisms of trade unions and their failure to meet the needs of women workers, women did express concern over the current worldwide attack on trade unionism. Either through legislation or company action it is becoming harder for unions to reach the unorganised and to carry out their work on the shop floor. Examples of this trend were given throughout the day:

- in Free Trade Zones, where real unions are often banned, bogus 'workers' councils' or 'yellow' unions are set up by the company

- other company tactics to get the workers to identify with the corporate image (such as 'beauty competitions') inhibit their consciousness as workers and undermine their cultural identity
- union activists in Brazil cannot always travel freely so valuable communication with other trade unionists is restricted
- anti-union legislation such as the 1982 Employment Act in Britain is being introduced to limit the right to organise in trade unions and to curtail acts of international solidarity by workers
- companies often selectively enforce compulsory redundancy on shop floor activists and officials

As Shanmati Jagdeo, a former shop steward, told us: 'I was sacked with four months' pay after eleven years of service. I took management to the Industrial Tribunal in 1981. After two and a half years I won the case on medical grounds. Then I couldn't find a job, so now I am in college studying Industrial Relations.'

The point was made emphatically that women want unions and that they want their share of the trade union movement - on their own terms. They expressed optimism about their future in it and their ability to make it work for them. As Helen Foreman said, 'It is a strong union organisation which stands between workers and management. Only by skilled workers standing together with others can we hope to stop exploitation.'

More than once it was said that even though unions are male dominated women must get into the leadership, make themselves known, make themselves heard, raise the consciousness of other women and raise issues on behalf of their sisters. Increasingly women are organising, in different ways and for different reasons. Trade unions can learn from these other types of organisation but they will do little or nothing on their own. They can help in the struggle only if we make them part of our strategy for organising.

What impressed me about the women at the conference was that we knew what we were after. We ... should strive to make greater efforts to raise consciousness within our ranks. We should take advantage of every opportunity. The women at the conference were very much aware of the problems and of what is needed to bring about a solution. We want organisation to see it through.

Gertie Roche

New Technology -our future or our fate?

'There are only two questions to be asked about New Technology - who controls it and who benefits from it?' This is how one conference participant summed up the issue of New Technology and women workers.

The answers were clear: NT is designed and controlled by multinational companies and used by them to ensure and enhance profits. The development of NT has revolutionised industrial processes and international communications and has done more to polarise the divisions between capital and labour than any single event since the industrial revolution in the 18th century. The uses to which NT is put now reflect the priorities and preferences of international capital.

NEW TECHNOLOGICAL IRONIES

The irony of NT is that while on the one hand it is seen to be clean, progressive and labour-saving - freeing labour from long hours of monotonous work to enjoy leisure time - in practice the introduction of NT has led to job losses and de-skilling. NT has enabled multinational companies to fragment and to relocate all or part of their production processes and by doing so to penalise labour forces in highly industrialised countries for their 'high labour costs' and exploit cheap labour in third world countries. It has also created a small elite of highly skilled NT designers - mainly men - in the west alongside the unemployed and a mass labour force of assembly line workers - mainly women - in third world countries.

It is no irony that women's jobs both in the west and in the third world have been the most affected by NT. Traditionally women's jobs in the west have been in the older industries, such as clothing and textiles: low paid, 'low skilled' work - the kind of work most likely to be mechanised. Thus many women in the west have lost their jobs. At the same time NT has itself generated a whole new range of assembly line jobs and these are specifically aimed at the meticulous attention to detail of third world women workers. The introduction of NT in the west has 'saved the labour' of women only by taking their jobs away and facilitated the exploitation of women in third world countries by enabling multinational companies to relocate the most labour intensive parts of their

production processes to the Free Trade Zones and Export Processing Zones of Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Malaysia.

IMPACT ON INDUSTRY

The conference looked at the various ways in which technological change had accelerated and shaped the internationalisation of labour and the international divisions of labour in recent decades. It was seen firstly that NT was not new work but a different mode of work - small, cheap and easily transportable. NT is about smallness - miniaturisation. It is this quality that facilitates the relocation of many production processes.

Secondly, it was clear to everyone that micro-electronics combined with new communications systems had made possible very cheap personal and data communication. This affects not only the manufacturing sector but also the service sector. We looked at the example of clerical functions like data entry which can now be done in ex-colonies and then flown back on magnetic tape or relayed by satellite. One US company can do a whole data entry job in Barbados for the cost of floor space alone for similar workers and machines in New York.

Thirdly, NT affects the international division of labour by de-skilling and fragmenting work. Traditionally, in textiles, access to a skilled labour force was



Electronics factory, Brazil (photo: John Humphrey)

essential. Now the production process is automated and can be carried out by 'unskilled' workers after a three to six week training period. This process of de-skilling is inextricably linked to the fragmentation of production processes made possible by NT and to the growth of home-working in the areas of clothing and electronics in recent years.

The micro-electronics industry itself is a vivid example of this fragmentation, routinising and new division of labour. In California's Silicon Valley, for example, research and development work is carried out by well paid, usually male, scientists and engineers. Circuits are then photographically etched onto layers of silicon in nearby assembly plants by women - 50% of whom are Asian or Latin - for low wages in highly pressurised working conditions. The next stage is relocated to Southeast Asia where the silicon slices are cut up, bonded onto circuit boards, sealed in ceramic coating and tested. From there the components are either sent to other third world countries to be assembled into watches, etc. or sent back to the US to be incorporated into bulkier products such as computers.

This fragmentation and de-skilling has serious consequences for international links and labour solidarity. Workers have no knowledge of how their product fits into the whole process - nor do they know how to recognise and re-deploy skills they have.

The economic benefits to companies of using NT are staggering. Researchers have found that computer-aided design reduces to an hour the duration of some clothing manufacturing processes which previously took about four days. Thus productivity could increase from two to six times. In ten years' time when the micro-chip is used throughout the whole clothing industry in industrialised countries, third world clothing manufacturers may not only lose their competitive edge in western markets but multinational companies with clothing plants in Sri Lanka and elsewhere may start moving back to the west because of the cost advantages of the new technology. The effect of this on third world countries' economies would be very serious: at present textiles and garments represent over 25% of manufactured exports for countries such as Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Colombia and the Philippines.

IMPACT ON WORKING CONDITIONS

The development of NT has made possible a whole new set of management techniques for worker control and manipulation. Some machines when switched on at the beginning of the work period can start by telling the worker 'You have been late three times this week. Please report to the office.' Micro-electronically controlled assembly lines can be speeded up by management to increase production output. Production standards based on highly sophisticated time and motion studies are used to force workers (for example, in factories in



Mexico) to work at very high speeds. These standards are used not as targets but as minimum production levels. De-skilling caused by NT has enabled increased productivity. Complex operations are broken down into simpler ones permitting more rapid assembly. The pace of work, which ties workers to the machines and de-humanises assembly workers, is a crucial element in furthering worker control and preventing inter-factory worker solidarity.

JOB LOSSES

The conference was informed that it was impossible to state accurately the number of jobs lost in the clothing and textiles industries due to the introduction of NT or to predict future job losses. Nevertheless it was obvious that in the first world women's jobs have been most affected. For example, in the clothing industry in Australia, there was a decline of 13% in women's employment between 1971 and 1979 - although there was an increase in men's employment of 9.1% in the same period. Since 1970 women have been employed gradually in some skilled jobs such as cutting - previously an all-male bastion - but the introduction of machines which use laser beams and can cut a whole suit in five minutes is likely to put a stop to that trend, since the number of cutters required must drop drastically. Worldwide, though it will take another ten years for NT to begin to displace the sewing machine, the impact on clothing manufacture will be dramatic and with it the impact on women's employment. In many cases employers who introduced NT in clothing rely on natural wastage to reduce staff numbers. Thus women who leave work due to pregnancy or domestic responsibilities are not replaced, and women's jobs are lost quietly and invisibly. There is no obvious sign of women's jobs being retrenched. The invisible nature of these job losses reinforces the vulnerability of women in the workforce. It is not noticed, therefore no one creates an outcry.

RESPONSES TO DATE

In the west responses to the introduction of NT by organised labour have varied from outright resistance to negotiated agreements. The former has never been successful in saving jobs in the long term but the latter approach has achieved substantial agreements on the introduction of NT, general principles and conditions for its use and some control over its effects. Such agreements to date have been achieved by sections of the car industry, print workers and telecommunications workers, that is, the most highly organised sections of the labour market.

It is women however who constitute the least organised, least skilled and most

vulnerable sections of the labour force and whose jobs are lost quietly and without trade union fuss. The need for women workers to organise to share information and ensure their future employment is obvious.

FUTURE OR FATE?

'Women are not good with machines' is a catchphrase with which we are all familiar. The notion has served well to exclude women from highly paid, highly valued technical jobs. Only 7% of all women employed worked in the UK engineering industry in 1980. Facts like this are explained simply in terms of the above myth. Another common idea is that all technology is 'neutral'. But in reality NT is far from sexless - it is male designed, defined and dominated. Thus women are both excluded and discouraged or else refuse to participate because of their social and political views on the use and abuse of NT.

Women must take on NT on our own terms - we must develop a feminist strategy which takes into account automatically our values and priorities. Technological change could be used to benefit all people and women in particular - many jobs done by women, both domestic and paid, are tedious, hard and repetitive and could be made less burdensome by NT. NT could enhance the quality of our lives and not simply displace or de-skill workers or add to the monotony of work. Technological change holds the potential to free workers, to increase community services and to shorten our working week.

How can women now excluded and discouraged from understanding and becoming involved with NT gain control of existing technology and determine future developments? The conference agreed that the first step was for women to work together both in the women's movement and in the trade union movement to educate ourselves about NT. We must take every opportunity to gain access to information in order to demystify NT and raise awareness of its potential, both negative and positive. We must organise to design NT appropriate to our needs and aspirations which make sense in terms of our social and political values. Above all we must challenge the myth that NT's future use is inevitable, indisputable and pre-ordained.

One thing seems certain - new technology is unlikely to be adapted to our needs unless we are in a position to say what our needs are and to organise to make sure that they are met.

Ursula Huwe

Homeworking

-the hidden labour force

'Homeworking is on the increase' we heard, but the difficulties of identification and organisation remain unchanged. Who are they? Why do they work? And why is this sector so important? were some of the questions broached by the speakers and the workshop on Homeworkers.

Homeworkers, by definition, work at home, are mainly women, work very long hours and are amongst the lowest paid. Homeworking is by no means a new phenomenon. Traditionally it has been associated with the clothing industries, but speakers pointed out that with increasing fragmentation of production processes homeworking is now used in a wide range of industries such as printing, packaging, leatherwork, jewellery, envelope addressing, buttons and belts, toys, and more recently, electronics and computing.

The women often work very long hours for unbelievably low wages. A speaker from Holland said that the majority of homeworkers there are on piece rates and earn far less than 40% of the statutory minimum monthly wage, which is f2048,80 (£464.58p). In England, the Low Pay Unit showed that a great many workers earn 50p - 60p an hour, with some earning as little as 20p.

Who do women take on such jobs? A short answer to this is poverty, combined with domestic constraints. The main group of homeworkers are women with family commitments which prevent them from leaving home. Typically, they have young children and/or elderly or disabled relatives. The general lack of childcare facilities and day centres for the elderly/disabled is the biggest single factor leading to the prevalence of homeworkers. Many women who previously worked in factories take on homework once they start to raise a family.

We also heard that, amongst this group, immigrant women make up a significant proportion. Racism and sexism in their various forms have given rise to a substantial amount of homeworking within Asian and Cypriot communities in Britain, and Turkish women in Holland. Homeworking presumes a certain flexibility in combining paid work with domestic work. But the advantages of this flexibility are doubtful - women express their boredom, isolation and poverty:



Electronics worker, Brasil (photo: John Humphrey)

You get up in the morning and there it is - a mountain of large plastic bags full of work to be done. You wonder if you can get through yet another day of work, loneliness and boredom. You know you will because you've got to. You've got to work hard because the wages are poor. You can't afford to chat to friends because time is money. People who don't work at home don't realise just what it's like. There is no time to spare. They seem to think that the work is there just in case you feel like doing it. They don't know what it's like to have no holiday pay, to have to work no matter how you feel because there will be no sick pay. And who can afford to have a weekend off? And what about when your machine breaks down and you wait for a day or two for the mechanic - who cares if your wages are short?

*Nellie
Outworkers' Own no 5*

The health hazards faced by homeworkers are many - some obvious and immediate, and others more long term. Sewing machines and industrial irons which are improperly mounted can cause nausea and back pain. Many homes do not have adequate wiring for machines which may require higher voltage sockets, creating fire risks and causing electric shocks. Added dust and dirt only increase the continuous round of housework.

The work of making costume jewellery is not unlike that of assembling minute electronic components:

At home your work becomes your life, it takes over, nothing else is important. In my case it took up a great deal of room in the living room. I couldn't put it anywhere else and even when I stopped working, which I rarely did, it was there defying me not to start again. All the paraphernalia attached to the job, the varnish and its smell, the glue that wouldn't wash out, the problem of having razor blades around, the dust from the cork butts and metal filings from the rings were all extra problems. I scraped my knuckles so often with the file, smoothing the edges of often as many as 500 rings, that even the prospect of having to do it brought me near to tears. The nylon thread had to be pulled very tight and cut my fingers - deep cuts which took ages to heal and often reopened. Force sprained my wrist turning a rod ... the close work in artificial light ... has damaged my already none too good eyesight. I seem to work all the hours God sent, from morning till late at night, often it's early hours, and sometimes through the night to meet deadlines. I worked when I was ill. I wasn't entitled to sick pay.

*Valda (F Field: 70 years on:
A New Report on Homeworking)*

Industry uses such exploitative methods to disperse risks and reduce labour costs. New industries quite commonly see homeworkers as a pool of cheap, docile labour. In an increasing economic recession, with the decline of manufacturing in the inner city areas where immigrants are concentrated, vulnerable groups like women - especially immigrant women - and the elderly are forced to do homework. Local advertisements attract the housebound and unemployed, while firms avoid the expense of overheads: rent, heat, light and the running costs of machinery. Most homeworkers bear these expenses themselves and even provide their own equipment, sewing machines being a common example.

Homeworkers are the cheapest and most flexible sector of labour available.

Speakers pointed out that their legal rights are minimal; that they usually are classed as self-employed, thus absolving firms from any obligations under employment and health and safety legislation. For the workers, the self-employed status is a fallacy - they have none of the implied control over their workloads and schedules. In fact they usually work for one employer only and are thus vulnerable to manipulation by that firm, which can expand or contract its workforce at will in accordance with a fluctuating market. Some firms impose restrictions on weekly earnings by delivering a set amount of work, while others delay payment until each batch is completed, delivered and checked.

Being scattered and isolated homeworkers rarely come into contact with one another, are therefore not organised and are rarely union members. Even their exact numbers are unknown. Herein lies one of the major problems relating to this sector. The pressures that force them to accept such work also exclude them from activities outside the home, especially activities necessary for organising. Commonly, their only contact with the outside world is through the usually male agent delivering more work. They are invisible statistically - if they stay at home they must be 'housewives' - and come low in the political priorities of the factory-based structures of trade unions with their 'male breadwinner' bias.

Having noted the appalling conditions of these workers, how can the problems be attacked? We heard how, in the Philippines, multinational corporations were now putting out electronics work to homeworkers as a result of trade union militancy in factories. The tradition of the factory-based male breadwinner has not held true for a very long time. Capital has been quick to exploit women wherever and however it can; labour organisations must also be forced to widen their focus.

New technology has already fragmented production processes, creating many and deep divisions among workers. Recent developments in communications (e.g. cabling and satellites) have long term implications for all of us. Homeworking will increase rapidly through, for example, teleworking with VDUs and computer terminals. Already evidence from the US shows the resulting de-skilling, lowering of wages and job losses in factories and offices. Concerted action is therefore of paramount importance. However, the first and most frequent problem faced by researchers and activists in this field is that of identifying the workers. Women are reluctant to talk of their work for



Homeworking (photo: Laurie Sparham/Network)

fear of being seen as informers, as working illegally, or out of loyalty to their own community. Another major problem identified by the workshop related to the women's scepticism about the trade unions' ability to help. (Trade unions in Britain have not been prominent in the fight against racism and sexism.)

Because the majority of homeworkers are women who are doubly disadvantaged on the grounds of gender and race, the workshop defined points of action taking both exploitations into account.

Women need to organise around the issues of the legal status and working conditions of homeworkers. Trade unions must grapple with the long term implications of the trend towards increased homeworking. As long as homeworkers are forced to work for low wages and in poor conditions they unwittingly remain a threat to the unions' own members.

The suggestion that homeworkers be persuaded to join a union is therefore problematic and no one at the conference underestimated the difficulties. The first step is to gain the trust of homeworkers. In Holland women's groups have proved to be invaluable in this way. One very positive outcome of the conference was that although there were clearly no easy answers, many different approaches to improving the position of homeworkers were shown to be possible. In India, for instance, there is the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a co-operative in which women have taken control over all aspects of their own employment. In Britain campaign work in Leicester, Camden, Haringey and Islington has begun to tackle the problem of identifying workers, while similarly in Tilburg, Holland, the Centre for Development Co-operation has been working with Turkish women. Action research like this is of vital importance if homeworkers are to organise themselves, cut across traditional ideas and become recognised as real workers.

International Links

-working together worldwide

What is predominant is a very local and nationalist perspective on labour problems. Clearly the major experience vis-à-vis the industries looked at today show that it is very important to have an international perspective.

Joji Carino

International worker solidarity is not automatic, nor is it a solution to workers' struggles. It is a practical viewpoint derived from links established and developed by workers' organisations including trade unions, labour activists and other mediators.

Through international links, workers are able to exchange information about the products they make, the processes they use, the companies they work for and the struggles, won and lost, of other workers.

International links are especially valuable for workers for whom organising within their own unions is itself a struggle. This is particularly the case for women working industrially who cannot escape male oppression even within their trade union. Linking with other women can provide information and moral (and to some extent) financial support lacking in their own workplace. The isolation of industrial action can be broken and new strength gained even from letters of encouragement from women in other parts of the world.

Where trade unions are effectively banned as in Free Trade Zones, international links help women organise in other ways, outside the zone or without formal trade union support. Ideas can be extracted from the tactics and strategies used by one set of workers and adapted to suit an industrial action elsewhere.

In almost every workshop of the conference the opinion was shared that international links were crucial for women working in industries dominated by multinational corporations. Multinationals have internationalised industry on an unprecedented scale: the manufacturing processes of just one product are often split between more than one country and workers in each have little or no information

about the other processes involved, the pay and conditions of the other workers or the nature and use of the product itself. Indeed, as in the case of silicon chips, 'one industry's product is another's process' (Ursula Huws). Manipulation of this information gap is part of the multinational strategy to divide and isolate workers.

National boundaries have been less of a hindrance to multinational strategies than an effective means of keeping labour divided. Such 'internationalism' can only be fought by an internationalist strategy of solidarity.

As pointed out in the workshop on the 'multinational boss', however, there is a danger in making too many global generalisations; the pace of change is different in different industries, in different countries. In the textile industry, for example, some parts of the industry are in one phase of internationalisation, moving to the third world to take advantage of low labour costs; while in another area the production process has been automated to the point where it is being moved back to the first world.

This staggering of phases can provide an opportunity to form links to share information on company tactics and strategy as well as factors related to production such as health and safety and automation. As Joji Carino pointed out:

International trade union solidarity has very practical origins - it was and is needed to make strikes effective. Female workers in transnational corporations in the third world need the backing of organised workers in the west to win union negotiations, collective bargaining power and better conditions. Their winning the rights will mean an end to so-called 'cheap labour countries'. Workers in the west can learn from the experience inside Free Trade Zones as these start to be introduced into industrialised countries.

Globally, working women are not in equivalent or necessarily comparable situations but they do share common interests; in this case, their bosses and the product of their labour.

It was argued at the conference that first world and third world women cannot all undertake the same strategies and tactics for industrial action or restructuring. While recognising the poor working conditions of women in the first world, with the even worse conditions of black women, the situations facing women in underdeveloped countries are much more severe. Striking for better pay or conditions is less bearable when there are no other paid jobs and when the prevailing social and political forces are many times more oppressive. Solidarity links could help point out the parallels between British women in regions of very high unemployment and black women in Britain, if that is what is needed. Also, alternative ways of working such as job sharing are helpful in a limited way for British and other first world women working at well paid industrial or occupational rates but job sharing is a financial impossibility for women in low paid work everywhere and especially in the third world.

But common interests do exist and women are able to unite through them, recognising each others' needs and oppressions because of race, class and gender.

Although we share common interests, finding them and developing a solidarity based on them is only part of what we must do. In fighting the international boss, women must also recognise their differences and the divisions that have been created by industrial strategies and the economic and political forces with which they interact. This applies nationally as well as internationally so that what is called for is a challenge to the dominant assumptions in our own countries and localities. Racist and regional biases nationally rest on the same structures and values that are blocks to international solidarity. As such, they are parts of a common problem, requiring, if not a common solution, than a solution that draws them together to show up the links in a system that flourishes by dividing workers.

The increasing concentration of resources in international capital and the fragmentation of work and consequent isolation of workers has clear implications for establishing international links. Although we were warned about the naivety of thinking this would be easy and heard counter-arguments from those who think it politically wrong or just an ineffectual approach, most agreed that from our experiences it is a practical and necessary undertaking.

Through linking for solidarity and information exchange a wide range of organisations, interest groups and activists

can and should be drawn together. How a network is developed depends upon available resources and specific group interests and needs. Two main types were talked about during the day, sometimes in the same breath, but each clearly emerged with its own focus and methodology:

Information exchange - sharing information between groups of workers and labour organisers on matters close to their work such as company movements, product and design changes, technological change in processes, health and safety aspects of materials and processes, legislative changes in influential countries which have implications for workers elsewhere (e.g. the 1982 Employment Act in Britain) and news of other workers' and women's struggles. Newsletters, journals and magazines are a valuable medium of information exchange.

Solidarity - incorporating practical actions in support of other groups of workers. These actions can be particularly effective in the same industry but can spread to allied industries and consumers' and human rights groups. They can also act as morale boosters and fund-raisers for workers organising or taking industrial action; and as a means of raising the level of public awareness and generating support to influence government and trade union policies. One suggestion came from the textiles industry session:

This is an issue close to ourselves: we all wear clothes. We should ask ourselves who made them, where did we buy them, etc. and begin to consider a broad campaign strategy around clothes - personalise the issue - not by a boycott but a consciousness-raising campaign showing the relationship between maker and buyer.

Trade unions are the obvious but not the only means through which networks could be established. They already have the bureaucracies through which information can be disseminated and the capability to internationalise workers' struggles. In fact, some trade unions have formed company combines of shop stewards within single multinational companies such as Fords. This is useful for workers who have the advantage of being recognised members of a large and powerful union, but it does not reach the unorganised and poorly organised who are mainly women.

Most women at the conference agreed that our first aim should be to establish networks which reach not only unionised workers but the non-unionised shop floor and homeworkers and their support organisations.

Conclusion

The road to development for third world countries is often described in terms of industrial and economic growth. No one, least of all third world governments, any longer holds many illusions about the beneficiaries of such growth. But the survival of most third world governments is now dependent on foreign investment (or aid) and this in turn is dependent on an increasing militarisation of their societies and repression of their workforces.

Meanwhile we in the west, whether in paid employment or unwaged, passively and actively condone an international economic and political order which rests on injustice, inequalities, profits for the few and poverty for the many.

For the women who organised this conference, Women Working Worldwide, perhaps the single most important outcome of the day was the clarity with which women present grasped the international connections and context of our employment or unemployment. We saw where we fitted into the multinational economic order.

Far from being daunted by the international pressure and power of this order women at the conference identified very clear areas for education and action. The common thread running through all the specific areas we discussed was the need to continue to inform ourselves and others; to share resources and information; to make direct contact with groups working in these industries and campaigning on these issues; to organise solidarity actions in support of specific women's struggles; to campaign in the UK and internationally on the issues affecting and determining women's employment.

In order to facilitate these exchanges and actions the Women Working Worldwide Collective is currently looking for funding to establish a research/action project, resource centre and information exchange network.

RESOURCES

Books

- DOES KHAKI BECOME YOU?: THE MILITARISATION OF WOMEN'S LIVES, Cynthia Enloe, London, Pluto Press, 1983
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN'S PLACE: WOMEN IN SINGAPORE, Aline K Wong, London, Change International Reports, 1980
FEMMES ET MULTINATIONALES, Andree Michel, Agnes Fatoumata-Diarra, Helene Aghessi-Bos Santos, Paris, Editions Karthala
FIGHTBACK SAYS A WOMAN, Clotil Walcott, The Hague, Institute of Development Studies, 1980
FINDING A VOICE: ASIAN WOMEN IN BRITAIN, Amrit Wilson, London, Virago, 1978
FOR A FEW DOLLARS...MORE, London, WOW Campaigns/Counter Information Service, 1981
FUTURE TECHNOLOGY AND WOMEN Proceedings of Conference March 1981, San Diego, Women's Studies Dept, State University
GETTING IT TOGETHER: WOMEN AS TRADE UNIONISTS, Jenny Beale, London, Pluto Press, 1982
HIDDEN ARMY, Simon Crine, London, Low Pay Unit, 1980
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN AND NEW TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE, Women's International Bulletin 28, Rome, ISIS, 1983
THE LACEMAKERS OF NARSAPUR: INDIAN HOUSEWIVES PRODUCE FOR THE WORLD MARKET, Maria Mies, London, Zed Press, 1982
MALAYSIAN WOMEN: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES, Consumers Association of Penang, 1983
OF COMMON CLOTH: WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL TEXTILE INDUSTRY, Ed. Wendy Chapkis and Cynthia Enloe, Amsterdam, Transnational Institute, 1983
OFFICE WORKERS' SURVIVAL HANDBOOK: A GUIDE TO FIGHTING HEALTH HAZARDS IN THE OFFICE, Women and Work Hazards Group, London, British Soc. for Social Responsibility in Sc. 1981
THE PHILIPPINES: CANVASSES OF WOMEN IN CRISIS, Maria C Villariba, London, Change International Reports, 1983
THE PLIGHT OF ASIAN WORKERS IN ELECTRONICS, Christian Conf. on Asia/Urban Rural Mission, 57 Peking Rd, 5/7 Kwloon, Hongkong, 1982
STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE: WOMEN WORKERS IN ASIA, Christian Conf. on Asia/Urban Rural Mission, Hongkong, 1981
WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT: A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR ORGANISATION AND ACTION, Rome, ISIS, 1983
WOMEN AND MEN IN THE INTERNATIONAL DIVISION OF LABOR, Ed. June Nash, New York, University of New York Press, 1983
WOMEN AND NEW TECHNOLOGY, Women's International Bulletin 24, Rome, ISIS, 1982
WOMEN AND NEW TECHNOLOGY, Scarlet Women 14, North Shields, UK, January 1982
WOMEN'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, Esher Boserup, London, Allen and Unwin, 1980
WOMEN'S WORK, WOMEN'S HEALTH, MYTHS AND REALITIES, J M Stellman, New York, Pantheon Books, 1977

Articles and Papers

- 'The Apparel Industry', Special Issue, NACLA Report on the Americas, Vol XI/No 3, 1977, (PO Box 57, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025)
'Changing Role of S E Asian Women: The Global Assembly Line and the Social Manipulation of Women on the Job', Special Joint Issue, SOUTHEAST ASIA CHRONICLE and PACIFIC RESEARCH, SRC Issue 66 1979, PSC Issue Vol 9/No 5-6 1978
'Delicate Bonds: The Global Semiconductor Industry', Special Issue, PACIFIC RESEARCH, Vol XI/No 1, 1980
'Free Trade Zones and Industrialization of Asia', Special Issue, AMPO JAPAN AND ASIA QUARTERLY REVIEW, Vol 8/No 4 and Vol 9/1-2, 1977
'Homeworking in the London Clothing Industry', Catherine Hakim, EMPLOYMENT GAZETTE, September 1982
'Imperialism in the Silicon Age', A Sivanandan, RACE AND CLASS, Vol 21/No 2, 1979
'Life on the Global Assembly Line', Barbara Ehrenreich and Annette Fuentes, MS 53, January 1981 (370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017)
'New Technology, Fragmentation of the Production Process and the Rise of Homeworking', Swasti Mitter, Dept of Business Studies, Brighton Polytechnic, UK (unpub. paper)
'Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers: An Analysis of Women's Employment in Third World Export Manufacturing', Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, FEMINIST REVIEW 7, 1981
'Sex and Skill: Notes towards a Feminist Economics', Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor, FEMINIST REVIEW 6, 1980
'Women in Asia', Special Issue, BALAI ASIAN JOURNAL, Vol II/No 4, 1981 (PO Box SM 366, Manila)
'Women and Chips', SPARE RIB 83, June 1979, (27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1)
'Women and Multinationals', Special Issue, MULTINATIONAL MONITOR, August 1983

Periodicals

ANF, Alternative News and Features, 4A Bhagwan Dass Road, New Delhi 110001
ASIA LINK, bi-monthly newsletter, Center for the Progress of Peoples, 48 Princess Margaret Rd, 1/F Kowloon, Hongkong
ASIA MONITOR, Resource Centre, 2 Man Wan Rd, 17/C Kowloon, Hongkong and 464 19th St, Oakland, California 94612
CTC REPORTER, Center on Transnational Corporations, Room BR-1005, United Nations, New York, NY 10017
FEMINIST REVIEW, 11 Carleton Gardens, Brecknock Rd, London N19
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR REPORTS, bi-monthly, 300 Oxford Rd, Manchester M13
MANUSHI, C1/202 Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi 110024
MULTINATIONAL MONITOR, monthly, PO Box 19312, Washington DC 20036
NILS, Newsletter of International Labour Studies, Galileistraat 130, 2561 TK, The Hague
OUTWORKERS OWN, Bulletin of Leicester Outwork Campaign, 32 De Montfort Street, Leicester, UK
TRANSNATIONAL BRIEF, Bulletin of Women's Employment Rights Campaign and Transnational Co-operative, GPO Box 161, Sydney, New South Wales 20001
VOICE OF WOMEN: A Sri Lankan Journal for Women's Emancipation, 529 Baudhdhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 8
WOMEN AND GLOBAL CORPORATIONS, Newsletter of American Friends Service Committee, Nationwide Women's Program, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

Centres and Groups

CANADA ASIA WORKING GROUP, 11 Madison Avenue, Toronto
CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION, Korvelseweg 127, 5025 J C Tilburg, The Netherlands
CENTRE FOR EDUCATION AND DOCUMENTATION, 3 Suleman Chambers, 4 Battery St, Behind Regal Cinema, Bombay 400039
CENTRO DE INVESTIGACION PARA LA ACCION FEMENINA (CIPAF), Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, 60 New Rajdhani, Delhi 92
CENTER FOR WOMEN'S RESOURCES (CWR), Rm 403 FMSG Building, New York St, Cor E Rodriguez Sr. Ave, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines
CENTRUM VOOR OUTWIKKELINGSSAMENWERKING (COS), Korvelseweg 127, 5025 JC, Tilburg, The Netherlands
CHANGE INTERNATIONAL REPORTS, 29 Great James St, London WC1
CONNEXIONS, 4228 Telegraph Ave, Oakland, California 94609
CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION OF PENANG, 27 Kelawei Rd, Penang
CONTEMPORARY ARCHIVE ON LATIN AMERICA (CALA), 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1
CORPORATE DATA EXCHANGE (CDE), 198 Broadway 706-7 New York, NY 10038
COUNTER INFORMATION SERVICE (CIS), 9 Poland St, London W1
DATA CENTER, 464 19th St, Oakland, California 94612
EAST WEST CENTER, 1777 East West Rd, Honolulu, Hawaii 96848
INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton, UK
INSTITUTO LATINOAMERICANO DE ESTUDIOS TRANSNACIONALES (ILET), Apartado Postal 85-025, Mexico
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION (ISRE), Carol Mansion, 35 Sitladevi Temple Rd, Mahim, Bombay 400016
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES (ISS), 251 Badhuisweg, 2597 JR, The Hague
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER (IDOC), Via S Maria dell' Anima 30, Rome 00186
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF CONSUMERS UNIONS (IOCU), 9 Emmastraat, 2595 EG, The Hague and PO Box 1045, Penang
ISIS Women's International Information and Communication Service, Via S Maria dell' Anima 30, Rome 00186
LONDON HOMEWORKING CAMPAIGN, 2 Cable St, London E1
LOW PAY UNIT, 9 Poland St, London W1
MEXICO-US BORDER PROGRAM, American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry St, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102 and Mexican Friends Service Committee, Ignacio Mariscal 132, Mexico 1
PACIFIC ASIA RESOURCE CENTER (PARC), PO Box 5250, Tokyo
PACIFIC STUDIES CENTER, 222B View St, Mountain View, California 94041
SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (SEWA), c/o Gandhi Majoor Sewalaya, Bhadra, Ahmadabad, Gujarat
SOUTHEAST ASIA RESOURCE CENTER, PO Box 4000D, Berkeley, California 94704

TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATION RESEARCH PROJECT, Faculty of Economics, University of Sydney, Sydney 2006
TRANSNATIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE (TIE) Europe, c/o TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTE, Paulus Potterstraat 20, 1071 DA, Amsterdam and 1901 Que St NW, Washington DC 20009
WAR ON WANT WOMEN'S GROUP (LONDON), 467 Caledonian Rd, London N7
WAR ON WANT NORTH WEST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S GROUP, 300 Oxford Road, Manchester M13
WOMEN AND COMPUTING GROUP, c/o Dept of Computing, Brighton Polytechnic, Brighton, UK
WOMEN'S HEALTH INFORMATION CENTRE (WHIC), 12 Ufton Rd, London N1
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE EXCHANGE SERVICE (WIRES), 2700 Broadway Rm 7, New York, NY 10025
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL SELF-EDUCATION AND RESOURCES LINKS PROJECT (WISER LINKS), 173 Archway Rd, London N6
WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTER, Sch of Public Health, Columbia Univ, 60 Haven Ave B-1, New York, NY 10032
WOMEN AND WORK HAZARDS GROUP, c/o British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, 9 Poland St, London W1

ORGANISERS

Helen Allison (War on Want), Joji Carino (Commission for Filipino and Migrant Workers), Nikki Grist (ADEC), Gerry Reardon (War on Want), Suhith Shivanath, Krystina Stimakovits (ADEC) (Archway Development Education Centre)

SPEAKERS AND WORKSHOP LEADERS

Liliana Acero (Institute of Development Studies), Umrn Beler (Migrant Action Group), Jude Connors (Women and Work Hazards Group), Helen Foreman (AUEW), Barbro Hoel, Ursula Huws, Shanmati Jagdeo, Celia Mather, Pat McDougal, Swasti Mitter (Brighton Polytechnic), Krishna Patel (ILO), Ruth Pearson (University of East Anglia), Annie Phizacklea, Gertie Roche, Pat Thomas (Ujamaa Centre), Anneke van Luijken (Centre for Development Co-operation Holland), Sandra Walker (AUEW), Wong Yut Lim (IDS).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The organisers would like to thank all those who made the conference a success by their participation, the GLC for allowing us to use County Hall free of charge, Diane Elson for her introductory article, and everyone who helped us in the editing, typing, proofing and design of this report especially Mike Bartram, Ken Clarry, Veronica Martell, Anne Mills and Max Wright

Cover photo: Electronics factory in Singapore (Jenny Matthews)

Printed by: Spider Web
14/16 Sussex Way London N7

WOMEN WORKING WORLDWIDE

WOMEN WORKING WORLDWIDE is a collective of women researching, campaigning and networking on women and multinationals focussing on the electronics, clothing and textile industries.

Our aims are to :

- * Build up resources
- * Establish international links between women working in and campaigning on women and multinationals
- * Exchange information on company policies and actions
- * Support specific groups of workers struggling for their rights and publicise their actions
- * Organise local campaigns

For more information contact:
WOMEN WORKING WORLDWIDE
c/o War on Want
or
Wiser Links



YALE UNIVERSITY



Women Work Together

Women all over the world are beginning to work together to control and change their lives.

WAR ON WANT is supporting their efforts by:

- supporting education and action projects in the UK and Third World
- publishing material in which women speak out
- campaigning on issues concerning women and development
- providing solidarity support to specific women's struggles
- building direct links with women's groups

WAR ON WANT

WAR ON WANT is a campaign against world poverty which combines development projects with campaigns, research and education to shape a better future now. *We need your help . . .*

467 Caledonian Road London N7
Tel. 01 609 0211

wisser links

WOMEN & THIRD WORLD INFORMATION EXCHANGE/LIBRARY
173 Archway Road, London N6 - Tel: 341 4403

WISER LINKS is a women's international information exchange project set up by a group of western and third world women based in London.

Our aims are :

- * to expand our library of resources from and for women and organisations working with women at the grassroots
- * to facilitate links between groups working in similar fields e.g. textile workers, women's health groups, rural co-operatives and projects, awareness and literacy training

For further information send large s.a.e. or ring 01 341 4403



Project of the
Archway Development Education Cooperative (Ltd.)

Philippines Support Group

BM BOX 758 LONDON WC1N 3XX TEL. NO. (01) 221-6601

- Opposes foreign domination and interference in the Philippines and the increasing military repression and economic exploitation under the US - Marcos dictatorship
- Supports the struggles of the Filipino people to promote independence, social justice, equality and democracy
- Our support work extends to migrant women workers in transnational corporations, trade zones, rural women and politics
- Issues include sex tourism, marriage, union rights, anti-militarization
- We have contacts and links with groups in Britain and the
- Our resources include shows and films on F

JOIN AND STRENGTHEN

WRITE AND CONtribute

I want to

Name

Patrons are responsible for returning this material to the Cross Campus Library on or before the DUE DATE. FINE RAJES are posted at circulation desks.

Published by

WAR ON WANT
467 Caledonian Road London N7

First edition 1984
Second edition 1985
ISBN 0 905990 21 8
£1.50

YALE

