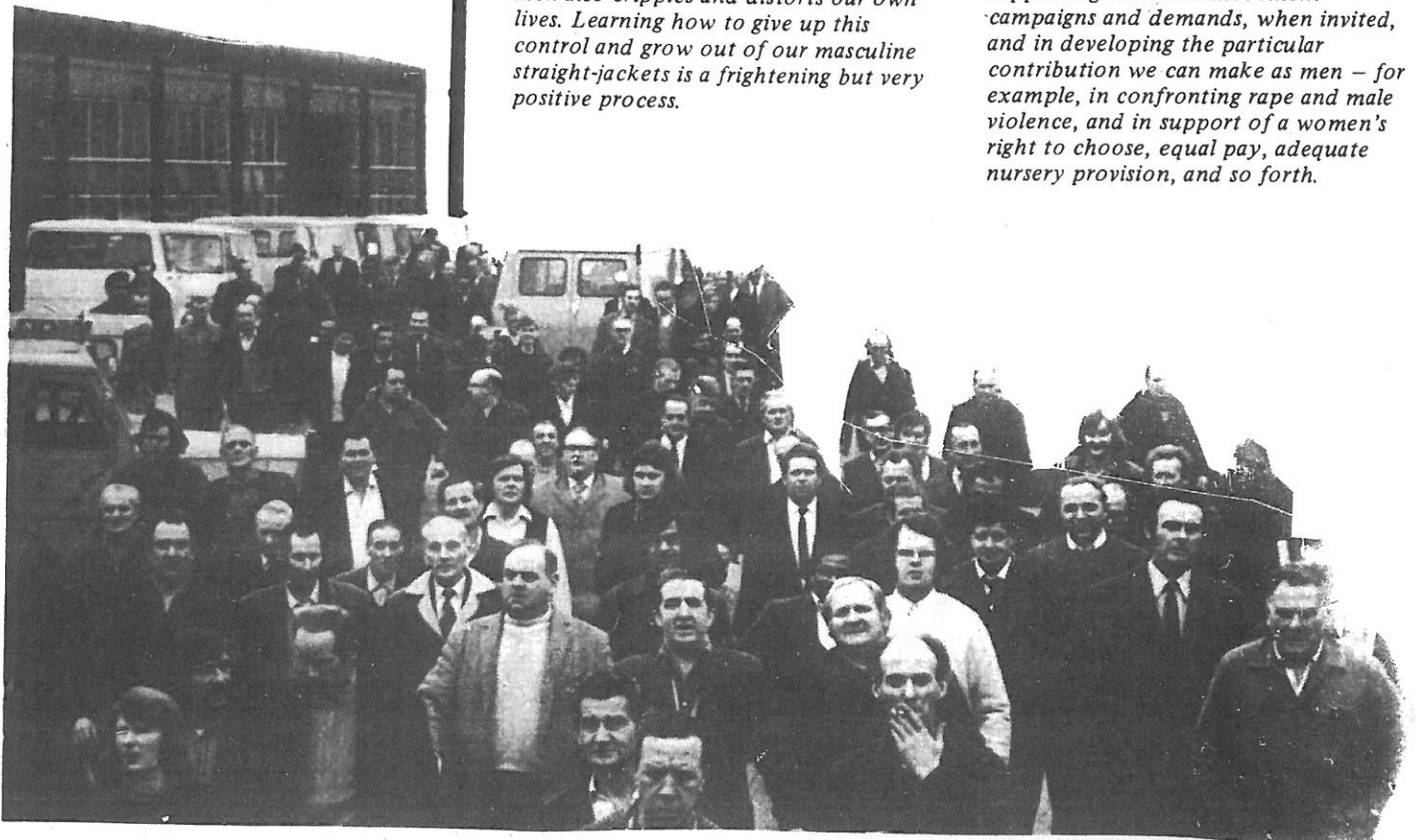


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Cover Design by James Swinson



ABOUT ACHILLES HEEL

Achilles Heel (formerly Men's Free Press) is a writing and publishing support group committed to supporting men in writing about men's politics and socialism. Publication of this journal is the major focus for our coming together and we do aim to encourage contributions from men outside of the collective. We also publish 'one-off' titles under the Achilles Heel name.

While hesitant to label (and so limit) our influences and ambitions for Achilles Heel, our individual and collective histories are heavily influenced by socialist and anti-sexist experience and theory. These traditions guide much of our editorial thinking. We also identify strongly with the 'minimum definition for the anti-sexist men's movement' which emerged from the Bristol Anti-Sexist Men's Conference in February this year. We reproduce it here since we feel it warrants wide discussion both within and outside the men's movement. We see it as a working draft and not a final statement. We want to encourage further debate on it in these pages.

"A Minimum self-definition of the anti-sexist men's movement.

This conference of men places itself unequivocally in support of the women's and gay movements in the struggle against sexism. We realise that men's power in our society means that we are not an equivalent or "parallel" movement. We are certainly not a competitive one.

Yet we have discovered that the power we have over women and other men also cripples and distorts our own lives. Learning how to give up this control and grow out of our masculine straight-jackets is a frightening but very positive process.

We are traditionally expected to be unemotional, tough, aggressive, individualistic, and not to admit weakness. Yet we all contain the opposite qualities - gentleness, cooperativeness, lovingness, receptiveness, which we can reclaim and allow.

The main vehicle for our personal changes has been men's groups, in which we can look at our negative patterns of relating to women and other men.

Becoming close to and drawing support from other men reduces the exclusive emotional burden that men have traditionally placed upon women. Recently some men have found therapy and co-counselling valuable tools in helping to resolve deep patterns and oppressive blocks in themselves.

We want to change our relationships with children, to take our full and equal share of responsibility for child-care. We have been discovering the positive benefits of being close to and learning from children. This means looking to change patterns of work and pay that are dominant in our society; and confronting eventually the huge gulf between the workplace and domestic labour and life.

The main public expression so far of our support for the women's liberation movement has been in helping to organise creches for women's events, and in attending mixed demonstrations. We would like to find other ways of supporting Women's movement campaigns and demands, when invited, and in developing the particular contribution we can make as men - for example, in confronting rape and male violence, and in support of a women's right to choose, equal pay, adequate nursery provision, and so forth.

The many of us who are heterosexual are committed to exploring our prejudices against gay men and lesbians, and our fear of our own gay feelings. We would like to find ways to linking up with and supporting the Gay Liberation Movement, and specific gay movement campaigns.

We have been developing ways of reaching out to other men; and confronting the sexism that we meet in other men in our own lives and workplaces. We want to create a positive anti-sexist culture that men can draw support from in their changes.

We want to develop campaigns in our own interest as anti-sexist men – against media stereotypes of men, around unemployment, men's health, for well-paid part-time work, for job-sharing, paternity leave, etc.

Patriarchal culture has become synonymous with the 'conquering' of the natural environment. We want to live in harmony with the natural world, including our own bodies, and to re-direct our skills and technologies in such directions as to make this harmony possible, eliminating poverty and enabling each individual to live to her or his fullest potential.

We realise that in our society sexism is inextricably linked with class and racial oppression, and with imperialism. We are working towards a society free of all these.

The anti-sexist men's movement is small in number, and it is young. We are only now beginning to feel confident to move out of relative isolation. We need to recognise our limitations, as well as our very real strengths.

In coming to take collective political initiatives, we don't want to create new hierarchies of leaders and led."

In changing ourselves and our roles we are often left isolated and confused. There are many aspects of our lives which are difficult to talk about let alone write about. We want Achilles Heel to lend support and encouragement to men in these changes. We want to make public issues that men have been dealing with in mens groups in a way which helps us understand and develop these ideas and experiences and makes them available to men who are more isolated. Problems of jealousy and possessiveness; difficulties in relating to children; depression; problems in making relationships; separation; feeling put down in our jobs; dealing with unemployment; problems in working in mixed or political groups; living collectively/living alone; questions of sexuality and our own health. Equally important; the positive sides of the changes we make in all these areas. It is incredible how little there is for us to read about our own lived experience. Our lives are as mythologised as women's and it is hard to find our true identity.

The journal is then an attempt to open up other possibilities, is a contribution to redressing stereotypic images of men and a vehicle for live debates about the issues which affect us.

ABOUT THIS AND FUTURE ISSUES

There has been a longer gap than we would have liked between this and the last issue. In the interval we have put a lot of time into finding ways of working and producing the journal that meets the strains of being a national publication.

The last year was difficult both financially and organisationally. The first three issues generated a lot of ideas, criticisms and questions both in and outside of the collective which we have wanted to digest before producing No. 4. We also came up against all the problems involved in producing and promoting such a journal and needed to devise a simpler and more efficient framework for production.

A major change has been our decision to concentrate each issue around a central theme and to advertise these several issues in advance. In doing this we hope to broaden our range of contributors and build in open discussions around each topic. We hope men outside Achilles Heel will also be encouraged to set up discussions. We feel that stimulating the magazine in this way will;

- a) give encouragement and support to men who find it difficult to write (including ourselves)
- b) articles will be stronger, having the benefit of collective discussion during their production
- c) writing articles will be a less individualised and isolated process.

'Men and Work' is the central theme for this issue, 'Men and Violence' is the focus for No. 5 and 'Men and Sexuality' for No.6. This form also reflecting our preference to be thought of as a journal rather than news magazine. This distinction helps with distribution and sales is in anyway a more accurate description of a bi-annual publication.



As for finance we continue to walk a tightrope and desperately need to receive more subscriptions, offers for bulk selling and general promotion. A sub's form appears later in the magazine; please support us by subscribing – for you this is an 'inflation proof' bargain – for us it helps cut our deadly distribution costs. Finally, potential contributors are advised to contact us in advance of sending material for advice about article length, etc. Graphics, cartoons, etc. are always welcome.

The Achilles Heel Collective