

Working Groups

At Fightback's "Strategies for Resistance" campaign planning day on 29th March we decided to set up working groups to move forward our campaigns. A lot of this work is urgent so if you are interested please get involved! The groups will aim to meet once a month.

- **Feminists against borders** - contact Laura 07890209479
- **Migrant workers** - contact Bex 07971719797
- **Reproductive freedoms** - contact Alice 07976275616
- **Welfare abolition** - contact Anne-marie 07840381195
- **Feminist education** - contact Laura 07971842027

Trade Union training

Feminist Fightback are planning on holding a dayschool for women trade unionists to share experiences and ideas on how to be active in the trade union movement and militant organisers in the workplace. It is especially aimed at women who have just become involved in their union or are thinking of becoming involved. For more information contact anna_longman@yahoo.co.uk

The last two months of feminist activism... Cont

Demonstration in solidarity with Yarl's Wood detainees: Fightback activists marched with around 200 people to Yarl's Wood Detention Centre for Women and Children to show their solidarity with the detainees. The speakers recounted the denial of adequate access to health care, detainees being held for years, prevention of access to legal representation, traumatised survivors of rape having no privacy from the completely male staff - who would enter their rooms without warning. Feminist Fightback have planned a meeting for the 9 May, 4-6pm, Housmans to work with other groups fighting deportation and immigration controls. FF also plans to develop education resources.

Update on Tube Cleaners Struggle

Despite 2/3 of London Underground cleaners winning the 'London Living Wage' since their strike last year, they still have no pensions, no sick pay and can get sacked at the whim of their managers. ISS, contracted in by Tubelines, has back-tracked on their promise that they would pay the London Living Wage by April, leaving cleaners feeling let-down and calling ISS 'thieves'. The need for a big campaign amongst the cleaners has not gone away. But the cleaning companies have decimated union organisation since the strike, by sacking many reps and members. The RMT union that organises London Underground cleaners is beginning slowly to rebuild. It has employed one of the sacked cleaners to recruit new members. Cleaners need to recover their strong position of last year so they can take on their bosses' bad practices and poverty pay. Support from Feminist Fightback has boosted cleaners' morale during this struggle. Ongoing support will be useful now in building confidence in the union and helping them to rebuild. If you want to get involved in the solidarity work join the migrant workers working group.

Workshops for schools, colleges and youth groups

We have recently started offering workshops on feminism and reproductive freedoms to schools and colleges. The first workshop was an exciting example of how young people are keen to engage with the issues of feminism and how we can provide a good space to explore students' ideas. Students commented that the workshop was "very inspirational", had a "good set of activity stuff" and involved people well. The teacher also let us know that "loads of the students have come up to me saying they really enjoyed it and it has really got them talking, and thinking!" One student reported: "It feels good to be part of something, even if it's only the mailing list. I'm running for women's officer in the student union so I'm hoping to get a group up and running in the college, looking at sexual health, feminist issues, other problems etc". If you know any students or teachers who might be interested in the workshops, get in touch.

All self-defining women are welcome to the meetings

- **15 April** Reproductive Freedom working group, Candid Arts cafe, Angel, 5.30pm
 - **17th April** Migrant Workers working group, Southwark Tavern, London Bridge, 7.00pm
 - **22 April** Welfare Abolition working group, venue tbc, 6.30pm
 - **9 May** fighting immigration controls and deportations, 4-6pm, Housman's bookshop, King's Cross
 - **13 May** FF steering 6.30- 9.30 pm skills - website training, politics - reproductive freedom
- 124 Canonbury Road, Highbury and Islington tube, call Bex on 07971719797 for directions
- **10 June** FF steering 6.00-9.00 pm skills - planning an action, politics - feminist education, venue tbc
 - **30 June** Picket of Harriet Harman's office, meet Peckham Rye stn at 5.00pm or call Alice on 07976274516
 - **8 July** FF steering 6.00-9.00 pm skills - facilitation, politics - international feminism, venue tbc
 - **12 August** FF steering 6.00-9.00pm skills - writing a leaflet/article, politics - objectification, venue tbc

Also: Places at summer festivals doing workers' beer - contact Rachael rachael_ferguson@yahoo.co.uk

www.feministfightback.org.uk e-mail: feminist.fightback@gmail.com — get involved!

Newsletter for March/ April 2009

feminist fightback

we're still **here**
we're still **angry**
we're still **fighting**

We live in a sexist society, fact. 80% of workers in minimum wage jobs are women; 70% of domestic and child-care work is done by women; we are bombarded on a daily basis with images that make us hate our bodies and how we look is always the most interesting thing about us; if a single mother steals from a supermarket to feed her child she is a criminal but the same supermarket can refuse to pay workers a living wage and is committing no crime; one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime, and the state perpetrates and exacerbates violence through its laws, prisons and police. We need a fighting women's movement more than ever. We need a feminism without borders standing for international solidarity with women fighting for their rights throughout the world; that demands the right to choose whether or not to have a child free from economic, legal and social constraints; that works with movements fighting for workers' rights and organises against sweatshops, immigration controls and for the rights of migrants. The world we live in exploits workers for the benefit of the few, and working-class women bear the brunt of poverty, inequality and oppression. Feminist Fightback tries to create a safe space to discuss our ideas and to plan grassroots feminist action, coming together to fight our own oppression and that of our sisters. We seek to involve feminists of different perspectives so please come and discuss with us.

Reports of recent feminist activism...

Gender, Race and Class: 14th February saw 300 feminists gather in London for an event which provided a clear alternative to Valentine's Day: discussing and debating anti-capitalist feminist ideas and planning the fight for our liberation from the bottom up. The 15 workshops focussed on taking ideas forward and while our conversations about the interconnections of oppressions have a long way to go we were glad to start them. The sheer energy that ran through the day was inspiring, a good place to move forward from. The event was organised by Feminist Fightback and a coalition of other feminist groups.

International Women's Day



IWD was a busy time, with a meeting on International Solidarity, with Organisation of Women's

Freedom in Iraq- UK, action against Prada's exploitation of workers with Labour Behind the Label and an anti-capitalist contingent at Million Women Rise.

Week of action against Welfare Abolition: On 9th March 25 activists dressed as bankers and occupied the Department for Work and Pensions. The aim of the protest was to highlight the fact that the Welfare Reform Bill was designed by bankers, penalises the poor, and abolishes income support for single parents and incapacity benefit. Pickets of job centres around the country took place throughout the week, which was called jointly with LCAP and DAN. The Bill passed, our fight against it will continue.

Day of action against Subway: On 4th April, activists from Feminist Fightback held a picket outside the Oxford Street Subway in solidarity with Natalia Szymanska, a 19 year old Polish migrant worker employed by a Subway in Belfast, who was sacked in her fifth month of pregnancy on a dubious charge of being in breach of the company's health and safety policy. She was sacked one month after telling her employers she was pregnant. The message was delivered to bosses in the service industry that these attacks on workers will not be tolerated.

Sex Workers' Speak Out: On Tuesday 31 April, sex workers and allies held a successful SPEAK OUT at the Eros Fountain, Piccadilly Circus against criminalisation and for labour rights for everyone who works in the sex industry. At 2.30pm, we took over one of the streets, bringing traffic to a standstill at Piccadilly Circus and unveiled a banner which read 'SEX WORKERS ARE STOPPING THE TRAFFICK'. Sex workers took direct action to highlight opposition to the Policing and Crime Bill. **More on the other side...**

