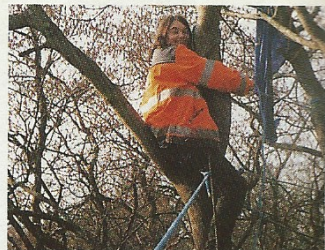
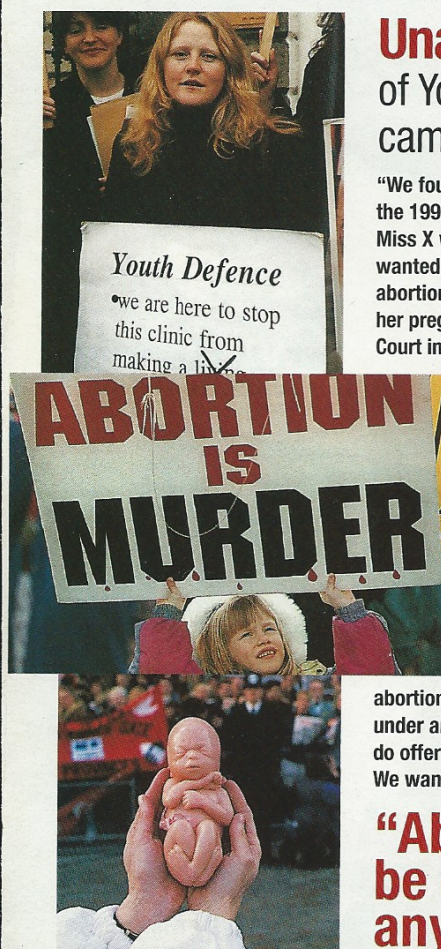


Fighting talk



There's more to Girl Power than high kicks and Wonderbras. 19 talked to three women who are prepared to fight and go to prison for the issues they believe in



Una McNahon, 25, is a co-founder of Youth Defence, an anti-abortion campaign group based in Dublin

"We founded Youth Defence after the 1992 'Miss X' case in Ireland. Miss X was a 14-year-old girl who wanted to come to England for an abortion. She was suicidal about her pregnancy and the Supreme Court in Dublin decided that even

though abortion is illegal in Ireland, women whose lives are in danger could seek an abortion elsewhere. It became a huge public debate and I felt Miss X's suffering got lost in it. Youth Defence campaign against abortion and for unborn children and their mothers. We believe that

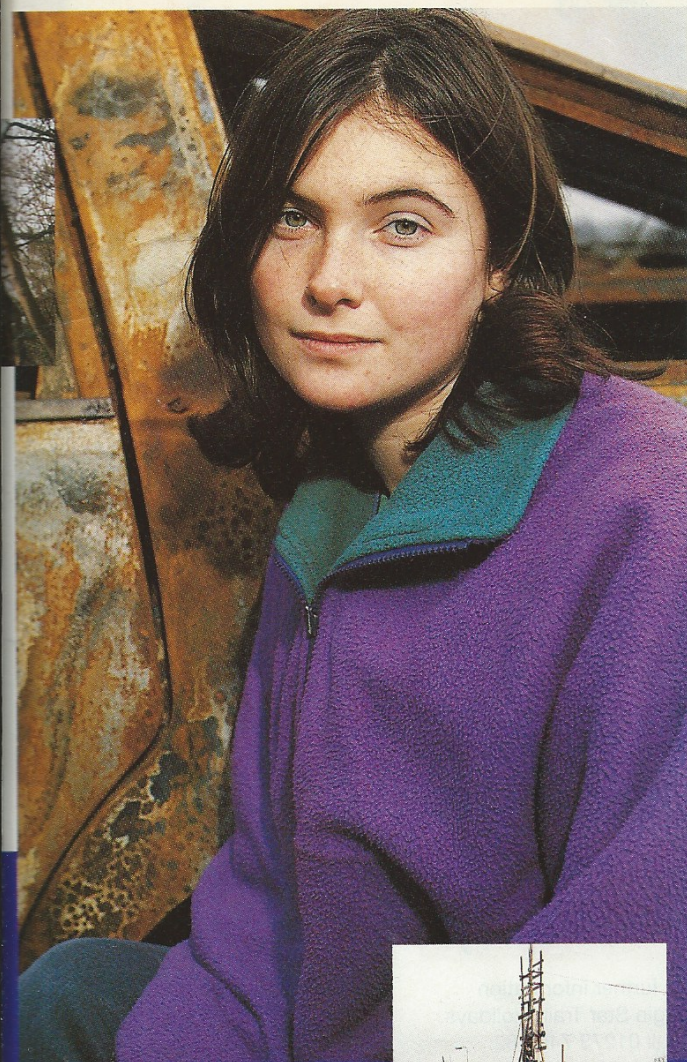
abortion shouldn't be carried out under any circumstances, but we do offer the mothers counselling. We want to tell people why we're

"Abortion shouldn't be carried out under any circumstances"

pro-life and why we think they should be, too, so we visit schools and every Saturday we go to different towns to speak out. We also protest outside our Parliament. We wouldn't carry out attacks like extremist pro-lifers in America. But there's a clinic in Ireland that has allegedly carried out two abortions and we picket outside there every lunch time. I was arrested for it and had to go to court, but I'd have no qualms about getting arrested again – if you really believe in something you have to make a stand. We get very negative publicity. The papers have called us fascists and Catholic virgin zealots! But there are many different people among our 4,000 members – from Aids patients to unmarried mothers. I can see why people object, but if you don't want a child, you can have it adopted. I'm not crazy. I just care about kids and their mums."

Cath Banns, 23, from Lancashire, gave up her job in market-research to become a full-time environmental campaigner

"A few years ago, I picked up a hitchhiker on his way to one of the Newbury camps. I'd heard about the anti-bypass protesters but I didn't expect to get involved myself. But this hitchhiker told me all about it, and I decided to visit the camp. It completely changed my life. When I got there I couldn't believe anybody would put a four-lane bypass through such a beautiful place. It made me very angry, and the people there felt so strongly that I was inspired to join them. I stayed for a week and then visited every weekend but it wasn't enough, so I gave up my job and my flat and moved into a tree house on one of the Newbury camps. Obviously my family were very surprised, as they weren't sure what I was getting into. But over time, as they saw developments on the news, they began to accept it. Not all of our work involves the radical



demos people associate with activists. I help build tree houses, do office work, talk to the press and show people around. But sometimes more extreme protesting is necessary. In one demo, we took over a compound and a few diggers got set alight. We've also stood in the way of bulldozers and been forced down from trees by the police. This action is most effective because it's what the media pick up on. It's not about one particular battle, though. They might build Newbury at any cost, but around 180 new road plans have been scrapped, so what we do here has a knock-on effect. A lot of us are moving to Manchester Airport to help the locals campaigning against a proposed



second runway. Many of us are prepared to risk our lives or prison. My life has really been enriched by what I do. Working for someone else's profit is all very well, but it can't compare with doing something that you believe in. I can't imagine going back to my career now. I'm standing up for my convictions, and that's far more important."

"I gave up my job and my flat and moved into a tree house at Newbury. My family were very surprised"



Ruth Dawson, 19, from Suffolk, has been an active member of the Vegetarian's International Voice for Animals (VIVA) since it began

"I used to be a member of the Vegetarian Society and my name was on a campaign mailing list. In 1994, when VIVA were getting their group together, somebody phoned and asked if I was interested in joining. It sounded like a good idea so I said yes right away. What I do depends on the campaign. One of our biggest campaigns so far has been the CRATE (Campaign to Resist



times since then. It's like there's a legal thing and a moral thing. It would be nice to think that the law reflected morality, but in a lot of cases

"It would be nice to think that the law reflected morality, but in a lot of cases it doesn't"

Animal Transport to Europe). It's an ongoing project of demonstrations against live exports. We carried a steel crate containing a model cow through the streets of various towns to show people the conditions that calves were being transported in. I've demonstrated in Dover and Brightlingsea, where VIVA ran legal, organised protests, but I also got involved in blocking lorries illegally. I was arrested for that, but released with a caution. It wasn't a pleasant experience, but I've done it several

it doesn't. I would never do anything that involves violence. It gives the whole animal-rights movement a bad name. Having said that, I *would* consider going on a hunt sabotage, but I'd do something passive, like using sprays to mask a fox's scent. I believe that the best way to change something is to get people to realise what's going on and get them to change their minds, so they pull out of all the various things that are harming animals."

Contacts

VIVA

12 Queen Square,
Brighton BN1 3FD.
Tel: 01273 777 688.

For info about campaigns, send a 20p stamp and your address.

Youth Defence
46 Mountjoy Square, Dublin.
Tel: 0035 31 855 2489

Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC)

Tel: 0171 222 5845.

An organisation aiming to change abortion laws in Britain.

Friends of the Earth
26-28 Underwood Street,
London N1 7JQ.

Tel: 0171 490 1555.

For info on environmental issues, send an sae.

FEATURE: DANIEL FRYER, WENDY GRANDTHER. PHOTOS: ADRIAN ARTHUR/IRIS WILDLIFE MAGAZINE, AP/PA, REX