



Saying What We Want

Women's Demands
in the Feminist Seventies
and Now

Zoë Fairbairns

Helen Graham • Ali Neilson
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editors



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Preface

There is a dangerous mythology among young women of good intent who imagine there was once a glorious feminist movement, lost somewhere in the mists of time back in the early 70s.

(Polly Toynbee in *The Guardian* 06/06/02)

Recently, Polly Toynbee attempted to rewrite the political action of the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) as a seductive myth. She argued that although there did exist a relatively small number of celebrated and eminent feminists of the time (she lists Germaine Greer and Betty Friedan among them), there was absolutely no sign of a unified collective of women. Having witnessed the coming-together of a conference based around that very movement of the seventies – a day that became the inspiration for this pamphlet – I find myself confused. The 'danger' that Toynbee evokes is bound up in her notion that 'myths about the past get in the way of the future'. Yet the Feminist Seventies Conference* I attended considered the legacies of the WLM as central to today's feminism. Far from creating a sense of apathy, the process of remembering the 70s feminist past – its successes and its solidarity – inspired, for me particularly, a feeling of excitement at what feminism could achieve and how we would approach the ever more subtle gender

*Held at the University of York, England, on 27th April, 2002.

inequalities within women's lives now. In this pamphlet, and in disagreement with Toynbee, we *use* 'the past' to envision a movement towards 'the future'.

In 'Saying What We Want', Zoë Fairbairns tells us of the importance to the WLM of recognisable feminist demands, of women 'saying what they want', and both Zoë and Helen Graham (in the postscript) insist on the necessity of women making renewed demands in 2002 and for the future. At the Feminist Seventies Conference, participants were asked to write or send their own present-day demands, and in this pamphlet we extend that invitation. As you read, you will note the generous margins throughout and the blank page provided at the end for you to 'say what you want' wherever and whenever you want. The pamphlet is designed to encourage comments, thoughts, demands, questions, emotions, ideas. Pass it on to your friends and family for them to add their own wants and requests. One of our aims, following the conference in York, is to create a web space for sharing our demands for the future. Send us your demands by email or by post to enable the development of a collective of women's voices rising to the 70s WLM's example of 'saying what we want'. *

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Saying What We Want: Women's Liberation and the Seven Demands

by Zoë Fairbairns

In her poem 'The Old Feminist', the US poet Phyllis McGinley (who died in 1978) pokes fun at the ageing activist who, after a lifetime of heady campaigning and some successes,

‘Takes no pleasure in her rights
Who so enjoyed her wrongs.’

I don't want to be like her, so I must try not to wallow too much in nostalgia as I look back through my rose-tinted spectacles at the Feminist Seventies – the good old days when everything was terrible.

The truth is that neither I nor anybody else 'enjoys her wrongs' while she is actually suffering them. But years later it may be possible to enjoy those wrongs in retrospect – particularly when some of those wrongs have been righted, and particularly if you were part of a political movement that can take some credit for bringing this about.

In this article, based on a talk I gave at the Feminist Seventies Conference, I look at one of seventies feminism's most characteristic and successful tactics: making demands.

For me, the Feminist Seventies began in late 1969, which was when I first encountered the words 'women's', 'liberation' and 'movement' side by side in the same phrase.

I was studying in the USA at the time, and my immediate thought was, why haven't we got something like this at home? By the time I returned to the UK in the summer of 1970, Women's Liberation (WL) was already establishing itself, not simply as an offshoot of the US movement, but as a home-grown response to home-grown sexual politics.

I found that there had been a conference held in Oxford in February 1970, at which the burgeoning Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) had agreed to campaign for four demands.

These were:

- (1) Equal pay for equal work
- (2) Equal education and equal opportunities
- (3) Free contraception and abortion on demand
- (4) Free 24 hour nurseries

I thought these demands were brilliant, striking at the very heart of why and how women were oppressed.

The main cause of women's oppression – it seemed to me – was that women tended to get married, have children and so become financially dependent on men and under their control. This was so obviously a bad arrangement for women that we must only be doing it because we had to. We were forced into it, I thought, by a lack of other options. If however, demands (1) and (2) were met, women would be able to get good jobs and live independently. If demand (3) were met, we wouldn't have to have babies, and if demand (4) were met, even if we did have babies, we would be able take paid work as well and so avoid coming under male financial control. QED, problem of patriarchy solved.

Another benefit that I thought would come out of

giving women a real choice of whether to marry, and/or have sex with men, and/or have babies, was that those heterosexual men who refused to mend their patriarchal ways would soon find it impossible to get a mate. They would thus be deprived of the joys of female sexual companionship, which in many cases would be enough to bring them into line. Alternatively, their genes would die out. Either way, that would be the end of patriarchy. This desirable state of affairs would, in my view, be further hastened by the achievement of three more demands which were added at subsequent conferences* in the Feminist Seventies. These were:

- (5) Legal and financial independence for women
- (6) An end to discrimination against lesbians
- (7) Freedom for all women from intimidation by the threat or use of male violence. An end to the laws, assumptions and institutions that perpetuate male dominance and men's aggression towards women.

That should just about fix it, I thought.

You might think I was a bit naïve, and I might even agree with you. But you don't have to see the Seven Demands as an answer to all women's problems, either in the Feminist Seventies or now, to recognise the advantages of saying what you want.

The first and most obvious advantage is that it is better than the alternative, i.e. not saying what you want. Saying that you want something – demanding it – does

*Demands 5 and 6 were added at the Manchester conference in 1975; the 7th demand, and an overall introductory assertion - "The women's liberation movement asserts a woman's right to define her own sexuality" - was added at the Birmingham conference in 1978.

not necessarily mean that you will get it, but not saying what you want more or less guarantees that you will not get it. And even if you do, you may not recognise it.

Before you can say what you want, you have to know what that is. You have to think about it, discuss it, agree on it. You have to ask yourself what, in specific terms, is standing between the way things are now and the way you would like them to be. Is it a law, a tradition, an economic structure or system (local, national, global or domestic), an ideology, a personal grievance, all or none of the above? Is it bigger than that, or smaller? You don't necessarily have to have all the answers, but you have to know what you think, you have to be specific, and you have to prioritise. You have to risk unpopularity by saying, 'this, not that' or 'this now, that later.' Those of us who were not at the 1970 conference owe a huge debt to those who were, and who dared to do these things.

Another advantage of having a list of clear demands was that it provided an answer to the frequently asked question, 'What do feminists want?' Or as a man once put it to me, 'How will you know when you've won?' I showed him a list of the demands and said, 'I'll know we've won when each of those demands has been met, and when they look as old-fashioned as campaigning for the right to vote.'

Has that day come? Hardly. But significant progress was made, during the Feminist Seventies and subsequently, towards the achievement of most of the demands, and much of that was as a result of feminist campaigning in its broadest sense.

Here are a few examples.

First demand: Equal pay. Women in 1970 earned only 66% of what men earned. Now the figure is 83%. That's still not equal pay, but these days at least some of the discrepancy is due to women doing different jobs from men, and following different working patterns. To some extent this reflects women's different choices and priorities, which makes it a different sort of problem (and in my opinion a lesser one) from the pre-70s practice of employers openly and unashamedly offering men and women different rates for doing the same job. That is now illegal. Similarly, the old trade union ideal of the 'family wage' (i.e. more money for men because they have to support a family, less money for women because they have men to support them) is rarely advocated these days, at least in public.

Second demand: Equal opportunities. When the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, many employers responded by segregating men and women into different jobs so that they would have no basis for comparison. But in 1975 the Sex Discrimination Act made this illegal, along with the practice of offering jobs to only one sex. This was quite normal before the Feminist Seventies, with newspapers running job advertisements in separate columns for men and women, and Labour Exchanges (government-run predecessors of JobCentres) displaying men's jobs and women's jobs in different windows.

Third Demand: Contraception and abortion. The only time that I have ever consulted a doctor as a private patient was in 1969 when I wanted to go on the pill. The doctor in question was my NHS GP, who informed me

that although he had no objection to giving me the pill, he was not legally permitted to do it on the National Health. So I had to pay a fee to see him, and the full cost of the medication on a private prescription – and very posh it was too, with twirly writing. The cost was two or three times the normal prescription fee. Another alternative would have been to go to a Family Planning Association clinic or a Brook Advisory Centre, but although both these bodies were charities and doing great work, you still had to pay. Since 1975, however, anyone who needs contraceptive advice or supplies can get them free on the National Health.

Abortion, although neither free nor on demand for everyone, is widely available. Attempts by anti-abortionists to restrict it were robustly and successfully resisted in the Feminist Seventies by the feminist-inspired National Abortion Campaign (NAC) and A Woman's Right To Choose.

Fourth Demand: Childcare. In 1970, just 10% of children under the age of five had a state-funded nursery place. The present government has guaranteed a nursery place for every four-year-old whose parents want it, and in its National Childcare Strategy acknowledges the importance of childcare for education, equal opportunities and social inclusion. That's still a long way from free 24 hour childcare for all, and, like all government promises, it needs to be watched. But at least now there is something to watch.

Fifth Demand: Legal and Financial Independence. In the early 70s, many laws, official regulations and commercial practices took it for granted that women were financially dependent on men, thus ensuring that this dependency, where it existed, was difficult to escape from.

It was, for example, normal practice for income tax returns to bear the words, 'If you are a married woman, this form should be given to your husband and treated as if it were addressed to him'; a wife's tax affairs were her husband's responsibility. Tax rebates owed to wives were frequently paid to their husbands, and it was not uncommon, if a married woman wrote to the Inland Revenue about some matter to do with her income tax, for the reply to come back to her husband, beginning, 'Dear Sir, with reference to your wife's letter, the answer to her question is...'

Many social security benefits were payable to women at a lower rate than to men, or not payable to women at all. (Invalid Care Allowance, a payment for people who gave up paid work to look after someone who was ill, was only payable to men and single women. Married women were deemed not to need it, because they would be at home anyway.)

Almost all family benefits were paid to the 'head of the household', which, unless he was actually incapacitated, meant the man. All this has now changed, thanks in part to the energetic and well-informed lobbying of the Women's Liberation Campaign for Legal and Financial Independence, later renamed The Fifth Demand.

Women's Liberation groups were also active in the 70s in defending Family Allowance (later renamed Child Benefit) which was the only independent income received by many mothers. Governments of both main parties (Edward Heath's Tories in 1971-2 and James Callaghan's Labour Party in 1976) tried to change this and pay the benefit to breadwinners, which usually meant fathers; but on both occasions, feminist-led public outrage was so strongly in favour of the payment going to mothers,

that plans to change this were abandoned.

Another problem related to consumer credit. It was common practice for shops and financial institutions to require a woman who wanted to borrow money – anything from an HP agreement to replace a toaster, to a mortgage to buy a house – to have the form counter-signed by her husband or another man, to guarantee the payment. Even if she was in a well-paid job, she was assumed to be unreliable. This practice was outlawed in the Consumer Credit Act of 1974.

Sixth Demand: Discrimination against lesbians. Unlike male homosexuality, lesbianism has never been illegal in the UK. But in the past there was much less social acceptance of lesbianism than there is now, when even cabinet ministers feel free to come out, and popular soap operas seem incomplete without a lesbian storyline. It is now much easier for lesbian couples to live openly, have fertility treatments, foster and adopt children, and own property together. But lesbian couples (like gay men) are still treated less favourably than married couples in terms of tax, inheritance and some employment rights; and Clause 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act, which restricts free speech on all forms of homosexuality, means that in some ways lesbians are now more disadvantaged than they were in the 70s.

Seventh Demand: Patriarchal violence, institutions and attitudes. It's difficult to comment briefly on this huge and wide ranging demand. Male violence to women is still a horrendous problem; the fact that there are now refuges and crisis lines (many of which had their origins in the Feminist Seventies) is some consolation, but not much. Still, it is true to say that many patriarchal attitudes which were taken for granted before the 70s, are

now widely condemned. One such was the notion that a married woman was her husband's property, and that by marrying him she had relinquished her right to refuse sex. This was the legal position in the Feminist Seventies – indeed, it did not change until 1992, which was when it first became possible under English law for a married woman whose husband had sex with her against her will, to charge him with rape.

Other attitudes which were once widespread but are now far less common are the assumption that women's chastity is more important than men's; that married women should not go out to work; that a woman who is sexually harassed in the workplace should keep quiet and look for another job; that single motherhood is a matter for shame and disgrace; and that the title 'Ms' will never catch on.

In listing these partial successes of the Seven Demands, I am not saying that they solved everything, or that they represented the only feminist political activity at the time, or that all feminists agreed with them. But they were widely accepted, and provided an important way of presenting the WLM to the rest of the world.

The way they did this provides, I think, a potted history of some aspects of the Feminist Seventies.

By the middle of the decade, there was huge interest in the WLM, with enquiries pouring into women's centres. I was a paid worker at one of these Centres (the Women's Research and Resources Centre – WRRC) from 1975 to 1977, and continued my involvement as a volunteer into the eighties.

Letters came from students writing essays, school students doing projects, journalists, politicians, or members of the public who had been intrigued or fired up by something they had seen in a newspaper or heard on the radio. Sometimes we didn't know what lay behind the enquiries, when they just said things like, 'Dear Sir, I am doing research on women, please send details'. What they all seemed to be asking, in their different ways, was, 'What is women's liberation? What is it for, what is it against, what does it do and where can I find it?'

The strictly correct response, of course, in a determinedly non-centralised movement, would have been to mutter, 'It's not for me to say' or 'Well, here's what I think, but I'm not the spokeswoman or anything, I'm certainly not the leader, so if you really want to know you'll have to ask everybody else...' by which time most of the enquirers would have lost patience and gone away.

So the WRRRC got together with two other women's centres - A Woman's Place, and the Women's Information, Referral and Education Service (WIRES) - to produce a leaflet that would explain the WLM in a way that we would all be happy to endorse and send to our enquirers.

The leaflet was called *Women's Liberation - An Introduction*. Producing the first edition was one of the shortest, easiest feminist tasks I have ever been involved with. So far as I remember, we didn't even meet. We didn't have to. We did it all either over the phone or by sending drafts through the post (no email in those days.) We simply used the demands - the agreed programme of the WLM - as the basis of our introduction. We listed the demands, explained what they meant and why they were important, gave the names and addresses of groups cam-

paigining around the issues and added some suggestions for further reading. We printed 10,000 copies and sent them out to enquirers, free of charge. Other feminist groups asked for copies for their own use; we either gave them away or sold them at cost. The first print run disappeared within weeks, and soon we were reprinting.

As the demands were added to, the leaflet needed to be modified. Once again, the WRRC, A Woman's Place and WIRES took on the task. This time there was a little bit more discussion, but not much. I think we met once, maybe twice. Lesbians in the group felt that the section on lesbian rights should be written by lesbians. Everyone agreed. Someone else wanted to include sections on consciousness raising and the small-groups structure of the WLM. Again, no controversy there. Addresses and reading lists were updated, and cartoons were added.* Again, many thousands of copies were printed, sold, given away or mailed out to enquirers.

In 1978, at the Birmingham WL conference, the demands were changed once again. (The final text appears at the end of this article.) Once again, *Women's Liberation - An Introduction* was out of date. So did we meet again to update it?

Not at once. For one thing, there were still plenty of copies of the 1977 edition left over, and for another, voices were being raised criticising the demands as too reformist, tinkering with oppressive structures rather than

*Photocopies of the 1977 edition of *Women's Liberation - An Introduction*, can be obtained from me at 27 Anerley Grove, London SE19 2HS. The print quality is not brilliant, but most of the text is legible. Please send 3 first class stamps to cover photocopying costs, and an A4 stamped addressed envelope.

overthrowing them. And the WLM was by now so bitterly divided over issues including race, class and sexuality that the women who had produced the earlier versions of the leaflet no longer felt confident that we could, in a single document, do justice to all the competing views and provide an introduction to the WLM that would be fair, accurate and above all useful to outsiders.

For several years we dodged the issue, relying on earlier editions of the leaflet, or responding to the 'I am interested in women, please send details' enquiries with individual letters – well aware that these were even less democratic and representative than a cobbled together new edition of *Women's Liberation - An Introduction* would have been. Finally, in 1983, a group was formed within the Feminist Library (formerly the WRRC) to attempt the task.

We met a few times, but we couldn't get beyond the first page. The mere mention of the phrase 'equal pay' was enough to bring about radical challenges: why do we want to be equal with men, don't we want something better? What's the point of trying to improve the conditions of women in waged labour when we want to end the whole concept of waged labour by overthrowing capitalism? Dealing with other demands on the list was no easier. Discussions of contraception and abortion soon raised questions about whether women should be having penetrative sex with men in the first place, and whether, by trying to make it easier to avoid unwanted pregnancy, we were not simply encouraging male sexual irresponsibility. Talk of nurseries was seen in some quarters as implying criticism of women who wanted to look after their children themselves, the phrase 'legal and financial independence' was seen as both too individual-

istic and too close to wages for housework, and ‘an end to discrimination against lesbians’ was seen as much too modest a demand.

All these debates were important, but they didn’t get the leaflet written. Soon the project was abandoned. As far as I know the leaflet has never been updated or reprinted, and neither, since 1978, has any Women’s Liberation conference amended the demands, or added to them.

So was this the demise of the Seven Demands? Not quite. It was a feature of the structurelessness and ultra-democracy of Seventies Feminism that no decision or policy could ever be enforced on the WLM as a whole. But by the same token, it could not be repealed either, and this applies to the Seven Demands. They continued to exist well into the 1980s as a defining mark of what feminism meant for a substantial number of women.

For example, WIRES, which was the nearest thing the WLM ever had to a national newsletter, used them as editorial criteria. WIRES’ policy was to publish, unedited, any contribution that was written by a woman, and did not contravene the Seven Demands. These rules made it easier for them to decide what to include – it meant for example that long debates about Northern Ireland or Palestine were included (they may not have had any direct connection with the Seven Demands, except perhaps the last one which covered everything, but they didn’t actually contravene them); while contributions from a group called Feminists Against Abortion (who took the view that abortion was an abuse of women’s bodies and right to bear children) were excluded as being in contravention of the third demand. With hindsight one might take different views on either of these points, but the women running WIRES had to have some

sort of fixed and agreed editorial criteria. The Seven Demands provided these until WIRES folded in 1986.

The Seven Demands were also listed in the Spare Rib Diary (which provided an annually updated list of feminist groups, businesses and projects, and so was essential to any activist); and as recently as 2001, they appeared on the wall of the Silver Moon women's bookshop in London.

Silver Moon as an autonomous feminist bookshop no longer exists (though it has recently reopened as a shop-within-a-shop at Foyles*). Spare Rib and its diary are no more. No-one organises WL marches any longer like the one held in 1971 when women marched behind banners proclaiming their favourite demand; and I am not aware of any attempts to republish *Women's Liberation - An Introduction*. Nor have there been in recent years the sorts of WL conferences at which policy can be more-or-less made and more-or-less agreed on by more-or-less everybody. Maybe it was easier to do things like that when we felt more beleaguered, when our ideas seemed wacky and revolutionary, rather than mainstream and obvious as many of them do now. Maybe things were easier when they were more difficult.

I believe that the Seven Demands served a useful purpose by providing a minimum programme, a rallying point, a loose but sustaining structure for an otherwise-unstructured movement. They also provided a reminder of what it meant to call yourself a feminist, as

*To contact Silver Moon at Foyles: silvermoon@foyles.co.uk; 113-119 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0EB, England; +44(0)20 7437 5660. <http://foyles.co.uk/silvermoon>

opposed to the equally honourable but very different identifications of ‘socialist who happens to be a woman’, ‘peace campaigner who happens to be a woman’, ‘ecological activist who happens to be a woman’ and so on.

If the word ‘feminist’ has any meaning, it has to incorporate a belief that there is such a thing as sexual politics, a power struggle between men as men and women as women. The Seven Demands identified the points of political friction and conflict, and possible directions for feminist political creativity. They are certainly not reformist. If you think they are, take another look at them and try to imagine a world – or even just a small part of the world – in which they have all been fulfilled. Would it be a world that you would recognise? Or would it be one in which a revolution had occurred?

The Seven Demands

as finalised at the National Women’s Liberation Conference held in Birmingham in 1978.

“The women’s liberation movement asserts a woman’s right to define her own sexuality, and demands:

- 1 Equal pay for equal work.
- 2 Equal education and job opportunities.
- 3 Free contraception and abortion on demand.
- 4 Free 24-hour community-controlled childcare.
- 5 Legal and financial independence for women.
- 6 An end to discrimination against lesbians.
- 7 Freedom for all women from intimidation by the threat or use of male violence. An end to the laws, assumptions and institutions which perpetuate male dominance and men’s aggression towards women.

Postscript

In the early 70s, on an International Women's Day march, the young Sheila Rowbotham carried a placard which among hundreds of other messages, chants and banners, read 'Equal pay is not enough. We want the moon'*.

Placing a concrete demand like equal pay in relation to the endless possibility of 'the moon', Rowbotham's slogan marks the tension between reformism and revolution, highlighted by Zoë in her article, as a continuum: not either/or but, the slogan implies, one before the other. Of course the demand for equal pay was met in 1970 and finally put into effect in 1975, two years before three out of four of the editorial team of this pamphlet were born. For us reading Zoë's work, the mere thought of men and women openly getting paid differently for the same job (no matter how much it still goes on surreptitiously) seems so long ago as to give a little frisson, *no, was it that bad?, really?* But once the frisson has given way and with a cold hard look at our own lives, the question Zoë leaves us with by the end point of her article is: 'if Equal Pay is "not enough" where does that leave us today?'

We, all of us, live in this land of 'not-enoughness'. Wanting to change the world – wanting that damned moon – causes conflicts. Zoë's article reminds us, renews our amazement at, how big an impact the women

*Sheila Rowbotham (1983) *Dreams and Dilemmas: Collected Writings*. London: Virago, p. 350.

involved in women's liberation have had on our lives. This inspirational sense of strength and success drawn from our collective memories is, however, criss-crossed by a heady sense of freedom, the hybrid emotion of liberation's mini successes and the cunning evolution of consumer capitalism. This kind of freedom, these feelings of choice and of independence are so easy to 'buy' into. Easy, in spite of the fact we all know how quickly they evaporate, when we walk at night, when we look in the mirror, when we come crashing up against certain people, images and ideas. When this freedom deserts us we are left with a sense of betrayal and hopelessness, not just for ourselves but for the world. With all the systematic inequality and hatred there is, we sometimes shrug, say to each other in a comforting way, 'well, what can we do?' So most of us do little bits, some do lots, in different groupings and organisations, sometimes experiencing the strength that comes with good fight-back politics but often weakened by the residues of failures – all the small demos and empty meetings. For us, the 'not-enough' generations, things are both 'fine', 'alright', 'ok', and without much hope for future change.

Zoë argues that for the WLM the Seven Demands acted as something to unify around. While this unity did not exist in any unproblematic sense, it offered a core set of beliefs, a way, Zoë suggests, of offering explanation. With this aim of explanation in mind I went on the local radio a couple of months ago to talk about the Feminist Seventies Conference. Patched in over the phone to Radio York's outside broadcast at an Agriculture Show, I held forth armed with facts of inequality: numbers of women in Parliament (though I'm doubtful it makes a difference), the disparity between women's weekly wage and men's (though an equalisation of that figure would belie many other inequalities). I failed where the Seventies demands succeed – I could not transform my attempt to communicate the extremity of our cause into anything more than a reformist plea.

At the conference women, inspired by Zoë's paper, wrote their present-

day demands. The demands were imaginative and hard hitting, ranging from 'feminism on the national curriculum' to 'living in a world unaffected by gender'. But, as with the 1995 campaign 'What Women Want*', when thousands of postcards were distributed and filled in by women, the demands were very different to the demands of the WLM. Then, in 1970, 1975 and 1978, they were produced collectively, through debate and through forging grounds for agreement. This difference in how the demands were produced caused us concern when we first thought about making the demands from the conference a basis for a bigger on-going internet project. Would publishing women's demands just be more hot air? Would we be creating a forum where individuals are only able to talk *at* each other rather than engaging collectively as they/we did at the Women's Liberation Conferences? But reading the demands both from the Feminist Seventies Conference and from the 1995 campaign, we were struck by the realisation that while they may have been produced by individuals the demands are far from *individualistic*. Although different methods for change are espoused, from parliamentary lobbying to love and dreams, demands-in-common develop. Post-September 11th and the war in Afghanistan, internationalist concerns emerge within the demands as a priority: peace, a world without poverty, clean water worldwide, an end to third world debt. Demands for British society included a well-funded welfare state with good wages for care workers, an end to the use of ECT in psychiatric wards and increased provision for women escaping domestic violence.

Zoë's article infuses our current demands with so much hope. She celebrates hard-won successes and rejects the idea that Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination were in any way inevitable. She also refuses closure on the Seven Demands, highlighting aspects that still need fighting

*The 'What Women Want' campaign was co-ordinated by the Women's Communication Centre. A book based on the demands, *What Women Want* edited by Bernadette Vallely, was published by Virago in 1996.

over such as Clause 28 and chasing up the government's promises to increase state childcare provision. To these areas women who contributed demands at the Feminist Seventies Conference might add: fighting the 'one-year rule' which forces women who have gained British citizenship through marriage to stay married for a year, British and US military and economic imperialism and the government's Private Finance Initiative.

Zoë's analysis of the Seventies demands can, perhaps, help me understand where I went wrong in my radio debut with my botched attempt to communicate. Her article reveals the way in which the Seventies Women's Liberation Movement both engaged with liberal reformism which 'did something now' *and* opened a window on a moonlit new world. This is where I failed. I didn't manage to evoke that symbiotic relationship between pragmatic priorities and dreams, between legal reform and social revolution.

In this period of 'not-enoughness' perhaps the way to come by the collective moon has to be a little different. Zoë talks about the danger of reverse romanticism, of indulging in that niggling sense that perhaps things were better when they were worse. One reason for the hopelessness we describe is that in 'these days' of 'alright' it's hard to put your finger on exactly what is happening. Understanding the Private Finance Initiative means understanding the subtleties of business law, and Tony Blair's line on UK involvement with 'Star Wars' National Missile Defence is that Bush hasn't asked him yet. This government, even more than most, thrives on secrecy – never makes it clear on what ground we need to fight, never throws down the gauntlet and says 'come on then, if you think you're hard enough'!

New Labour's politics of attempting to discredit and 'wrong-foot' confrontation makes us recognise that not only might things have been better before they were better but that they might also get worse. There is a danger that we get so seduced by the march of progress along the continuum of 'better and better' that we don't notice it isn't

a straight line. There may well be other directions, not directly backwards – some of us would recognise that (wouldn't we?) – but which nevertheless make the moon seem as far away as ever. One direction we seem to have taken is down the road of so-called irony. Just look at recent ad campaigns, the 'not for girls' Yorkie, the 'we keep women in check' Echo biscuits, the 'I'm a prostitute' Bueno Bar. And at the way Jade from *Big Brother* has been talked about – 'pig', 'stupid', 'ugly'. There has been a power shift, participating in popular culture is becoming a little bit too uncomfortable.

'Not enough', whether at some point on Rowbotham's continuum or on some very different path than could have been envisaged in 1971, is *still* 'not enough'. The challenge for women today is to decide what we want to change and how that change can be enacted. The modest and utterly optimistic aims of our *Women Demand* website are to make connections between our individual demands, to enable collective recognition and to publicise links to available information. Our website assumes that it is useful for dreams, desires and demands to be initially formed but that they will also be challenged and re-worked through collective actions of debate, demonstration or direct action. That way 'not enough', we hope, can stop being a description and resurface, as it once was, as a demand.

Helen Graham

Campaign Links:

Here are some links to campaigns mentioned in this pamphlet. These links are obviously not exhaustive but offer a way into campaign networks.

Childcare

Day Care Trust www.daycaretrust.org.uk

Clause 28

Outrage <http://outrage.nabumedia.com>

Domestic Violence

Women's Aid www.womensaid.org.uk

Equal Pay

Fawcett Society, <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/home.html>

National Missile Defence

Stop the War www.StopWar.org.uk, CND www.cnduk.org, Women in Black www.womeninblack.net

Private Finance Initiative

More Information: George Monbiot www.monbiot.com under health, 'Very British Corruption'. Campaign links: Unison www.unison.org.uk/positivepublic/index.asp

Your Demands

An Invitation

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