

MARGARET ROFF

1941 - 1987

Margaret Roff grew up in Sussex and then moved to the North of England to study sociology at Sheffield University. After graduating, she worked for Christian Aid before her love of books led her to train as a librarian. Following a variety of library jobs in England and Wales, she moved to Oswestry as area librarian but five years later made the decision to change her life by giving up librarianship and moving to Manchester to work for a co-operative distributing radical and alternative publications.

Margaret cared passionately about justice and equality. She was a radical and an activist, and campaigned vigorously against all forms of oppression. She became actively involved in politics at an early stage in her life but her political involvement was never confined to the narrowness of party politics and she campaigned with many minority groups for their rights.

In 1982 Margaret was elected as a Labour Councillor for the Rusholme ward. She worked tirelessly for the residents of her ward but also took a stand on wider issues. At a time when issues such as sexism and sexuality were not taken seriously Margaret worked with others to introduce equal opportunities to the City Council. She also came out as a lesbian and joined groups campaigning for lesbian and gay rights, attracting unwarranted criticism when she accepted the nomination for Chair/Mayor of the Council in 1985. She chose to withdraw from the nomination although not from political action.

In the few years she was in Manchester she supported many groups and individuals campaigning on issues, including women's rights, anti-deportation campaigns, the fight against racism and for lesbian and gay rights. She was always committed to the struggle to improve the situation of low paid workers' rights and in the last year of her life she took a job with the Low Pay Unit.

She also became involved with Twin Sisters, a group of women supporting other women in Nicaragua, and it was on a solidarity delegation to Manchester's twin town of Puerto Cabezas, now named Bilwi, that Margaret lost her life in a hotel fire.

Margaret was special not only because she was a dedicated sister and campanera; she was also a dear friend who touched the lives of many. She was warm and sensitive; she listened and she shared; she spoke out and took action. She was an inspiration to many and she never let go of the ground as she reached for the moon.

'To you beloved comrade we pledge this solemn vow, the fight will go on.'