



# What have people made in Barking & Dagenham?

## Women Demand Fair Pay

In the summer of 1968, something very important happened in Dagenham at the Ford factory. It was a time when many women who worked there felt that they were being treated unfairly. They discovered they were not being paid the same as men for doing the same job. This made them angry and frustrated so they decided to take action and go on strike. This means they stopped working to protest for equal pay.



The women had good reasons to strike. At the factory there were three pay scales for the male workers, these were skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. The women, who were responsible for creating the car seat covers, were on a special women's rate. This rate paid 13% less than the unskilled male rate! In addition to this, the working conditions were harsh. Sheila Douglas - one of the workers at the time - described how she had to make 30 seat covers an hour, all whilst being watched over and timed by a male worker who was being paid more than her.

The women first tried to raise their concerns with the company leaders, however, they failed to act. This left the women with no choice but to strike. When the strike began, some people in the public didn't support them. They faced criticism and were called names. People said that they were causing trouble and should go back to work, but the women were determined to fight for their rights and did not let the negativity stop them.



**"It was a surprise to us as well as everybody else. We didn't think we were going to fetch the whole Ford Empire to its knees, as you might say, but that's what happened eventually. And it was all down to us, us ladies. And we were ladies, whatever anybody else may say."**

**- Sheila Douglas**

The strikes had a big impact on the Ford factory. Without the women working (almost 200 in total), the production lines slowed down, and the factory couldn't operate at its usual speed. This eventually caused the factory to close. It was a major inconvenience for Ford and business stalled. The strike showed the importance of the women's work and made people realise that they were crucial to the factory's success, after all, without car seats you couldn't have cars!





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Other female workers in another Ford factory in the country, soon joined the women from Dagenham. It became a national story that could not be ignored.

In the end, the strikes led to some positive changes. The women's determination managed to get their pay increased slightly, although it was still not completely equal. What was important though, is that the echo of their voices were heard, and the government eventually agreed to pass a law in 1970 that made it illegal to pay women less than men if they were doing the same type of work.



This was a big step towards achieving equal pay for everyone, but there was still a long way to go. In 1984, the women went on strike again, this time to push for true equality in the workplace. Sympathy, this time around, was higher and many of the men in the factory supported them in their actions. The women finally got recognised and they were paid on a male rate.

The strikes at the Ford factory in Dagenham were a turning point for equal pay rights. The women faced challenges and criticism, but they didn't give up. Their actions showed the world that women deserve equal opportunities and fair treatment in the workplace. Their legacy continues to inspire us today and reminds us that we can make a difference when we work together for what is right.

- Some of the women from the 1968 and 1984 strikes receiving a 'women of the year' award with TV presenter, Lorraine Kelly.





# What have people made in Barking & Dagenham?

## Women Demand Fair Pay

1. What years did the women's strikes take place?

☐ 1968 and 1984

☐ 1968 and 1970

☐ 1970 and 1984



2. Why were the women unhappy about being on a special women's pay rate?

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3. Why were the working conditions tough?

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4. Before striking, how did the women try to gain equality in their pay?

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## What have people made in Barking & Dagenham?

5. The strike had very little impact on the operations at the factory.

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True

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False

Explain your answer

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6. How did the law change in 1970?

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7. Why do you think sympathy was higher the second time around?

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They were unhappy because they discovered it was 13% less than the unskilled male rate.

3. Why were the working conditions tough?

They had to meet high demands and were timed and watched constantly.



4. Before striking, how did the women try to gain equality in their pay?

Before striking, the women tried to speak to the company leaders.





## What have people made in Barking & Dagenham?

5. The strike had very little impact on the operations at the factory.

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True

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False

Explain your answer

The strike caused factory production lines to slow down. This eventually led to the closure of the factory and loss of business for Ford.

6. How did the law change in 1970?

It became illegal to pay women less than men for the same type of work.

7. Why do you think sympathy was higher the second time around?

Sympathy could have been higher the second time around as views in society changed. More people might have seen it fair that women be paid the same.





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Teacher's Pet



Historic England



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# Local History

Historic England and Teacher's Pet have come together to bring you a collection of free resources that you can use in your local history teaching.

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Historic England



Teacher's Pet

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## Who are Teacher's Pet?

Teacher's Pet have been providing downloadable and playable educational content to early years and primary school teachers for over 14 years. We cover all areas of the curriculum and use a team of in-house teachers and designers to create engaging and memorable concepts, that the children will love.

## Why local history?

At [Teacher's Pet](#) we want to empower primary school teachers by giving them the tools they need to deliver inspiring and thoughtful lessons about the local area and its history. We believe local history teaching has such an important part to play in a child's wellbeing – helping to give children a sense of pride in where they live.

Our Local History project is designed to provide teachers across the UK with everything they need to successfully carry out a full scheme of teaching about their local area, through key enquiry questions and source led activities.

Working with [Historic England](#) gives us access to archived maps and photos for resources and information from knowledgeable local historians, as well helping us to provide the content to you free of charge.

For more information about our Local History project or to find out more about Teacher's Pet Classroom Resources, please visit our website.