

feminist fightback

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

May/June newsletter

What the Other Feminists Look Like...

Harriet Harman, Minister for Women, thinks that a 'feminist' response to the recession would be to place more women in top city jobs, putting them 'in charge of the banks'. Meanwhile Harman supports the Welfare Reform Bill, which proposes to introduce US-style 'workfare' practices, forcing mothers of young children into minimum wage jobs or risk losing their benefits.

Harriet Harman likes to talk up her feminist credentials, but what kind of feminist only looks out for the interests of rich women during times of economic crisis? In fact, Harman has a long track record of selling out the majority of women she claims to represent – most recently playing a key role in blocking a Bill to legalise abortion in Northern Ireland. If this is how the Minister for Women is going to act on our behalf, then we can do without her!

Fortunately, Harriet Harman's feminism isn't the only kind on offer. Many women in London are organising to resist the iniquities of capitalism – from the parents occupying Lewisham Bridge Primary School to protest against its privatisation; to hostel residents demanding decent housing in Hackney; to the Visteon workers who occupied their factory and finally won their redundancy. Feminist Fightback has also been organising grass roots resistance to some of Harman's biggest sell-outs during her time as Minister for Women – occupying the Department for Work and Pensions in protest against the Welfare Reform Bill, and taking direct action in solidarity with Northern Irish women who continue to be denied the right to control their own bodies.



Feminist Fightback invites you to join us outside Southwark Town Hall to show Harriet Harman that women have been fighting back in ways very different to those she proposes. We'll be 'decorating' the Town Hall, sending message to Harman in a variety of 'creative' ways, and inviting our Minister for Women to come out and take a look!

This will be followed by a film showing introducing a number of women-led struggles taking place at the moment. We want this to be an opportunity to find out what's going on in London; to make links with other women's groups; and to find inspiration for how we can act collectively to take control of our workplaces, our communities and our lives.

Reproductive Freedoms

At May's Feminist Fightback steering meeting we had a thought-provoking discussion about the history of the movement for reproductive freedoms, and how this could inform our current work in this area. The reproductive freedom movement emerged in the 1970s, initiated by socialist feminists who believed that the fight for a legal right to choose needed to be bound up with, rather than separated from, other issues that affected whether a woman had the real right to choose (such as sterilisation abuse, birth control access, child care). This analysis is shared by Feminist Fightback and informs the work we do today, though we recognise that we often end up (as did our sisters in the seventies and eighties) focusing on the latest attacks on the legal right to an abortion at the expense of these wider demands. Really addressing these wider campaigns, developing creative ways for involvement outside of the legislative framework and thinking through some of the more thorny issues that the reproductive freedoms perspective throws up (such as reproductive technologies and disability rights and abortion) is something we will continue to work on over the forthcoming months. For more information on Feminist Fightback's work on reproductive freedoms see our website or contact the reproductive freedoms working group on 07976 274516.

Calendar

All self-defining women are welcome to the meetings

- **10 June** FF steering 6.00—9.00 pm skills – planning an action, politics – feminist education, venue Highbury Round House
- **30 June** Picket of Harriet Harman's office and film showing, meet Southwark Town Hall 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



Support the Tube Strike

Feminist Fightback Supports the Tube workers who are out on strike fighting for decent pay, against job cuts, and to stop management persecuting staff and breaking their own policies.

The support group are meeting Monday 15th June, 7pm at the 12 Pins, Finsbury Park

Find more information at www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk/jobspayjustice

Occupation of Lewisham Bridge Primary School - Education for All



Since April 23rd parents and teachers have been occupying the primary school, in opposition to Lewisham Council's plans to demolish the school building, and replace it with a school run by a guild of wealthy businessmen known as the Worshipful Company of Leather Sellers. The decision to close Lewisham Bridge was made some time ago without

consultation with parents and the children are now being bussed from their school building to a council building over a mile and half away, meaning that they have to get to school an hour earlier than normal, and have a very long day. Furthermore their new building lacks basic facilities and costs an estimated £900 d day! The plans to demolish the school and turn it into a 3-16 one come against a shortage of primary school places across London and a local shortage of secondary places in the north part of the Borough of Lewisham. Most of the other schools in the north of the borough operate some sort of selection,

meaning that many local children cannot get into them. Lewisham Bridge is to be the site of a new primary and secondary school, rather than the bare land next to it, which is to be turned into private flats, shops and a swimming pool. A clear example of land for the rich, not for education, and of education being run in the interest of private, unaccountable organisations. As a leaflet produced by the occupiers explains. "Lewisham Bridge School is also being knocked down as part of the Council's plan to break up democratic education in Lewisham into Trusts and Academies. The planned new school would have a significantly different legal status to the existing 'community' primary school. It would become a 'foundation' school that can set its own admissions policy." Parents and teachers have taken a stand to show that they do care and are not willing to see their children's education jeopardised in the interests of profit. This is an

inspiring example of fighting back with perseverance, for better education. The occupiers welcome visitors – get in touch and find out more at <http://defendededucationlewisham.wordpress.com/>

Feminist Fightback is an activist network. We're inspired by the politics of socialist feminism—the idea that women's liberation and the establishment of a democratic, classless society are interlinked—but we seek to involve socialists and feminists of different viewpoints in discussing ideas and building a movement. We hold regular steering committees in London and the north of England, open to all self-defining women, to decide activity.

Get involved—

Email feminist.fightback@gmail.com

or see www.feministfightback.org.uk