

WOMEN AND SOCIAL CHANGE

This section of *Pravada* is dedicated to Vivienne Goonewardena (1916-1996) who from the 1930s to her death was a full time militant of the L.S.S.P. and its best known woman leader. In recognition of her work and as a tribute to her memory, we publish several articles under the theme "Women and Social Change". The first, "Vivienne Goonewardena - La Pasionaria of Sri Lanka" places her in the context of women revolutionaries of the Left in the 20th century. The emergence of outstanding women militants was a particular historic phenomenon, linked to the momentous movements of the century that drew women into the struggle for socialism and feminism and against imperialism and fascism. In Sri Lanka, Vivienne Goonewardena followed in the footsteps of Selina Perera; who was a founder member of the LSSP. An article "Selina - the forgotten Socialist militant" - deals with the little known aspects of her life against the background of the LSSP underground years in India.

This issue also carries an article on a brief but important moment in womens' history-the formation of the Eksath Kantha Peramuna comprised of the leading women members of the Left parties and other women sympathizers. Vivienne Goonewardena also played a part in its formation and development, raising issues of socialist feminism and womens' unity in the face of the divisiveness of men on the Left.

One of the interesting aspects of the Left parties in both Sri Lanka and India was the presence as founder members and early associates, of foreign Socialist women who were married to local Left leaders. One of them who made a brief but spectacular impact on Sri Lanka was Hedi Keuneman, "lost" to the country since 1946, but "rediscovered" in London a few years ago. "Remembering Hedi", a short note, discusses her contribution to local politics.

While many of the Left women leaders were educated upper and middle class persons, there were also numerous working class militant women in the Left parties and trade unions who were as active in the political and class struggles of the time. The fifth article in this section foregrounds these women and gives them due recognition in the history of the Left.

Women of the Left in Sri Lanka had made a political mark from the 1930s onwards and we pay homage to them - Vivienne Goonewardena, Doreen Wickremasinghe, Selina Perera, Susan Caldera, Hedi Keuneman, Maimoon, Sita Wickremasuriya, Ponsinahamy, Jeanne Moonesinghe, Kusala Abhayawardhana and many others. Their contribution to the Left parties, the trade union movement and women's struggles and international issues are being researched by the Gender History Unit of the SSA. We invite those who have material or memories of these issues and activities to join in the project.

CONTENTS

VIVIENNE GOONEWARDENA Kumari Jayawardena	16	REMEMBERING HEDI	27
SELINA PERERA Hector Abhayavardhana	19	WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT Mangalika de Silva	29
SISTERS IN ARMS Neloufer de Mel & Ramani Muttetuwegama	22	JAIL FOR PICKETING	31