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**T**he economic crisis is highlighting more than ever the inequalities in society. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer. And its exposed other divisions too.

Women have come a long way - we've won the right to vote, some abortion and contraception rights, the legal right to equal pay and to an extent sexist attitudes have got better. But like the 15% pay gap shows, there's a big difference between a law being changed and women having real equality.

And the Con-Dem government's brutal austerity is making things much worse. 750,000 public sector workers are losing their jobs - the majority are women. We've seen tuition fees tripled, EMA taken away and child care facilities at many universities closed. Welfare benefits are being massacred - leaving many single mothers unsure

of how to keep a roof over their families' head and many women in violent relationships even less confident they can leave.

This isn't a conspiracy against women by sexist politicians (although with members like Ken Clarke and Nadine Dorries in the Tories, you wouldn't be surprised if it was!). It's a symptom of the fact that the oppression of women is institutionalised under capitalism.

A capitalist economy relies on the super exploitation of women, as cheap labour in the workplace and as unpaid cooks, cleaners and carers in the home.

Sexism, and all violent manifestations of it, is a symptom of a deeply unequal society that teaches men they must control women, including sexually. This is reinforced by women's material inequality and lower status in society.

We demand change! We want a socialist world where society's huge wealth and resources are collectively owned, based on co-operation not exploitation and genuine democracy. We want a society where women are not financially dependant on men, but everyone has a decent income in their own right.

Reactionary attitudes to women are very deeply ingrained and would not disappear overnight. But in the longer term a socialist society which has freed the family from its role as a social institution will develop a culture and ideology that reflects this.

But as you can see overleaf, that doesn't mean we think we have to wait for socialism to improve things for women...

**Turn over for the Socialist Party's opinion and demands on victim blaming, abortion, street harassment and domestic violence.**

## FIGHTING SEXISM: WHAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY THINKS

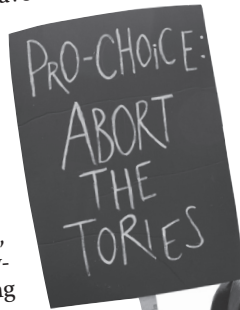
### Defend and extend abortion rights

In the last year there has been a stepping up of right-wing anti-choice campaigning. Some Christian groups have started picketing abortion clinics. These groups want to control women, their bodies and their sexualities.

But every woman should have the right to choose when and whether to have children. The politicians who claim to be 'pro-life' say they are 'defending the family'. But in reality it's these same politicians who are cutting the services and resources working class families rely on most - child care, welfare, education, jobs. Having real choice means fighting for these things too.

We campaign for:

- No cuts or privatisations in the NHS - repeal the Health and Social Care Act, end the abortion post code lottery by investing in all NHS services
- Free abortion on request - end the need for two doctors' agreement



PRO-CHOICE:  
ABORT  
THE  
TORIES



### End street harassment

Often it seems like we can't even feel safe walking down the street. Up to 95% of women report having experienced sexual harassment in the street at some point. People might think that cat calls, wolf whistling and aggressive leers are just 'men being men'. But it can have a huge impact - many women report choosing different routes home, pretending to be on their phones when walking past groups of men or even changing the way they dress.

Again, street harassment is often a way to demonstrate a man's 'masculinity' and the power he has over women. A socialist society, based on equality rather than hierarchy (of class or sex), would begin to tackle this.

We campaign for:

- Stop the cuts! Many, such as public transport staffing and street lights, will make women feel even less safe
- Invest in measures to make women feel more safe - free phones, rape alarms, self defence classes and night buses

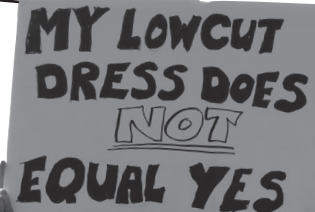
### Stop victim blaming

All too often the blame for sexual assault and rape is put on the victim, how they were dressed or behaving. And too many politicians and celebrities have tried to differentiate between 'different types of rape' - suggesting that date rape or rape by a partner are less serious than being attacked by a stranger.

We have to reject these arguments and put the blame firmly on the shoulder of the attacker. We also have to recognise why rape exists. Rape has very little to do with sex and a lot to do with power. It is a product of a capitalist system that teaches people that women are inferior to men and should be controlled. Part of campaigning against rape and victim blaming has to be challenging this system.

We campaign for:

- Stop victim blaming! Decent education in schools, workplaces and trade unions about the myths and facts of rape
- Decent support - including legal, emotional and where necessary practical - for victims of sexual assault, rape and domestic violence



MY LOWCUT  
DRESS DOES  
NOT  
EQUAL YES



### Stop domestic violence

One quarter of women will be a victim of domestic violence at some point in her life. Young women are now the group at biggest risk.

In the 1990s Militant, the predecessor of the Socialist Party, organised the Campaign Against Domestic Violence. This campaign got every national trade union to adopt a policy on domestic violence which has helped countless women, for example, be transferred to a different area without losing their job if they move to escape a violent partner.

We campaign for:

- No to the closure of domestic violence support services! Increase and improve these services to help those women affected by domestic violence
- A mass building programme of decent, affordable social housing to make sure women have somewhere to go should they choose to leave a violent relationship

This is just a sample of what we think and what we campaign for. To find out more, get in touch with us (details on front) or come to one of our meetings:

### Why should feminists be socialists?

Socialist Party meeting, open to all, come along to find out more about us.

Room University of London Union  
Mallet Street  
WC1E 7HY



### All London Socialist Party meeting

Thursday 27 September 2012