

Editorial

At times this undertaking has felt slightly crazy. Western world in panic over terrorism? US/UK bombing one of the poorest countries on earth? Middle East crisis worse than ever? Dread the next news bulletin? And what do we do? Produce a feminist magazine!

After September 11, and especially after the attack on Afghanistan, many people felt challenged. A sense of powerlessness fought with the urge to act. A sudden appreciation of how little one knew about many things struggled with the need to make sense of current events. The two of us kept finding each other at demonstrations, meetings, teach-ins.

On a march against the bombing, we find the feminist presence is muted to say the least. Doves and banners call for peace, some of them in women's name. The Socialist Workers Party placards put it all down to imperialism. Leaflets abound explaining why this or that minute left sect has absolutely the right line on this situation. Small groups of feminists stand by (actually one of us was sitting under a tree breastfeeding) while large phalanxes of militant Muslim fundamentalist men hurry past. Some of the chanting is apparently in favour of the Taliban. Certainly nothing remotely expresses our perspective.

And at a meeting of the anti-war 'coalition', the SWP dominates with its annoyingly familiar style of silencing any line it doesn't approve of, and rushing to organise the revolution before any of us are even introduced. You could almost believe with their sense of urgency that they will stop the war, but really it's just to shut up any dissent.

We also attend an ad hoc feminist meeting, called by Women Against Fundamentalisms, Women In Black, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, and others, and it is here that Helen is

inspired to produce a publication to explore feminist responses to these events. Sophie was a founding member of the *Trouble & Strife* collective, and we wonder about making it a special issue of *T&S*. We approach the current collective and they are pleased. They give us editorial control and while this one is rather different from previous issues, we hope it maintains the *T&S* spirit and tradition.

We knew there were feminists 'out there' who for years had been studying Muslim fundamentalism internationally, and had opposed and challenged its development in many countries — we wanted to know how they saw this new situation.

We knew of the existence of Afghan feminists, entirely ignored by the news media while US aggression was presented as if it were on their behalf. We needed to seek them out.

This magazine is the result of such searching. We hope it will help you a little with yours.

One apology: that this issue was not out in April as we hoped it would be. We bit off rather more than we could chew. This means that some articles are somewhat out of date, through no fault of the authors. For example the pieces by Palestinian women were written before the terrible incursions by Israel. But while change is rapid at present, the underlying issues remain depressingly stable, and we think that everything in the issue will be of great interest for some time to come.

The fact that the magazine has appeared at all is due to tremendous, readily given, help from many women, often in response to direct requests from us! We are extremely grateful (thanks to them appear more fully on the inside front cover). □