

2nd NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

By HILDA WATTS



A delegate from the Eastern Province wearing her national dress, addresses the Conference.

ALTHOUGH women's rights were featured at the National Conference of Women held in Johannesburg over the week-end, they did not appear as the over-riding issue of the Conference.

The emphasis was clearly on the struggle for full rights and freedom for all, and on the role that women can and must play in winning those rights. If the women delegates who attended the Conference are typical of women from their various areas, then it is certain that the force for freedom in South Africa is more powerful than many think.

Delegates numbering more than 150 came from many different areas, including many towns in the Cape, as well as Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London, Bethal, and Kimberley. They represented approximately 230,000 people, and included a representative number of African, Indian, Coloured and European women.

The Conference was opened by Ray Alexander, who spoke of the important role that women played in the past, and

... AND THE MEN TAKE THEIR PLACE

By PAUL JOSEPH.

I WILL not easily forget Saturday, 18 April, 1954. It was one of the most exciting and inspiring days of the national liberation movement.

It was inspiring for it was then that the women of different nationalities came forward to launch the first women's national organisation to fight for their rights and the protection of their children. It was inspiring because the founders of the organisation each have a proud record in our struggle for liberation.

As I looked round the crowded hall, I saw Mrs. Njongwe and her comrades in their traditional dress, her entire delegation consisting of defiers; veteran trade unionist Hetty du Preez; Mrs. Fatima Seedat, a steeled fighter who

served two terms of imprisonment during the defiance campaign; Mrs. Debi Singh, defier wife of the Natal Indian Congress secretary; Mrs. Dora Tamane, the inspiring secretary of the Retreat (Cape) branch of the African National Congress; and scores of others with similar records.

On the platform was the veteran anti-pass fighter from Durban, Miss Mkize; hard-working and rousing freedom song leader Miss Ida Mntwana; powerful orator and energetic worker, Miss Hilda Watts; and Miss Ray Alexander, one of the most inspiring women of our time, a woman who has reared dozens of trade union leaders, and brought happiness to thousands of workers. Ray was indeed the brains and driving force behind the conference.

The delegates were trade unionists, housewives, social workers, nurses, factory hands and farm workers, women with a diversity of religious and social outlooks, yet all determined to remove their social, economic and political disabilities and to make life free and happy.

Above the platform was a banner: "Greetings to the Women of all Lands"; an on the walls round the Conference hall: "No more war! Let our Children Live! Ban the H and A Bombs!" and so forth.

The level of debate and discussion was impressive. The only practised public speakers were Ray Alexander and Hilda Watts. The rest of the women made impromptu speeches — but rous-

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must play in the present and future of our country. Ida Mntwana spoke of the position of women in South Africa, and a most interesting report on the position of Indian women in South Africa was given by Mrs. Fatima Meer, of Durban. Mr. D. Nokwe, deputising for Mr. W. Sisulu who was unable to be present, read a paper on the position of women in China today, and I spoke on the role of women in the struggle for peace.

Delegates Spoke Up

The most interesting and inspiring part of the Conference was provided by the many delegates who spoke during the discussion. The subjects covered showed the real political awareness of the delegates, who linked up the question of women's rights with their own struggles and problems, the Bills now before Parliament, and the political issues of the day.

One delegate was loudly applauded when she said that if it were not for the husbands, many more women would have attended the Conference. This dele-

gate spoke with bitterness of the Western Areas Removal Scheme, describing the terrible conditions under which families lived in the Orlando shelters, while the Government threatened the forcible removal of people from their homes in Sophiatown.

Women from Durban, Cape Town and other areas spoke of the conditions under which children were brought up today, the lack of proper family life, the lack of amenities and education and other opportunities, the need for schools, creches, maternity homes, the high rents and poor houses. But over and over again delegates emphasised the fight against unjust laws the Bantu Education Act, the Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act, the Population Registration Act and the Pass Laws.

Resolutions were passed on these Acts, as well as on the issue of peace, Kenya, and support for the Freedom Congress.

A Charter of Women's Rights was adopted, and this Charter summarises the demands of women in South Africa

today, for themselves, their children and their families. The Charter forms the basis for the organisation that was formed, and for the work of the Committee that was elected at the end of the Conference.

The purpose of the Conference was achieved — to advance the role of women in our fight for freedom. Without the active part of women, — one half of the population — that fight cannot succeed. To organise the women, we must also fight against those traditions, customs or habits that relegate women to an inferior place in our society and prevent them from playing their part to the fullest extent. In fighting against this inferior position of women, we are also fighting for freedom for all.

all the delegates' accommodation and transport problems while they were in Johannesburg.

In the early hours of the morning of the conference the men folk were up and about, taking arrivals to their places of accommodation. At 6 a.m. on the Saturday we were at Park Station to meet the Port Elizabeth and Cape Town delegates.

A visit to the kitchen showed a hub of activity. You would find John Motsabi, banned Secretary of the Transvaal African National Congress, and Youth Leaguer Harrison Motlana slicing ham (and too often slipping a morsel into their mouths!). Young Farried Adams was preparing biscuits and munching some at the same time. Leon would be washing lettuce while Norman would be preparing fruit. The Moola brothers would be washing cups while Stanley Lollan of SACPO was busy with the tea urns. Shy Solly and Abdulhay of the Indian Youth Congress would be tidying up. The women were on no account to see an untidy kitchen.

Occasionally Rica and Beata of the Congress of Democrats would sniff around and pass favourable comments.

In the evening the men organised a social for the women.

After the conference I arrived home near midnight, fagged out, but hoping that I, for one, would not be "swept aside".

PEACE IN THE KITCHEN

ing and impressive ones, at that. One when she said that if it were not for the speaker said: "If the men stand in our way we shall sweep them aside for our rights." Another: "I live in bondage, everything I do, drink tea or work, I mix with tears. No longer can I stand this oppression!"

They finally adopted a women's charter of rights, elected a committee and established their new national organisation.

Here were women in revolt!

The day held yet another excitement!

The men were in the kitchen preparing teas and lunch. They also tackled



A delegate makes her contribution from the floor.

GRINDING POVERTY & MASSIVE WEALTH — THE CARNEGIE REPORT

... The first Carnegie Commission in the 1920s studied the conditions of poor whites. Its report was the basis of effective state intervention to alleviate the 'poor white problem' — often at the expense of poor blacks. Carnegie II was a very different investigation. Initiated in 1980 at the University of Cape Town, its premise was that black South Africans were the main victims of the widespread poverty and destitution in the country. The second Carnegie enquiry drew in researchers from universities and organisations around SA.

The Carnegie conference at the University of Cape Town in 1984 was attended by some 450 people who presented over 300 papers, describing the dimensions of poverty, analysing its causes and exploring possible solutions. In addition, several post-conference studies addressed gaps in the research which participants had identified.

The scope of the research, funded largely by the same US-based trust as the first commission, was encyclopaedic. Topics ranged from micro studies of small rural communities to macro-economic analysis; from malnutrition to fuel; from health care systems to trade unions. The data and debates have been brought together in *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge* published this week.

Its authors are UCT's Professor Francis Wilson, director of the second Carnegie enquiry, and Dr Mamphela Ramphele, senior research officer in UCT's Department of Anthropology and Paediatrics. The report

presents a devastating picture through statistics, which, for example, show half of SA's population has a living standard below the subsistence level, while over 80 percent of Africans in reserves live in dire poverty. But, more powerfully, the report paints in painstaking detail a picture of what it is to be poor in SA, often portrayed through the voices of the poor themselves ...

Weekly Mail 24.1.89

... Whites, who constitute less than a sixth of the population, earn nearly two-thirds of the income; blacks, who account for nearly two-thirds of the population, earn a quarter ... Nearly two-thirds of the black people live below the minimum living level. The MLL, fixed in 1985 at R350 a month, is determined by the cost of a list of items needed for a household to survive.

Pioneered by the University of SA, it includes the following items: food, clothing, fuel/lighting, washing/cleaning, rent, transport, tax, medical expenses, education and replacement of household equipment. Professor Wilson and Dr Ramphela quote the findings of Dr Charles Simkins, a University of Cape Town economist, whose studies of poverty and unemployment have won wide recognition. According to Dr Simkins, more than 80 percent of blacks in the reserves or homelands live in dire poverty. Within the reserves or 'national states' there is a high degree of inequality.

In the Lower Roza administration area in Transkei, the income ratio between the richest 10 percent of households and the poorest is 15.1 ... All the important indicators of poverty are present in the black community: large-scale unemployment, widespread hunger and disease, and high rates of infant mortality ...

Even in the relatively wealthy cities there is unemployment in the black community: in townships around Grahamstown unemployment has been estimated to be between 60 and 70 percent of the workforce; in Port Elizabeth's townships it was calculated to fluctuate between 45 and 55 percent in the mid-1980s; in Johannesburg it has been reckoned to vary from between 20 and 30 percent. Despair settles on people who are retrenched and cannot find work. It wraps itself around them, suffocating them and destroying their self-respect.

Professor Wilson and Dr Ramphela speak to individual people and allow them to talk back. Their words are poignant: 'My children are not living,' says one man. 'It is like these hands of mine have been cut off. I am useless.' 'I feel like a dead person', says another. A fellow unemployed man echoes his statement: 'It is a death sentence. The countryside is pushing you into the cities to survive, the cities are pushing you into the countryside to die.'

'Unemployment brings three difficulties,' comments a woman. 'Sickness, starvation and staying without clothes.' The wife of an unemployed man confesses to wanting to

poison her children. She cannot stand the anguish of listening to them cry from hunger. 'I feel like feeding them Rattex.'

South Africa, write the authors, is a country where hunger and malnutrition haunt — or perhaps hunt — the poor. It is a country where diseases associated with deprivation — kwashiorkor, marasmus and marasmic-kwashiorkor take a heavy death toll, especially among children.

They quote the carefully considered conclusion of Dr John Hanson, a leading paediatrician: 'It can be said that approximately a third of black, coloured and Asian children below the age of 14 years are underweight and stunted for their age.' Malnutrition is usually associated with high infant-mortality rates. SA is no exception. While there has been a sharp decline in infant mortality among urban blacks in recent years, it is still high in rural areas and markedly higher than it is in the white community.

Expressed as deaths per 1 000 live births, the infant mortality rate for black people is between 94 and 124 (incomplete data accounts for what the authors refer to as the 'range of uncertainty'). For whites, Asians and coloureds the rate is 12, 18 and 52. Black children are eight to 10 times more likely than white children to die before their first birthday. For coloured infants the risk is four times as great ...

Star 24.1.89

Jessie could not bear to see her two children suffering. Unable to feed them or pay for their education she decided to kill herself. She poured a gallon of paraffin over her clothes and looked for a match. She did not utter a sound as she walked around the yard burning.

The death of Jessie Tambour, aged 36, in a black township last June is recorded with academic dispassion in a survey of poverty in SA published last week. It is a catalogue of appalling misery, documenting an epidemic of hunger and hopelessness far worse than official statistics indicated.

Uprooting Poverty, the South African Challenge, by Professor Francis Wilson and Dr Mamphela Ramphela of the University of Cape Town, draws from hundreds of research papers from the past decade ... Amid a welter of depressing statistics, several stand out to illustrate the severity of the crisis and the violence it spawns:

- SA has the widest gap between rich and poor of 57 countries for which data is available ...
- Two million children are physically deformed for lack of calories in a country that exports food ...
- SA has a per capita gross national product more than seven times that of China, but life expectancy is substantially lower (54 years compared with 69).
- In some black townships there are almost 20 people to each house and 66 to each pit toilet.
- The murder rate in Cape Town is nearly three times that of New York. In 1986 more

than twice as many people were murdered in the tiny Cape peninsula as in the UK.

● Untold thousands 'ride the blue train'. The 'blue train' is meths; the 'white train' is a lethal cocktail of meths and detergent.

Citing what they term 'apartheid's assault on the poor', the authors blame government policies aimed at defending white political and economic privilege. 'The superficial calm of the Casspirs (police armoured cars) and censorship is not a sign of peace as many whites in the protected suburbs wish to believe. It is the enforced silence of people under occupation,' they say.

'Renewal of South African society is not possible without the defeat of the racist ideology which sustains the current ruling élite ... Underlying all strategies against poverty must be a clear recognition of the necessity for a fundamental redistribution of power.' The authors contend that dismantling apartheid would not be enough to eradicate poverty, however, and call for radical land reforms and massive state assistance. In particular, they suggest slashing defence spending ...

The evidence presented by the University of Cape Town academics is compelling in three specific areas:

● Hunger and sickness: A third of black, coloured and Asian children are stunted for their age. In two Cape villages, the proportion is 80 per cent. At a conservative estimate, up to 27 000 children under five years died from malnutrition in 1975.

Blacks account for more than 80 per cent of known tuberculosis cases, and whites 1 per cent. In Cape Town the notification rate (per 100 000) among young children in 1987 was 649 for blacks and five for whites. Gastroenteritis is the biggest killer in the coloured community (176 per 100 000) and the second most common cause of death among blacks (86 per 100 000). The corresponding figure for whites is four. Measles kills nine times as many black children as white.

● Housing: Between 1983 and 1985, 172 000 houses were built for whites, resulting in a surplus of 37 000. Some 41 000 were built for blacks and the net deficit topped half a million. In Alexandra township, north of Johannesburg, the population density is more than 10 times that of the nearest white suburb.

The address of many black workers separated from their families is a bed number in a maze of concrete bunks accommodating 90 men in one room. Sanitation is woefully inadequate. In 1985 police fired rubber bullets, birdshot and tear gas to disperse residents protesting against the toilet-bucket system in the township.

● Fuel and water: One of the clearest images of poverty is elderly black women carrying huge bundles of firewood on their heads, passing underneath high-tension electricity cables. In the high grasslands of KwaZulu, the average distance walked to collect one load for cooking, warmth and light

is more than five miles. Severe brain damage in black children has been traced to the burning of discarded battery casings for fuel.

A black district in the Eastern Transvaal has one water tap for every 760 people. Most white suburban homes have two or three taps per inhabitant. Extreme poverty, overcrowding and a sense of hopelessness contribute to alcoholism and violence...

Times (UK) 2.2.89

EXECUTIONS, POLITICAL TRIALS AND DETENTIONS

Workers en masse face the Noose

At least six trade unionists are on death row as a result of violence at three strikes during 1986. They include William Ntombela of the Commercial, Catering & Allied Workers' Union of SA, and Tyelevuyo Mgedezi and Lucky Nomganga of the National Union of Mineworkers ... Three Transport and General Workers' Union members are also on death row after the shooting of a driver during the Putco dispute in 1986. T&G is gathering signatures for a petition.

15 members of the SA Railway and Harbour Workers' Union are currently appearing on charges of murdering four men accused of breaking the strike. Eight of the accused have pleaded guilty. Judgement is expected next month. 25 members of the Print, Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union are charged with the killing of five non-strikers during the Afcol furniture dispute last year.

South 2.2.89

Upington 26: In the Shadow of the Gallows

An ex-mayor, a 60-year-old couple, a former policeman, high school pupils and three sets of brothers. These are just some of the accused in the Upington 26 trial set to make legal history ... In the wake of the Sharpeville Six controversy comes an even bigger 'common purpose' trial — that of the Upington 26, the largest group ever convicted of murder in SA legal history ... As SA law stands, any person who is part of a mob that becomes intent on murder is equally guilty if the mob action results in someone being killed, even if that person did not inflict the fatal blow.

An all-out effort will be launched to save them from the gallows. The defence team have gathered an array of experts to prove extenuating circumstances when the trial resumes next week. The accused are convicted of murdering municipal policeman Lucas Sethwala ... The trialists are all from the township of Paballelo, near Upington.

South 2.2.89

Masina & Comrades: Soldiers of MK

Four men yesterday refused to plead to charges including treason, saying they were soldiers of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, and did not recognise the civilian court. They are Jabu Masina, Frans Masango, Neo Potsane and Joseph Makhura. The statement read by Masina on behalf of the accused said:

'Our refusal to participate in the proceedings stems from our belief that this court and this judicial system is founded on injustice and oppression. We state that such a judicial system cannot operate independently from the political system within which it functions.'

The statement said that all four men were held in solitary confinement without access to legal representation for eight months. All were tortured and brutally assaulted. During this process information was extracted from them by the security police. They believed that this information would be used against them, the statement said.

'We, as members of Umkhonto we Sizwe, are involved in a war of national liberation. We, as soldiers, cannot and should not stand trial in a civilian court.' They said that as trained soldiers and freedom fighters they had taken up the struggle on behalf of their people 'to rid this country of a system which is evil and which degrades and dehumanises people on the basis of skin colour.' They said the international community had condemned apartheid as a crime against humanity.

After their refusal to plead, Mr Justice De Klerk entered a plea of not guilty. The accused have refused representation by advocates, but attorneys will be present during the trial.

Sowetan 2.2.89

Cape Town 14 Charged with Treason

The 14 accused in the major treason trial starting in the Cape Supreme Court on Wednesday represent each sector of SA's divided society: classified black, coloured and white, they come from the ranks of the unemployed, the working class and the educated élite. They include Jennifer Schreiner, 32; Tony Yengeni, 34, who is married to co-trialist Lumka Nyamza, 26; Gary Kruser, 28; Christopher Giffard, 28; Gertrude Fester, 36; Richmond Nduku, 27; Sitlaboch Mahlale, 38; Mongameli Nkwandla, 31; Mzimkulu Lubambo, 36; Alpheus Ndude, 46; Mthetheli Titana, 26; Colleen Lombard and Suraya Abass, 36 ... Most of the accused have been in prison since September 1987. They were held incommunicado for six months before the first of several court appearances ... Charged with offences ranging from a spate of Peninsula bomb attacks, propaganda work, recruitment activities and courier tasks for the ANC, the accused have shown high levels of morale and militancy during their court appearances with their *toyi-toyis* and chanting.

Weekly Mail 3.2.89

Pretoria 12 Face Treason Trial

The case of 12 alleged ANC members, who were allegedly responsible for the Sterland bomb blast in Pretoria last year, a similar attack at a Pretoria city centre restaurant a month later, and a hand grenade attack on the house of a Mamelodi policeman, was referred by the Pretoria regional court for summary trial in the Supreme Court.

The accused, Moeketsi Koka, Godfrey Mokuba, Francis Pitse, Ernest Ramadite,

George Mathe, Johannes Maleka, Peter Maluleka, Phuti Mokgonyana, Joseph Nkosi, Thapelo Khotso, Reginald Legodi and Alfred Kgasi, face a main charge of treason and 28 alternative charges, including four charges of murder. The state alleges the accused were all members or supporters of the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe ... *Citizen 31.1.89*

ANC Three Found Guilty

The ANC now boasted more representative offices in foreign capitals than did Pretoria, Dr Ian Phillips of the Department of Political Science, University of Natal, told the Maritzburg Supreme Court. He was giving evidence in mitigation of sentence for three ANC men found guilty of terrorism before Mr Justice Booysen. They are Derrick Muthwa, 27, of Empangeni; Mafi Mgbobhozi, 21, of Umlazi and Ntela Skhosana, 23, of Ntabamhlope, near Estcourt. Dr Phillips said this growth in the ANC's representative offices to between 40 and 45 was unique in the history of liberation movements, and that for all the recognition in the international arena, it had shunned the status of being the sole representative of the people.

Star 27.1.89

... Ntele Skhosana and Mafi Mgbobhozi have each been sentenced to 12 years after being found responsible for an attack on the Esikhwini police station near Empangeni. AK-47 rifles had been used in the attack. Mgbobhozi was also found to have planted anti-personnel mines at the Sanlam Centre and at the Post Office at Empangeni, and another at a speed trap outside Gingindlovu in 1987. Derrick Muthwa, 27, was jailed for five years after he was found to have possessed a firearm and an anti-personnel mine. The court found that while Muthwa was not a trained terrorist, he was a supporter of the ANC.

Sapa

BBC Monitoring Report 30.1.89

Bethal Three: Appeal Granted

Three convicted Bethal treason trialists — Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, Acton Mandla Maseko and Simon Dladla — who were sentenced to a total of 55 years' jail by the Pretoria Supreme Court, have been granted leave to appeal against their sentences ...

City Press 5.2.89

Mayekiso Treason Trial

Moses Mayekiso, the treason accused whose trial re-opened yesterday after he was released on bail in December, had participated in various meetings in an effort to end the unrest in Alexandra township during 1986, the Rand Supreme Court heard. Giving evidence Mr Ricky Valente, former chairman of the Sandton town council, told the court he had organised several meetings with former Alexandra mayor, Sam Buti, as well as with members of the Alexandra Action Committee, of which Mr Mayekiso was an executive member, following the 'six-day war' in the township early in 1986.

*A letter from a brand-new mother
to her own godfather.*

Jane has a son!

This month we have a "Letter From Jane," to her godfather, Professor W. I. C. Morris, F.R.C.S. (Ed.), F.R.C.O.G., whose letters of advice and explanation helped her right through her pregnancy.

My dear Godfather

He arrived just twelve hours ago. Yes, it is a boy. Peter pretended that he did not mind whether we had a girl or boy, but if you could have seen the proud look on his face when he came to see me for the first time you would have known that a son was his dearest wish.

I can hardly believe yet that I am a mother. The world seems to have changed completely since he was born and made us a family of three. I never knew such wonderful happiness and such a feeling of achievement. I feel as if I had climbed Everest and could do it again at a moment's notice!

I have just fed the baby for the first time and I am afraid I spent most of his meal-time examining his fingers and toes and eyebrows and marvelling at their perfection. He has a lot of dark hair and is smooth and pink but his only likeness at the minute is to a frowning little old man.

Peter Ian is his name. Ian after you, who, through your letters, have given me such confidence and knowledge while he was on the way that I can almost say I really enjoyed his birth. Certainly there was discomfort and some pain but, as you rightly said, never was pain so worth-while. All I can recall now is the wonderful moment of his birth and the deep sense of peace after it.

If you remember, you calculated the date of arrival to be about the 27th but warned me that this could

not be regarded as a firm fixture. Peter Ian evidently thought otherwise, as my labour started late on the 26th and he was born at ten minutes past eleven on the night of the 27th.

I was so grateful you had insisted on relaxation exercises, for as soon as I had a "show" and knew this was really the beginning I was able to relax and keep calm straightaway. It was a most exciting feeling, like Christmas morning, especially when we drove in the hired car through the empty streets in the early hours.

Quite soon after I arrived at the hospital the waters broke but, because you had told me it did not necessarily mean a complication, I tried not to worry. As it turned out it did not seem to make any difference at all. From that time, all through the day, I managed to relax well and dozed off between contractions. I had your last letter with me and re-read it several times. It gave me a great feeling of comfort to know just what was going on.

I think I went into the delivery room late in the evening and was given some trilene soon afterwards, so my memories of what followed are a little hazy. But I remember when I had the feeling of bearing down, which you told me about, and felt so pleased that this meant the beginning of the second stage. And I remember the doctor saying, in a delighted voice — "Ah, here's the head" just when I was feeling a little exhausted.

I am also delighted that I was "all

there" when Peter Ian was actually born. I shall never forget the surge of relief and triumph when the doctor said, "A lovely boy for you," and then that first indignant yell from the newest Peter in the family.

Then, while I was having a cup of tea when it was all over — only one small stitch you will be pleased to hear — the doctor told me that Peter weighed 7 lb. 10 oz. and that he was "complete and perfect."

Now, of course, I cannot wait for you to come and stay with us and see our son. He really is almost as much one of "your babies" as the many you have brought into the world. You have given me inestimable help and confidence towards a happy pregnancy and childbirth and Peter and I think our best thanks would be to show you the bonny result — Peter Ian.

Yours in gratitude and affection,

Jane



A GARDEN IS A LOVESOME THING..

When we bought our house, just after the war, we chose it for the garden more than for the house. All you could say about the house was that it lacked most of the worst features of the hundreds of other houses that we had seen and rejected, without possessing any out-of-the-ordinary attractions.

But it was set in half an acre of ground, with a spacious stretch of lawn in front, flowerbeds, a drive bordered with six magnificent jacaranda trees, and a high, thick hedge all round. At the back were fruit trees, fig trees, grape vines, almond trees, and tall trees down the bottom. Everything was in a state of sad neglect and disorder, but this did not scare me at the time — foolish amateur that I was.

I did not know anything about gardening in Johannesburg. I had never heard of cutworm; I thought snails were rare objects collected by little boys; I thought centipedes were harmless creatures; I knew nothing of the nocturnal habits of the rose beetle; aphids, thrip . . . they had never entered my life.

I did not know that our soil was not only of the poorest, but sadly exhausted into the bargain. I did not know that after rain it would set as solid as a piece of concrete, on which you could bend your garden tools without making much impression; that after years of compost and fertilisers and all sorts of things, many common annuals would still refuse to thrive in it (and why — I do not know to this day).

I did not know that jacaranda trees are the messiest trees in the world; that they keep their leaves after the other are bare, then shed these infinitesimal objects one by one; and after the leaves, shed sticks; and after the sticks, that large flat seedpods would hurtle on the iron roof of the house; and after a brief glory of blossom, the blossoms would pile in brown drifts, and the whole process would start again.

I did not know that the high, protective hedge would make it impossible to grow almost anything in the beds it surrounded, since the hedge greedily took both sun and moisture from the soil in such quantities that scarcely anything else could grow.

But most of all, I did not know that beautiful gardens don't go with children and dogs; that if you have the one, you must sacrifice the other.

All these things I only learned through years of experience.

The first Spring, we blithely and ignorantly planted masses of seeds directly into our iron-hearted soil, making little plans that would show where groups of glorious annuals were to grow. I still remember how we cherished the few stunted, isolated and miserable flowers that survived the rigours of the earth.

Later on, when we had become educated to the compost heap and seed bed, we managed to achieve something of a show in some of the beds — but only with great toil, care, some considerable expense, and by abandoning anything at all fancy or delicate in the way of flowers.

We did not lack ambition, even after a few years. I still remember how we tried to grow Barberton Daisies. Having been warned that the seeds were not good in germinating, we bought only the freshest, and planted them in boxes of earth that had been sifted, sterilised and mixed like the formula for a baby's bottle. I can't tell you the whole long story — only that after a year or two we gave up, and bought some roots, and at the end of a considerable period of protection and care, a bud finally appeared on a stem. Each day I watched that bud grow, until the morning came when it was ready to come to full flower. That morning one of our toddlers walked past and decapitated my Barberton Daisy. I've never tried to grow them again.

Our lawn is ideal for playing cricket, except that due to the slope of the ground, the stumps are always placed against my best flower-bed. If I am watching through the window, the children run round the bed to get the ball; when I am not watching, or when the game gets hot, they run through the flower-bed.

Not a dog walked up our street (and let me say there are huge packs of dogs in our neighbourhood) without relieving himself on the red-hot pokers and agapanthus next to our gate. And our own dogs developed such a liking for flowers in bloom that they would often make a bed of flowers *their* bed.

We had many 'garden boys' in our time. One of them dug up all the new seedlings I had carefully planted in planned groups, laid them out in the hot sun, and replanted them in spaced rows that he measured exactly with a piece of string. Another dug up and threw away a few hundred bulbs of anemones, ranunculas and freesias that I had planted.

Finally I have reached a compromise with my garden and my family. We grow quite good vegetables at the back, away from marauding children and animals. And in the front we are building up more and more of those wonderful perennials that nothing seems to discourage — shasta daisies, agapanthus, pokers, and others. For the rest, a few of the hardiest annuals survive the cricket matches, and in mid-summer give us a pleasant display, even if we would not even qualify for "also-ran" in the annual garden competitions.

But on the windowsill of my kitchen, I have a wonderful display of pot-plants. Completely safe from all four-legged and two-legged things, my beautifully-coloured

FREEDOM SONGS

by THEMBEKILE KA TSHUNUNGWA

Wherever Africans assemble there is music — road workers wielding their picks and shovels, miners, the men who till the land, prisoners in the cells, in the churches and in the grave yards. Even under adverse conditions the people sing and the musical hum brushes away the sorrow.

There is great variety in the music and the rhythm of each song characterises the occasion. The road-digger singing as he takes his place in the line, pick poised above head, and then brought down in unison with the row, makes music, shall I say, without pulse or beat, but each singer keeps perfectly to the tempo with remarkable beauty of harmony. The number of parts in such music is not fixed, as each man comes in with his own contribution, yet, with striking strangeness the part fits in with exquisite harmony. On the land in springtime, during the ploughing season, the very air is filled with music as each young man, whip over one shoulder, sings out praises to his father's span that draws the deep-sinking plough.

Most African songs have developed from specific occasions, and the national Freedom Songs are no exception. Rhythm, gesture, movement, mime, all play their part in the characterisation of a particular song. The songs vary from area to area, but everywhere the words are simple and everywhere the singing is in harmony — as with all folk songs.

The year 1952, when the African National Congress embarked on the historic Defiance Campaign, brought with it innumerable songs of freedom that sprang up like mushrooms after rain. Some of these songs were composed in prison and the defiers sang them as they came out to rejoin their comrades after serving their sentences.

Among these was the volunteer recruiting song:

"Joyinani madodana
Ixesha likhile.
Balani madodana
Ithesaba lethu nini."

"Join ye youths,
The time has come,
Write down your names
Our hope lies on thee."

When this song was sung at a meeting, hundreds of young Africans would come forward to volunteer for action.

There are many other songs which were the first introduction to Congress for many thousands of Africans who warmed to their spirit and answered their call.

Here are a few examples:
"Thina sizwe esimnyama,
Sikhalela izwe lethu
Elathathwa ngabamhlophe
Ma bazeke umhlaba wethu."
"We the black nation
Cry for our country
That was taken by the white men.
They must let our country go."

Ho! Malan vul'itilongo
Ho! Malan vul'itilongo
Thina sizongena s'ngama Volun-
tiya
Thina sizongena s'ngama Volun-
tiya."

"Hey! Malan, open the jail doors
We are to enter, we volunteers."

Organisers travelling from one centre to another and conferences held from time to time, have helped to spread the songs throughout the country. The tunes of the songs are nearly all original, the composers unfortunately unknown in most cases. But this confirms the fact that the Africans are a musical people with hundreds and hundreds of composers, albeit at the moment living in obscurity.

Many songs derive their music from Church hymns. All that the Congress people have done is to substitute new words for the original ones, e.g.

"Sophiatown likhaya lam
(Repeat four times).

Sophiatown is my home
(Four times).

Other words are added from time to time for the sake of variety. This song gave a magnificent impetus to the Western Areas Removal Scheme protests. When sung with feeling this song charged the very atmosphere with the opposition of the people to the removals.

Another song that is a Church tune was sung soon after Dr. Da-

do, J. B. Marks and others were arrested. As each national leader was arrested his name was fitted into the song.

As the struggle in the liberation movement entered each new phase, new songs sprang up. Each campaign developed its own songs. During the boycott of Verwoerd's Bantu Schools, many songs emerged, e.g.

"Abazali bam banqand uVelevutha ayek' Imfundo.
Xelean' uVelevutha
Aseyifun 'Apartheid."

This is a Cradock "special" composed by a prominent leader of that town who has composed many other songs, many of which have still to be written down and circulated.

This song says:
"Our parents! Stop Verwoerd
To interfere not with education.
Tell Verwoerd that we do not
Want Apartheid."

In 1952, in Peddie, Cape, a woman volunteer was shot dead by the police. The Cape A.N.C. organised all its branches to erect a tombstone at her grave. The Minister of Justice banned the gathering planned to pay tribute to a renowned fighter for freedom. A song which tells the whole story movingly was composed.

And there are other songs — songs which tell of the Bandung Afro-Asian Conference; Seretse Khama; the Battle of Blood River and others. These songs are perhaps not yet written down. Some are known only in restricted areas, yet through them the history of the whole Congress movement is depicted.

The collection of this music in book form would be no mean contribution to the recording of the history of the liberation movement in South Africa. The composer who puts his music to paper is making a similar contribution. For the young generation throughout the country yearns and thirsts for our national freedom songs. They are the people who sing these songs on the streets and thereby popularise them and the Congress movement. Our leaders may be banned from addressing gatherings, but let us sing to the world as did the children of the Israelites when they sat down on the banks of the river of Babylon and sang in sorrow when they thought of Zion. Let the people sing!

WORLD PEACE COUNCIL PLEA TO END H-BOMB TESTS

by GORDON SCHAFFER

Our aircraft swooped down on Colombo airport. The tropical sun was shining after a fierce monsoon storm. The scent of the earth and the trees, the beauty of the palms and the flowering shrubs set against the dazzling blue of sky and sea were perfect. A Ceylon girl came with garlands of jasmine to welcome us. "This is paradise," I said. "Many people and a number of religions say Ceylon was the original Garden of Eden," she replied and added: "We think it is a very good place to start building peace."

The customs officials waved us through all the formalities. "Welcome to our country," said one, "and long live peace."

So we came to the first country of the Commonwealth to agree to the holding of a meeting of the World Peace Council. But as far as the Ceylon government and the leaders of opinion in the country are concerned, it is more than just granting permission for the conference. Ceylon's Minister of Justice is chairman of the committee of Ceylon citizens who prepared the conference. The Mayor of Colombo made a welcoming speech and Prime Minister Bandaranaike sent a message of greeting and invited all the delegates to an official reception. In every country, West and East alike, the diplomatic representatives of Ceylon were instructed to give visas to any member or guest of the World Peace Council. Representatives of 75 nations came.

Remember Sheffield

As the Mayor, resplendent in red and gold, took his seat to the beating of drums, my mind went back seven years to the last time a world peace conference was called in a British Commonwealth country. We stood then on the steps of Sheffield Town Hall and had to tell the people with shame and sorrow that famous men and women from all over the world had been turned back, in some cases insulted, because they came to us in the name of peace. Then Giles, one of our famous cartoonists, summed it all up with a picture of a little boy writing "PEECE" on the wall, and his sister shouting, "Ma, Cyril's wrote a wicked word."

The memory served to emphasise how far we had come. A message from Prime Minister Bandaranaike was being read: "We are living between two

worlds, a world that is dying and a world that is struggling to be born. We are living in a period of transition from one civilisation to another. Ideologies and isms are made for man and not man for them. We must think in terms of mankind. If we can ensure peace for 25 years, I feel confident the danger time will have passed. Every effort for peace deserves the sympathy and support of us all."

A message from Joliot-Curie, president of the Council and one of the world's greatest atomic experts, called on the delegates to rally all the immense forces who have joined in protest against the tests.

Gandhi's Wish

Joliot-Curie called for a truce on tests and said that once a truce is agreed upon, it will be very difficult for any power to start again: "It is no longer possible to settle international disputes by war. Public opinion is against it. Already we have seen public opinion stopping wars when the armies were still able to fight."

Inevitably, in a conference set in Ceylon, the theme of colonialism came up again and again. Dr. S. Kitchlew, one of India's best loved leaders, appealed to the "great and cultured people of France" to cease waging a hopeless war in Algeria and to abandon the relics of a period that has passed. "Britain and India", he said, "are well fitted to work together for peace. That was the wish of Gandhi. But Britain must learn that the peoples of Asia, Latin America and Africa are no longer content to remain poor and hungry and the hunting ground for foreign powers."

Dr. Kitchlew put forward proposals which command support not only in India's peace movement but among most of her leaders and her people. "We must put a stop to the lust for domination by certain powers. Countries are being subjected to pressure in the Middle East and West Asia to prevent them from exercising their sovereignty. We welcome the decision of Britain and other nations to extend trade with China and we say China must no longer be excluded from U.N. and from the councils of the world. East and West Germany must be kept out of military blocs and foreign soldiers must be withdrawn."

Peace and Plenty

Prof. K. Yasui of Japan spoke about the dangers to his country and I wondered how long other peoples who are in similar peril would remain unresponsive. "We are a small island," he said, "studded with U.S. bases. We are an outpost for atomic war. We are making the utmost efforts to liberate our country from this disastrous position. This struggle is life or death for the Japanese country."

This conference, like the meeting of governments at Bandung, has helped to crystallize the massive forces of peace here in Asia. We who came from the West realised with new force that we are a small minority of the human race. But we also understand how great has been the achievement of the peace movement in welding us into an unbroken front of friendship and common struggle.

One other truth forced itself on our consciousness: Asia is poor. In this island "paradise" many men, women and children are near starvation. Since our leaders exploited them for so long, we in the West have a duty not only to join with them in the struggle for peace, but to share our wealth and our industrial and scientific techniques. Peace in our modern world must not be mere freedom from war, but abundant life for all mankind.

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● **Inside Story:** Linda Grant

It was received wisdom. Girls excelled at school in the early stages. But boys overtook them, because boys were brighter. New evidence suggests the opposite is true. Could women be the weaker, fairer, *cleverer* sex?

IN 1954 a front-page story appeared in the *Hunts Post*, the county paper for Huntingdonshire, under the headline: "Girls Brainier Than Boys". Too many girls had been passing the 11-plus, and the education authority, despite the formal protests of teachers, had decided to limit their numbers. "As a result," the paper wrote, "some boys will be admitted to the school, although their educational performance may be inferior to some of the girls who are excluded . . . The scholarship sub-committee announced that it was aware that no useful purpose would be served by allowing the admittance of boys who were clearly incapable of taking a grammar school course."

It was not an isolated incident. For many years English education authorities operated a quota system similar to those used by American Ivy League colleges to limit the admission of Jews and Blacks to their courses.

If quotas had not been imposed in mixed grammar schools, two-thirds of the classroom would have been occupied

by girls. Throughout primary school and in the early years of secondary education, girls did better than boys in most, if not all, subjects.

The accepted theory held that this was because girls "matured" earlier than boys and that in later years the boys would catch up. This case seemed to be proved by GCE results at 16 where girls did poorly, particularly in sciences and maths. If girls were outperforming boys at the 11-plus, but later slowed down their progress, something had to be done to tilt the balance in the favour of those late-developing boys.

In places where there were single-sex grammar schools, generally in matching pairs for each area, there was a fixed number of places and there wouldn't be enough room for the lower scorers on the entrance exam anyway.

The old 11-plus largely used IQ tests in order to select. So if girls were brighter than boys at 11, a girl competing against lots of other bright girls needed an IQ of, for example, 127, to get a grammar school

place, while a boy, with less stiff competition, would only need an IQ of 123.

Thus there is every reason to believe that some girls who had passed the 11-plus were sent to secondary modern schools, while boys who had also passed but with lower marks, were marching off in the autumn term in their grammar school blazers.

Those girls who did go to grammar school would continue to meet quotas as they attempted to maintain their early potential. Girls applying to do medical degrees in the Sixties were not informed that there was a 20 per cent limit on female candidates. Until the Oxbridge colleges went co-educational, only a small fraction of places were available to women. At Cambridge, with three women's colleges, the quota in favour of boys was 11 to one, so girls had to be considerably more able than boys to get a place. Barrier after barrier impeded girls' progress, but why not? The exam results proved time and time again that despite their early advantage, boys were brighter than girls. Until now.

When, in 1992, Mary Meredith was appointed to the equal opportunities post at the Vale of Ancholme Secondary School, a Humberside comprehensive, she went at once to look at the recent GCSE results.

Equal opportunities, she thought, were so often criticised as a vehicle for promoting left-wing feminist values that, in order to protect herself against accusations of political correctness, she chose to place equality in terms of raising standards. What she expected to find was girls doing poorly in maths and sciences, the traditional boys' subjects, and she was prepared to wheel in her female role

models and celebrate women's achievement. But the results revealed something very different. Boys, she found, were far less likely to get over five A-C grades at GCSE, and when she looked more closely she noticed that boys were falling badly in language-based subjects such as English and history. But the greatest surprise was that girls were doing as well, if not better, in maths and science.

THE FIGURES were not one-offs, they reflected a national trend. The effect of the publication of GCSE league tables is that they make obvious what were previously hidden patterns. Statistics issued by the Department of Education show that only 37 per cent of boys are achieving five or more A-C grades compared with 46.4 per cent of girls, and while the boys are making progress on 1988 figures so are the girls, and the gap between them is getting wider. The results in English and sciences show the same pattern. Of those achieving grades A-C in 1992 in English, 61.8 per cent were girls and 45.9 per cent boys. English is traditionally a "girls" subject, but physics isn't. Here 73.7 per cent of girls were getting A-C grades, while only 69.2 per cent of boys achieved these grades. And even in maths, where boys did do better, it was by the tiniest of margins: girls obtained 44.9 per cent of A-C grades, girls were just behind with 43 per cent.

A wealth of evidence is coming in to support these findings. In a report by Keele University's Centre for Successful Schools, of a survey of over 7,000 young people accumulated during 1993-4, Michael Barber argues that "girls are consistently more positive, better motivated, better at getting on with their

teachers and better behaved. The difference is most evident in relation to motivation, where the gap widens to 10 percentage points by the mid-teens . . . Furthermore, on the question which asks the pupils to assess their own ability, the answers reveal that more boys than girls think they are able or very able, and fewer boys than girls think they are below average. Yet the actual results at GCSE shows these perceptions to be the reverse of the truth."

And it is not only clever girls who are outstripping boys. Peter Downes, vice president of the Secondary Schools Association and head of Hinchbrook School, the school which was once Huntingdon Grammar, now a mixed comprehensive of 1,800 pupils, asserts that in the figures he has examined for Cambridgeshire schools (where girls outperform boys by 9 per cent) "the gap between boys and girls gets greater the lower down the academic league table you go". So the least able girls are still doing better than the least able boys. In fact, the group that one might expect to be faring most poorly, Asian girls who do not have English as a first language with families who oppose further education for their daughters, are not at the bottom rung of achievement.

That place, according to Dr Diane Sammonds, of London University's Institute of Education, is taken by white working class boys who were born in the summer and therefore are young for their year. Other educational theorists have tentatively suggested that the parents of ethnic minority children, aware of what is stacked against them by a racist society, place a greater value on educational achievement as a way to success than the parents of white children who may, in the past, have regarded jobs as guaranteed.

Teachers and theorists are asking

● **Class divisions: 'School,' argues one expert, 'is essentially a linguistic experience. While girls relate to each other by talking, boys tend to relate to their peers by doing'**

themselves what is going on? Why are boys under-achieving? But there is another, deeper question. Have girls always been brighter than boys, as that newspaper headline of 40 years ago asserts? Was it not the case that boys caught up, but rather that girls have, until now, slowed themselves down to meet the limited expectations of their potential by schools, family and the wider society? There is a devastating critique of the way researchers have assessed girls' historic failure to do as well as boys, in *A Fair Test: Assessment, Achievement And Equity*, by Caroline Gipps of the Institute of Education and Patricia Murphy of the Open University. Researchers, they argue, assumed that there were sex differences in intellectual abilities, and then went looking for an explanation which would explain what was considered the "natural order". Darwin, for example, observed that man's superior intellectual powers were based on the "fact" that they had always provided for and defended women.

Women's intellectual ability remained unknown and unproven until little over a hundred years ago because there was virtually no provision for their education. The establishment of the Girls Public Day School Trust (GPDST) in 1872 set up the first schools across the country offering academic courses (the earliest girls schools, St Paul's and North London Collegiate, were founded by the Misses Buss and Beale, Victorian feminists and pioneers of women's education). Until the 1944 Education Act, there was no free

secondary education for any children except for those who passed what used to be called "the Scholarship". While theoretically this was open to both girls and boys, many parents declined to allow their daughters to "go on". The expense of the uniform was one reason cited, while others argued that it was pointless for girls to be educated beyond the needs of marriage.

When, after the 1944 Act, girls began to sit the 11-plus in large numbers, the theory developed of girls' earlier "maturity" to account for their initially higher achievement and apparent slump later. What does the word "mature" mean in this context? While there have been many theories arguing for or against sex differences in the acquisition of different types of skill, there is no conclusive evidence, one way or the other, particularly physiological evidence. One study, cited by Gipps and Murphy, found that girls up to the age of 18 months were ahead in response to verbal stimulation, comprehension and vocabulary, but later research confirms or contradicts these suggestions. On mathematical ability, a 1972 study concluded that the male and female brains are differently lateralised, the female brain promoting overall better linguistic performance while the male is conducive to better visual-spatial functioning. But this hypothesis, like many others, is disputed.

Another view of "maturity" holds that, because girls reach puberty before boys, they quickly become distracted from academic work and turn their attention to those familiar subjects, clothes, make-up and the opposite sex. But Peter Osborne, head teacher at Shenfield School in Essex, a comprehensive with nearly a thousand pupils, describes

maturity like this: "You look at their behaviour. Maturity is a value judgment on how they behave. The boys run around kicking balls and the girls stand around talking. If you're a £5-million footballer, then running around with a football is mature, but if you're a 12-year-old, it isn't. Thirteen-year-old girls say that boys are childish, compared with them. If you listen to the girls, it's clear that what they say is the subject of mature consideration. Boys verbalise less than girls."

THE PROBLEM with kicking a football around at school is that, unless you are going to be a sportsman, it doesn't lead anywhere. The value of talking, even if it's about that swoony babe in 4B, is that it uses skills that are going to be needed in the workforce: verbal reasoning. Peter Downes's Cambridgeshire study shows that, while boys play sports or computer games, girls read. "School," he argues, "is essentially a linguistic experience and most subjects require good levels of comprehension and writing skills. Whereas girls relate to each other by talking, boys tend to relate to their peers by doing... In the crucial lower secondary years... girls are less likely to be allowed out by their parents for safety reasons. They are more likely to spend time at home doing homework and reading."

A picture is beginning to emerge of boys viewing the crucial reading and linguistic skills as "sissy". "The girls are blossoming and the boys badly need help," Peter Osborne says. "What is worrying is that the male sex does not yet know what is going to hit it. One teacher told me that the boys are worried because the girls are so assertive." Thirty years

ago, it would not matter at all if a boy left school with few qualifications and little in the way of verbal ability, because there was plenty of manual work about. But now the economy has changed, and it is the language-based service sector that will make up the bulk of new jobs, jobs for which it is girls, not boys, who are qualified.

If girls were always as bright as the boys, if not brighter, why have they been underachieving up to now? In part, the existing barriers impeded their progress, but even so, why the poorer exam grades at 16 in the past? According to Helen Wilkinson's recent report, *No Turning Back: Generations And The Genderquake* published by the independent think-tank Demos, it is because women's aspirations and their image of themselves has profoundly altered in the past quarter of a century. The report is the first to track the advances of the Seven Million, the men and women between the ages of 18 and 34 who came of age after the ground-breaking equal opportunities legislation of the Seventies.

Wilkinson describes a generation of confident, assertive, ambitious women with goals and expectations far beyond those of earlier generations, partly as a result of earlier gains made by the women's movement. "When you are seeing more and more women in the economy, it's now girls who have the right to feel optimistic about the future," she argues. Seventy-nine per cent of the women surveyed say that they want to develop their careers or find employment while only 50 per cent regard having children as a goal. Less than a quarter of young women between 16 and 24 feel that a woman needs a stable relationship to be fulfilled.

The effect of these aspirations is apparent in the changing nature of the work-

● **Eyes down:** The publication of *GCSE league tables* has revealed that only 37 per cent of boys are achieving five or more A-C grades compared with 46.4 per cent of girls

force. The participation of women in the labour market has increased from 53 per cent in 1973 to 65 per cent in 1991, while male involvement has dropped from 93 to 86 per cent with the sharpest rise among graduates. Women now account for 54 per cent of all newly-qualified solicitors, an increase of 9 per cent in seven years.

One can see these changes sharply illustrated by the achievements of two sixth-form classes, 25 years apart. In 1969, Belvedere, in Liverpool, was a GPDST direct-grant secondary school with an intake two-thirds drawn from the fee-paying daughters of the middle classes and a third attending on local authority scholarships. The pupils in the sixth form were among the brightest in the city and the teaching staff were almost exclusively unmarried women, most not far off retirement, teachers who had themselves been educated before women obtained the vote. The ethos of the school was academic and tacitly blue-stocking feminist: its most notable old girl was Rose Heilbron, the country's first woman QC. While marriage and motherhood was rarely, if ever, mentioned, it had high ambitions for its highest achievers and very little to say to the rest.

The class of 1969 did as well as would be expected. Around 12 girls out of 29 went to university, almost all to read traditional arts subjects such as English, history and classics. But what happened to the others? The school does not keep records but collective memory recalls that most were awarded the school's sec-

Continued on page 46

ond prize, teacher training college which then offered a non-degree certificate of education. Careers advice was rudimentary and it was as if the school had no other idea of what to do with its pupils who did not take the full course of three A-levels, or whose grades were too poor to guarantee university admission.

Twenty-five years on, the direct-grant status no longer exists. The school is independent but a third of pupils are still on assisted places. The headmistress is Mrs Carole Evans, who had left school only a year before the 1969 group. "There are now 106 girls in the combined senior and junior sixth," she says, "and they are encouraged by me to go for it. I tell them, don't go out there and expect to be a personal assistant to the boss, go for being the boss yourself. The image has long gone of my girls considering themselves second-class citizens." Intense efforts are made to ensure the girls succeed: interview techniques are practised, mock interviews held, girls go on work experience, videos of universities are shown and Mrs Evans has recently appointed an Oxford co-ordinator and a Cambridge co-ordinator who will take any girl who wishes to attend on a visit to the universities. This week the GPDST launches the Minerva Trust, an organisation of old girls committed to networking and advancing women's careers.

The 1993 and 1994 figures for A-level results and final destinations initially reveal the same core group achieving high-level grades and going to the same "old" universities. But the subjects are different. In 1993, 52 per cent of the girls read science subjects, 36 per cent arts and 12 per cent went into the professions of law, medicine and veterinary science. Where did the others end up? One went to teacher training college. Most of the remainder won places at what used to be the polytechnics in a breathtaking variety of subjects: countryside management, hotel management, business studies, environmental science and computing. For 1994 we see degree courses in genetics, pharmacology, environmental studies, business studies and Japanese, social policy with film and TV, environmental engineering, women's studies and human movement and science.

Twenty-five years ago, 69.5 per cent of those who went to university were men. Now the numbers are virtually equal. If the best and the brightest of 1969 had such limited aspirations (and such limited choices — many of these courses didn't even exist in 1969) compared with their successors in the 1990s, what was happening to those girls who passed the 11-plus but were shunted off to secondary moderns because there weren't enough places for them? Low pay, early marriage, part-time work after the children had gone to school and more low pay? A generation of timid, underachieving middle-aged women, bossed about by some 20-year-old trainee manager, accepting it because 30 years ago the council told them they didn't make the grade?

Helen Wilkinson has described the success of the current generation of girls as a genderquake. She believes that we are "in the middle of a historic change in the relations between men and women: a shift in power and values that is unravelling many of the assumptions not only of 2,000 years of industrial society, but also millennia of traditions and beliefs." Yet later in her report she concedes that a survey of women directors undertaken two years ago found that 70 per cent thought that women still do not have equal opportunities in the workplace and male attitudes were cited by 37 per cent as the most common problem.

Back in those schools, what is happening to the underachieving boys and the over-achieving girls? When boys are asked why they are not doing well, they say it is



● Peter Osborne: The head teacher at Shenfield School in Essex contends that 'maturity' among girls is illustrated by their willingness to verbalise their experiences

appear on the team at all, the male students are far more willing to take risks, answering questions when they have only a vague idea of the answers. Women usually don't put their hand on the buzzer unless they are sure they are correct. But the men still get more answers right because they are prepared to guess and strike lucky.

Osborne put the girls at the front and made them answer questions and very quickly, the numbers of girls who were taking physics increased by 300 per cent? But before he could find out whether the trial had been effective in terms of GCSE results, the National Curriculum was introduced which subsumed physics into general science.

At the beginning of this school year Osborne brought back single-sex classes. The girls, he assumes, "will blossom while the boys, who badly need help to make them like school more, will have teachers who will put down peer group pressure. You will also take their audience away. Even 11-year-old boys are saying that they aren't concentrating because they are paying so much attention to girls. We're open to accusations that we're neglecting the social mixing but we're fostering the extra-curricular activities."

If Osborne's experiment pays off, perhaps both sexes will benefit: boys will overcome their resistance to learning and actually do better in exams, while girls develop a realistic idea about their own abilities. What may help is the increasing view outside educational circles that the future is, officially, female. A report issued in July by the Institute of Management predicted the extinction of the male manager: team working, consensus management, negotiating, the ability to handle several projects at a time and interpersonal skills, regarded by the Institute as typically "female" are predicted to be replacing the traditional hierarchical structures of the contemporary workplace.

This is the real issue when we speak of girls' aspirations. Whether more girls go into engineering is to miss the point. The problem is the large numbers of women who currently graduate in arts subjects, go into professions that are relatively open to women, like the media, law teaching or social work and still hit the glass ceiling. A few hundred more women engineers won't equal the impact of one woman at the head of a major British company or editing a quality newspaper, in charge of opinion forming.

One Guardian colleague who has read the Demos report remarked that it was all very well for a younger generation of women to believe that they had nothing to gain from feminism, that the future was going their way, that they could achieve anything they liked. What happens when you reach 30 and when you have children, she asks? Just as your career should be accelerating into the fast track, you shift down into the slow lane for the next few years. The extraordinary paradox of the British education system is that we are educating the brightest people in society, giving them unlimited aspirations and then dumping them when they want to fulfil another role. The changes can't just happen in the classroom, they will have to permeate every part of society. As Clare Short remarked on the subject of using quotas to get more women into parliament, "We've got a rifle range in the House of Commons and no creche." **G**

because they didn't work hard enough.

When girls are asked the same question, they reply that they are not clever enough. Girls and boys are continuing to operate against the facts and this is not just a case of that vague American syndrome "low self-esteem". In the past, boys have been educated to become breadwinners, to take on responsibility and support a family. A positive approach was vital to finding and staying in work. To not be up to it was to fail as a man. In contrast, girls were not expected to succeed, so to assert their own intelligence required not only self-confidence but a violation of social norms.

Despite their success in school, girls still undervalue their achievements. "I interviewed someone yesterday with five A-levels, three at grade A, two at grade B and I wondered why she hadn't gone to Oxbridge," a senior woman manager at the BBC told me. "Then I saw a male candidate who had got two Bs and a D and he'd gone to Cambridge. My hunch is that fewer girls apply." The hunch was correct. Figures for Cambridge entrance indicate that 58 per cent of those who apply for places are men, although proportionately more of those girls who do apply are accepted than boys, presumably because they get better grades.

Boys' underachievement and girls' faulty image of themselves has returned some teachers to a debate about whether the two sexes need to learn in different ways and different environments. This has led Peter Osborne to re-introduce single-sex classes, 20 years after the compre-

hensive system made co-education the norm. "What boys have told researchers is that they don't like school, that they don't work hard," he says. "The girls on the other hand, feel undervalued, they feel that teachers spend more time with the boys and this leads to the girls feeling undermotivated."

D IANE Sammonds's research indicates that boys do indeed get more attention in the classroom, not because they are favoured over girls but because their behaviour is more disruptive and requires more of the teachers' time and energy, while the girls tend to sit quietly getting on with their work. "So in class," Osborne argues, "the girls have a problem, but in the GCSE results, they're wiping the floor with the boys." Talking to women in their twenties, Osborne found that they complained that the male disruptive behaviour continued at university.

How then, to begin to dissolve girls' lack of self-confidence, an instinct which will continue with them when they start applying for university or jobs? Osborne's first experiment was in his own subject, physics, where girls were not doing as well as boys. He noticed that the boys sat at the front of the class and answered most of the questions. One only has to observe a line-up on the newly-resurrected University Challenge to notice that, where female students

PHOTOGRAPH: JACKIE CHAPMAN

It's official ...

Women are superior beings

OWN CORRESPONDENT

It may be a man's world at the moment - but not for too much longer. Women are outperforming men in every area, and will eventually rule the planet.

The message to men is clear: you could soon find yourselves surplus to requirements.

After a study of the sexes, scientists concluded the "world naturally belongs to women". Women are both psychologically and physically stronger, says the report in the science magazine *Focus*.

Girls are smarter, more sociable and kinder to themselves than boys. And when they grow up, they get further along the career ladder, earn more and manage their families better.

The findings suggest the world could soon be under the control of remarkably superior beings.

Test and exam results last year showed girls were way ahead of boys in the classroom from the age of seven to 16.

Studies show boys also fall behind girls in their ability to read, concentrate and cope with tricky situations. They are also less productive and tend not to persevere as long as girls.

Physical strength is one area where men could usually feel confident of coming out ahead. Not any more. More women are muscling into the realms of endurance sports, such as climbing Everest and trekking to the South Pole. And thanks to their pear-shaped build, their level of endurance outstrips men's.

Men also tend to collect fat around their stomachs, making them more prone to heart disease and diabetes. Women are naturally in better shape to avoid these illnesses - without even trying.

"This goes some way to explain-

ing why women live for an average of five years longer," says the report.

The statistical slaughter goes on. Men are more accident prone and more likely to commit suicide.

Considering the figures on the work front, that's hardly surprising. In the 1980s, one in 15 homes had a woman as main breadwinner. Today the figure is one in five.

By 2010, three in five women could be earning more than their partners, says the report, which also found that "women managers score better in decision-making and planning skills".

Men are more likely to be unemployed than women. In Europe, the ranks of jobless men have jumped from 8% in 1968 to 22% in 1993. The reverse is true of women. "Women are putting off having children to concentrate on their jobs," the report said. "For the first time in decades, more are having babies in their 30s than in their 20s."

And that is the other area where men may no longer be needed. With sperm banks cutting out the need for a partner for reproduction, fathers could find themselves out of the family unit.

Dr Ian Banks, an expert on men's health, told the study: "It is wrong to say that women are outshining men in every area.

"We men are very good at killing ourselves, killing other people, having more accidents, getting more sports injuries and we excel at not seeing our doctors."

He said there was no reason why society could not "overcome some of the pressures which drive men to self-destruction".

"Men need to be encouraged to look after their bodies and health," he said. "If they don't, men will become more and more marginalised."

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