

Editorial

Since **Feminist Review** was founded, we have had a special commitment to publishing material on and by women in the third world. This issue features three such articles: on India, Iran and South Africa. The women in these countries are facing very different forms of political opposition and have different degrees of political power to struggle for feminist objectives. Taken together, the articles illustrate the need to consider both the historical specificity of women's struggles in the non-western world and their common factors. They also pose the question, albeit in different ways, of the meaning of feminism in the third world context. In so doing they address implicitly the possibilities of feminism as an internationalist movement; that is, one premised on the principle of solidarity across nations and upon the belief in the universality, although not the uniformity, of women's oppression.

This year is the seventieth anniversary of the African National Congress. To mark this we publish an article by Judy Kimble and Elaine Unterhalter which looks in detail at women in the ANC over this period. In doing so they explore the complex, and at times conflictual, relationship between feminism and the national liberation struggle in South Africa. The authors question the appropriateness of what is seen as western-inspired feminism in such a context, where the class struggle and the anti-apartheid movement appear to claim priority. Yet they also document the emergence of a feminist consciousness among African women which has developed in the course of their struggle against apartheid. We are also publishing two documents from a women's conference in India which show how feminists there, under different conditions, have been able to take up both class and feminist issues simultaneously in their campaigns against rape and police violence. Thus for these Indian women, feminism is seen to be relevant to other questions as well as finding its own national specificity. Haleh Afshar's article on Khomeini's interpretation of Koranic law and its effects on the juridical and social position of women in Iran is a sobering reminder of what can happen to women if our interests are not clearly and explicitly defended in the course of revolutionary struggle. It is a sad irony that when Iranian women mobilized to protest against the Khomeini measures, they were countered by nationalist arguments dismissing them as western stooges and they were crushed by savage and continuing repression. The question of the limits of feminist internationalism, as well as of its possibilities, will be explored, we hope, in future articles in **Feminist Review**, but for the time being we are pleased to begin to address it by publishing these three thought-provoking pieces.

Some similar issues are raised in Caroline Rowan's discussion of the politics of the Women's Labour League in the period until just after the first world war. She argues that the Women's Labour League did raise feminist issues within the Labour Party but, centring on welfare and the home, these derived from the value they placed on women as domestic workers and childrearsers. They clearly did much to assert the importance of changing the conditions of working-class women's domestic labour. However, its close association with the party heightened splits within its ranks on other feminist issues such as suffrage, family endowment and equal pay. We can also learn a lot from the strategies of our sisters in other European countries. Barbara Henkes and Jeanne de Bruijn's article discusses the one-day women's strike in Holland in 1981 which was organized to protest against restrictive anti-abortion legislation. In its assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of this action, the conditions for support and lack of support, its long- and short-term effectiveness, it provides an important example of an innovatory feminist political strategy.

In *Feminist Review* 10 we published an article by Mary Evans on women's studies. In this issue Angela McRobbie continues the theme by looking at the political and theoretical problems involved in doing feminist research. She questions the ideal – espoused by radical and feminist sociology – of letting the subject speak and argues that there is no such thing as direct access to women's or girls' experience. A feminist researcher will be offered and derive different things from, for example, a feminist girls' project worker, but these are not necessarily less valid in terms of feminist politics. She takes the position that rigorous 'academic' research, defined by a feminist commitment, is indeed important and cannot simply be dismissed as male-defined.



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