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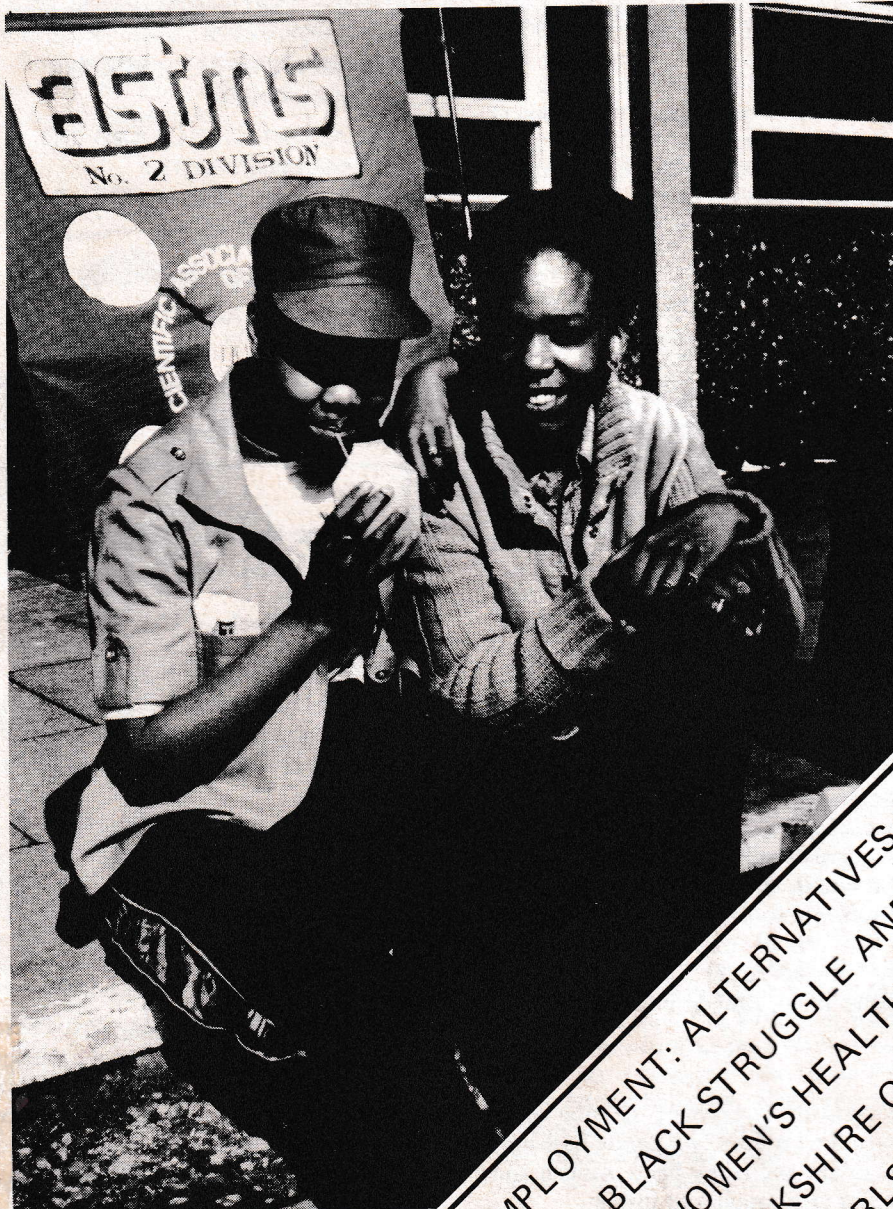
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communist party womens journal

no34

autumn 1981

30p



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Happy Families

Looking back over the political events of the summer, one stands out as impossible to ignore: the Royal Wedding. Not just the celebrations themselves, but the saturation media coverage, the commercial souvenirs from video recordings to carrier bags, and even the cheap beer from Charringtons, made sure that no one could escape from Charles and Lady Di.

The Establishment made no secret of the purpose of this ideological onslaught. The Times leader on the Wedding Day told us that royalty symbolises national unity and national unity is important because: 'Like the family the nation is a primary unit in the construction of social order.'

So the Royal Wedding was an occasion for uniting the nation, for getting together to celebrate and forget the 3 million unemployed, the urban riots and police violence and even (as the media so conveniently forgot) the death of David Moore, run down by a police van in Toxteth

Those of us who expressed irritation or boredom were seen, at best, as puritanical spoilsports or humourless feminists, at worst as dangerous anarchists. 'Don't do it, Di!' badges aroused more hostility than 'Sack the Tories' or CND.

Di's done it!

But this wasn't just *any* royal occasion. A Royal Wedding is something different. Again, the Times hammered the message home:

'The English throne is now identified with exemplary family life. . . Part of the public gratification is the prospect which it affords of that character being carried forward to the next generation.'

The Wedding symbolised the stability of conventional moral values: the monogamous nuclear family, the heterosexual couple, the experienced husband and the virginal bride, whose main interest in life, as she told us repeatedly, is children.

But what about the rest of us?

This is the ideal to which we are supposed to aspire. But for most of us, whether we want it or not, it's easier said than done. Over the years, successive governments, but particularly the present one, have simultaneously paid lip service to the family and made life increasingly difficult for families with children. Child benefits and maternity grants have not kept pace with inflation. Families with children have been increasingly heavily taxed. School meal prices have soared and discretionary facilities, like school transport, are rapidly disappearing. Wage earning mothers suffer from lack of child-care facilities and are made to feel guilty into the bargain!

White weddings only

Even worse is the government's treatment of non-white families. British immigration laws ruthlessly separate husbands and wives, parents and children and many black women and men never succeed in bringing their families to Britain.

Recently, Nasreen Akhtar appealed against deportation. She had been married in Islami law and separated before a Registry Office ceremony took place. The Home Office adjudicator dismissed her case, describing her marriage as a 'mockery'

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Cover photo: Taking a break on the People's March (Morning Star)

under English law. His words spoke volumes about state racism and the family.

Romance and ideology

Charles and Diana (and their future 2.2 offspring) may represent the establishment's view of 'exemplary family life' but this hardly constitutes a norm. In 1980, for example, there were approximately a million single parents in Britain.

There are many ways of bringing up children — alone, in couples, in extended families or in collective households. Whether we have children and how we live with them, is *our* choice, and should not be dictated by an ideology that is forced on us almost to the point of tyrannising those who do not 'fit in'.

Nevertheless, we cannot deny that the ideology is a powerful one — as the Wedding's 750 million television viewers proved. The romance of a young girl snatched from her job in a kindergarten to start a new life with her prince has an appeal which even some hardened lefties found difficult to resist. If the left has anything to learn from this whole expensive charade, it is that we have a long way to go to make our ideas, particularly about the family and personal relationships, as popular and appealing as those we are competing against. Royalty and romance have a head start on us, but that is all the more reason for making our policies as concrete and attractive as possible.