

NOTES ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION

WE SPEAK IN MANY VOICES



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part I

THE

NEW VOICES



OVER 20,000 WOMEN MARCH IN NEW YORK,

WOMEN'S STRIKE DAY, AUGUST 26, 1970

AN ANALYSIS FROM THE INSIDE

Mary Ann Murphy

Women's Liberation, Detroit

The Women's Liberation Movement has become a growing force in the last few years. Its emergence has been consistently greeted with perplexity, contempt, or ridicule by the Left as well as by the general public. Yet its underlying seriousness has been recognized. There is an increasing tendency for radical groups to try to "come to terms" with Women's Liberation. There is the nagging suspicion that the new feminism has a point. The logical conclusion of the movement to liberate the poor, the dark, the workers, and the students would seem to be that women, too, should be free. This realization makes the women in these groups tend to resent their status, which is usually inferior to that of the men, and apply pressure to the organizations, often through their own caucus groups.

The reaction of male members, of course, differs. While many radical men are positively affected by the viewpoints of Women's Liberation, it is obvious that others are becoming defensive. They may try to reassure their female counterparts that their legitimate complaints are being taken care of; that, in any case, the concerns of women are secondary to more important considerations; and that, finally, women's problems will all be solved "after the Revolution." They fear the loss of willing helpers, ego-boosters, and bed partners if Women's Liberation has too much effect on "their" women. A tense relationship is often apparent between Women's Liberation and women members of the Left, too. For while the women may be sensitive to certain issues — and are becoming more so — most tend to share the opinion that a separate women's movement is unimportant and "counterrevolutionary."

Every woman who does decide to devote her time to women's issues must shake off as best she can a male identity that makes her view women — and consequently herself — very much the way men do. Even though women compose more than half the American population, it is considered almost immoral, or at best frivolous, for them to use their energies exclusively to solve their own problems — although there is no corresponding odium attached to black people who concentrate on racial issues. Beneath the label "counterrevolutionary," then, we find the age-old inability to take women seriously, even on the part of people who feel committed to the principles of freedom and equality.

I have spent so much time describing the relationship between the Left and Women's Liberation because this movement, to a large degree, is a product of the radical milieu of the sixties. It was inevitable that many of the women who were working against the oppressive economic and racial system of this country would eventually become aware of the all-pervasive and universal oppression based on sex. Many of these women in the last few years have felt so strongly about this issue that they have left the traditionally male-oriented groups of the Left and joined and helped create the Women's Liberation Movement. But while the rela-

tionship of Women's Liberation to the general arousal of youth in the last decade cannot be ignored, other antecedents must also be emphasized.

The connections with the feminist movement are obvious. After the initial push to gain the vote succeeded, this movement seemed to sputter out. There were even strong tendencies toward backsliding as Betty Friedan pointed out in *The Feminine Mystique*. However, particularly after the publication of this book, there was a renewed interest in the plight of women. With the growth of Miss Friedan's National Organization of Women (which is oriented basically toward middle-class, professional women) and the development of the radical Women's Liberation Movement, the forty-year dormancy period of feminism was at an end. The movement is rapidly becoming stronger than ever.

But the emergence of Women's Liberation must not be strictly tied to events as recent as feminism or the political upheaval of the 1960's. Surely it is a unique product of this particular time, but the roots of the movement are in the universal and age-old longing of women to be free. Every culture in every time has felt the thunder of individual women who broke the bonds that held them. Ancient societies as patriarchal as Egypt and China occasionally quaked under the command of strong women rulers. There are few male warriors in history to equal, let alone surpass, Boadicea or Joan of Arc; there are few poets to compare with Sappho. But, unfortunately individual women who managed to overcome the sexual barriers never seriously challenged the validity of these barriers. Realizing their isolated status, many, in fact, tended to vehemently accept and defend the male value system, and so their achievements were rarely accompanied by a general awakening of their sex. But the fact that there have always been women who overcame the enormous obstacles created by male domination shows the drive and ability that lies beneath the "passive" surface of womankind.

Nor has group effort by women been unknown until modern times. Ancient Rome had an active feminist movement which, like our own, lost its influence after initial legal reforms were made. Unlike our own, unfortunately, it had no rebirth. But aside from spectacular individual or group efforts, the desire for freedom is reflected even in the age-old resentment women have felt for their male "protectors." Opportunities for partially expressing this resentment are almost institutionalized. There is as much hostility towards men — perhaps more — at a suburban kaffeeklatsch as at a Women's Liberation meeting. But the opportunities to react to and overcome this resentment as a group, and thereby affect lasting changes, are lacking at informal gatherings of women.

It is group action that has enabled women to enact many alterations in their status. As they become better organized, more meaningful changes will be possible. However, the nature of the organization of Women's Liberation is puzzling to many people. It has no central headquarters, no officers, no official pronouncements. The small, independent group is its basic unit. The movement consists of a large network of these groups that have sprung up all over the country. The small group is particularly important in the difficult period when a woman first becomes

aware of the complicated problem and process of sexual exploitation. She usually needs a comfortable, sympathetic environment, oriented to the solution of these problems, before she can successfully come to terms with them. The small group will retain its importance as long as women must live in an outside world that is — at least to some degree — hostile to their needs. The small group also serves as an intimate, often exciting soundingboard for new ideas and experiences. It encourages participation of even those members most conditioned to passivity.

Women's Liberation hopes that each group will maintain its basic independence to insure the vitality of the movement and because we feel that toleration of differing goals and methods is a value that should be encouraged both in political movements and in the new society we envision. We hope to avoid the rigidity and the consequent splintering that has characterized the Left.

However, women are not satisfied with merely discussing their problems and creating a secure refuge from the world. We are confronted with a vast assortment of problems (examples: the need to eliminate abortion laws; to end employment and educational discrimination; to set up day care centers; to get rid of the dehumanizing attitudes toward women reflected in the mass media, advertising, and "beauty" contests; to end the legalized slavery that exists in the institution of marriage and eventually affect fundamental changes in the family structure). As the movement grows and we become more aware of our own strength, the need for communication and cooperation between groups becomes obvious if we are to effectively use our power to change these things. Consequently, there is a movement to provide more coordination of effort, not just between various Women's Liberation groups but also between these and other groups or individual women who have a stake in these various struggles. We here in Detroit recently formed such a coalition, opening it to any women who wish to oppose male supremacy in any particular areas, regardless of whether they accept the broader philosophy of Women's Liberation.

We don't want to force our convictions on any women, but expect that we can unite in the areas in which we already agree. We hope that as our movement grows and as the group consciousness of women in general develops, we will eventually become that rarest of political forces — a mass movement.

The largest problem of Women's Liberation is convincing women that the fight against their oppression is a valid, in fact a necessary, endeavor. On the basis of sheer numbers, Women's Liberation has potentially the greatest effect of any political movement. For in spite of economic, racial, or national differences, women share a common oppression. We want to reach all kinds of women, emphasizing the ancient unity of our sex. But aside from this fact, there is an ever-growing awareness within Women's Liberation that by attacking the oppressive nature of the male-female relationship, we are penetrating to the roots of all oppression. When the most obvious physical difference between human beings — that which distinguished women from men — is suffused with the strongest feelings of fear, hostility, and exploitation, what hope can there be for relationships involving other dissimilar humans? "Man's" inhumanity

to "man" is ultimately based on man's inhumanity to woman.

John Stuart Mill called the traditional family structure based on the inequality of the sexes a "school of despotism," thereby expressing the realization that human society cannot be improved if its most basic unit is oppressive. Women's Liberation is the only radical movement that concentrates on *this* relationship and thus, we feel, is the only movement that can significantly affect the quality of life for *all* people.

"WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL YOUR LIFE?"

Rachel Woods

black hospital worker

I was talking with some women about the article in Life magazine about Women's Liberation. Some of the women thought it was absurd that women think they are discriminated against in this society. They said that women hold the upper hand. This may be true in some areas such as emotionally, but not in power. I really told them off. They didn't feel that women are discriminated against on the job, so I told them about mine. I am a child care attendant in a city hospital. I work on the midnight shift with several men, and I do all the work. The men are allowed to come and go as they want, but the night supervisor, who is a woman, wears me out. I always have to be on the floor. Why should it be that I'm the one who is always tagged and who is always oversupervised? The men goof off, go to sleep, are off the floor for hours—and the supervisor knows it. But I can only take a break when she is on the floor. The men, who are supposed to do the same job, can sleep or go out for hours. In addition, I do all the office work. Sometimes I carry a chart right to one of the men if he handled the patient, but otherwise I do all the writing up. It's not that I mind doing the work, because there isn't that much; but I mind their loafing while I do what work there is.

This is the way it has always been: the female is always caught in the trap. Relationships are the same way. Work like cleaning up after dinner, seeing the tables are set, the women always do. When we work, in the dining hall, the men on my job say that's women's work, yet we are all getting the same pay for the same job. One day I complained because the women did all the work. I was tired of washing dishes after dinner while the men went away.

The women I was arguing with about Women's Liberation were middle class. I said, "Where have you been all your life? You sure don't get around much. There are lots of women in the suburbs who are doing things now, who are in the Movement,— their eyes aren't blind like yours."

The City has been cutting the budget. In the Health Department there has already been a big cut back, with no publicity at all about it. In two weeks time we have had ten people transferred from the

special hospital where I work to the general hospital. Plus there are people being laid off — civil service employees. It's mostly affecting the registered nurses and the licensed practical nurses, which is very unusual. One whole psych floor in my hospital has been closed. We had two women nurses on our floor who were ordered to transfer to the general hospital emergency room — quite a switch! The women took a demotion in rank, from licensed practical nurse to child care attendant, so they wouldn't have to go. There's about an eight hundred dollar difference in salary too.

The cut back is mostly affecting women. People are very upset — this is their means of living, and all of a sudden, boom. Especially affected are black women nurses, who took civil service jobs for the security and are being laid off. They are also starting to make people change shifts all the time. The reason given is so they will know what's going on all the time, but it's silly. The people had learned how to do one job well, and many had other part-time jobs for some extra money. Now their schedules are constantly changing, so they can't hold another job.

You asked how I manage to go to school all day, work all night, and take care of my three kids by myself. That reminds me of the Women's Liberation meeting and the interaction between the young woman who said she wasn't going to have a family and the woman who had a large family to take care of. To me, they are two entirely different situations. When you find you do have the family, you have to go ahead and do it. For one thing, you need time to go through all the red tape to seek any type of assistance. I feel why go through all of this, and come under the brand of mothers who receive a "dole", when I don't have to. Most ADC mothers don't get enough to live on anyway. I don't mind paying taxes for ADC, so women can stay home and take care of their children. But when you have a job, it gives you an outlet so you can keep abreast of what's happening out there. I'm out there with people, and I think that's vitally important to me. I have a sister who raised eight children on ADC, and she only kept her equilibrium because she is an outgoing person too; she was active in the church and the PTA and other organizations. She didn't just sit at home with the kids, which you can do when someone is giving you money to take care of them. It can easily become your whole life, and I don't feel that's all of life.

I don't feel I can be the best mother to these kids unless I know what's happening in the world, and I feel they benefit from it. And it's surprising too, how much more responsibility the kids have taken on since I've had this schedule. That's a good thing to learn in our society, which doesn't provide for everybody. The society needs to be revised; it shouldn't brand welfare mothers like that, but I don't want to be in that category right now. I feel I can do much more for myself and for the children by working. It's difficult to keep up my schedule, but because you have responsibility, it enables you to do more things. I pace myself outwardly I may look like I'm running around helter-skelter, but inside I'm calm.

When you have children, you can't keep yourself bottled in. You have to take care of the children, but you have to have outlets for yourself too. It's a little selfish also; I'm not doing this just to get work or go to school, but I feel I have to get on a better financial basis. If the kids are going to go to college, if we're even going to get along, with inflation, I have to do this kind of fighting. And it kind of satisfies me, to have interaction with children besides my own, and my work in the church, etc. Also, it helps to know that there are others going through the same thing you are. I talk about it with the women in class who also have kids.

I'm divorced, and it's hard to be alone, but I have enough to do without taking on any more projects. And men are projects. I don't want one just hanging around. And I don't even know myself when I'll be home half the time.

But I'm not bitter about the life I have as a woman. One thing I noticed in the Life article was a note of bitterness. I know that's common for people who are fighting for their rights; but I guess I'm a Martin Luther King. I don't feel that way. OK, men have done this to us, but it's not going to help us get out of the situation by brooding on what has happened in the past. We have to direct our energies toward what we are going to do, what steps we are going to take, and not by being bitter and hating men. That's wasting energy.

I think all women are aware of their oppression, but not all are active in Women's Liberation now. They are so busy with other fights around the job and racial discrimination, and they feel these are more important to do first. But really they should all go along together, because they are all in the same vein. I am fighting for someone who is a woman as well as black; to me it is the same fight. To me the idea is clear: liberation, complete, whether it's a question of male and female or race. But I don't feel at this point there are enough women who are aware *enough* of their oppression to want to take any steps. I won't say they are not aware, because I think all women know to some degree what the society has done as well as what men have done to them — really the society, with men as the instruments. It's a matter of having so many things to do in keeping my family going, training my children, trying to get a better job and advance myself, the Movement, trying to get better jobs for everyone, that Women's Liberation seems like kind of a selfish area to work in. It appears selfish because it brings it back directly to you, even if it is for all women. There is so much to be done for others in the revolutionary movement that is taking place.

I think women are aware of the problem, but nothing to this point has excited them or incited them enough to want to take part, except for the young, who have more time and will do more in this direction as the young are doing in all directions. It may take a lot more happening in the revolutionary movement before Women's Liberation takes hold, so that it's not a point of ridicule. As more women find out that some women are going to bat for them, it's like a contagion; they will join forces, and at least give lip service to what is going on, where as before they would have remained silent.

THE HIGH SCHOOL MILL

Bernice M.

high school senior

I am a senior at a high school in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. This is an all white, upper middle class area. I am writing strictly about my experiences at this school, as a radical, and as a woman.

I am a woman seeking a college career. To prepare myself for this goal, I must take certain college-prep classes such as biology, chemistry and trigonometry. In these three subjects I've had male teachers. In these classes, other female students as well as myself have been treated in much the same way. The attitude of most male teachers is that female students are taking up desk space. In these teachers' minds is the archaic idea that all girls are in the college-prep classes to find suitable husbands and nothing else. To illustrate this I will give an example which occurred in a chemistry class. A boy asked a question on something he didn't quite understand, and the instructor went into a very lengthy explanation. When a girl asked a question on some other matter of equal importance, the teacher replied, "Honey, all you have to do is look pretty and you've got it made." He then proceeded to go on to another matter.

In the history department, teachers have now become aware that current political events must be discussed in order to give a student a well-rounded education and a basic understanding of their government. It has been my experience that male teachers tend to discriminate against girls as they limit their number to one or two per discussion compared to twelve to fifteen boys. It is my opinion that these teachers believe that the woman's place is in the home, making beds, cooking meals, and taking care of the babies, and that women should leave the running of the government to the men. It is this idea and the one previously mentioned which I feel must be overcome before there can be any kind of an effective revolution.

As for the administration of the school, they seem to have somewhat liberalized over the years. With a little determination and a good fight, girls can now take the so-called "boys' classes" such as auto shop, drafting, and graphic arts, whereas before it wasn't even open to discussion.

However, the most encouraging aspect of the senior high schools are their students. They seem to be free thinking individuals in respect to woman's equality. Girls seem to hold the same number if not more elected offices. High school Students for a Democratic Society was run by women, the Radical Student Union (RSU), a group of Los Angeles high school radicals, had a woman president, and I was the chairman of the RSU chapter at my school. We women were just as highly respected as men holding equivalent offices.

It seems to me that most of the Women's Liberation effort should be directed toward the reeducation of the adult males who retain the old idea that the woman's role in building a nation is exclusively one of taking care of the home.

WOMEN: BLACK AND WHITE, YOUNG AND OLD

Ethel Dunbar
black worker

To have a discussion on the woman question is something that women have to do. We have to start writing about it a little at a time, before we can start writing a book. I think more older women should begin to help. They know more about life, and understand more about men, maybe, than some of the younger women do.

Men think they should treat women just like little children, and that we should do no more than they tell us to do. Men have ruled for so long, and treated women so unfairly, that many women would rather try to keep on working and raise their families by themselves than have a man running over them, as if they were not human beings.

Men have run this world out by organizing it into a hate-society. Today that is why white women can't sit down to discuss with black women about women's problems. White men have taught them for so long that they are better than black women, that it keeps coming out all the time.

I was at a discussion several weeks ago on the question of women's rights. I know as well as any other woman that women have been segregated and denied their rights throughout history, and that black women have been doubly oppressed. The black woman is a second class citizen in society and a second class human being to the black man as well. I think there has to be a lot of free and frank discussion between women on this question to try to come up with a sound position.

At this discussion, one white woman, an old politico, said she had just left a caucus in her union which had been discussing the problems of women in the shop. The question came up of a white woman fighting for higher pay, because even black men were getting higher wages than white women. Being a black woman, it made me angry to have it put that way, because it sounded as though white women thought they should make *more* than black men. Black men do hard, hard work. And there is something wrong with that whole way of thinking.

When we discuss women's freedom, we have to include everyone's freedom who is oppressed in this society. Our rights mean, to me, more than a man sharing in the housework and other things that are supposed to be "women's work." We have to have an understanding of everything that is involved in a woman's life — both black and white. White women have to make sure that they do not let white men mix up their thinking.



THE NEW AND THE NEWER

Molly Jackson
white working student

It seems impossible to me that only two years ago I had never really thought about the constant oppression of women as women. I had had plenty of personal affronts on the job, but never connected a fraction of the elements of male chauvinist society with my experiences. I was a political person, "knowing" how to look for the new forces of revolution in our time, but not really understanding why, at its formation in 1955, News and Letters designated women, along with workers, blacks, and youth, as a revolutionary category.

I first thought seriously about Women's Liberation about the time the new movement was starting, when a Puerto Rican friend told me about the treatment she and other women were receiving in some black and Puerto Rican leftist groups at the time: Women not only limited to certain non-thinking work, but formally excluded from many meetings; a boyfriend telling her to shut-up in public when she tried to express an idea; one CORE office at which, if you called up with anything but a simple factual question, you were told by a woman that she couldn't answer it, that you should call back "when a man is here." What was going on? It was part of the authoritarian tendencies blossoming in the New Left, but it was much more — it was the result of the lack of self-conscious, organized voices of women to fight the discrimination against them which so thoroughly saturates the dominant culture that we are all infected with it.

About a year ago, I became involved with the WL group at the University of Chicago. It was during the occupation of the Administration Building by several groups, including WRAP (Women's Radical Action Project). In a spring in which there was little new in the student movement, a reflection of the New Left's approaching dead-end, the voice of WL was very new and very strong during that demonstration. The WRAP women were an organized, cohesive group. They met regularly on their own, formulated their own actions and ideas, and took part fully in the mass meetings with the men. For many women, it was the first time they had chaired a meeting, written a leaflet, or expressed their own ideas in front of a large group. Part of the impetus, of course, came from the fact that the event which triggered off the sit-in was the firing of Marlene Dixon, a radical woman professor who was active in WL. But the women including many who originally entered the building only because they liked Mrs. Dixon as a teacher, went beyond the single issue: they wrote and distributed analyses of male chauvinism in the university and the society, and convinced the larger group to add demands for more women professors and students, courses on women's history, and free child care to the rather standardized demands for student control and open admissions. They raised the issue of WL among *everyone* on that campus for the first time.

The Columbia University women had sparked an idea the year before,

when they suddenly balked at being on the food committees during that occupation, and demanded that there be equal numbers of men and women on them. Now the University of Chicago women effectively applied the concept that women are equal to men in the realm of ideas. The women also shook up the "radical" men on a personal level. In addition to the women's example of self-organization and their full participation in every aspect of the occupation, from strategy to "sitting security," they also confronted the men with their male chauvinism during the long period of close contact. The following exchange, for example, must today be standard in such situations : Man — "If you're so liberated, how come you won't sleep with me?" Woman — "That's exactly the kind of thinking I'm liberated *from*!"

After the sit-in, large numbers of women began to attend the weekly WRAP meetings — often more than 60. Almost every meeting consisted of several elements. There would be a business part to discuss requests for speakers around the city, demonstrations, other W.L. groups, etc. In a "personal" part we talked about our daily problems as women. I was surprised at the strength this gave many of the women to participate in the other activities, as well as giving them a whole new view of society when they discovered that *their* problems were common, and thus the fault of the society, not of themselves. Often, there was a "political" discussion. Again, I was surprised at the sophistication of the women. Most quickly stated matter-of-factly that capitalism oppresses women by using them as a reserve of cheap labor, that it uses men against them to prevent workers' solidarity, that part of women's mistreatment by their husbands is an outlet for the husbands' anger and frustration at *their* dehumanized jobs. Not so explicit, but surely in our attitudes, was the idea that women must be a force for liberation that will combine with other movements to tear down the existing society and create a totally new one, and must assure by our movement that the new one will be free of all aspects of male chauvinism.

We were fortunate to have a concrete women's struggle that crossed class and racial lines taking place on our own campus. The idea of a free child care center provided by the university for its employees and students was spreading among the employees. It became particularly important with the low-paid, unskilled university hospital workers, most of whom are black women. In the early spring these workers wildcatted against both the university and their corrupt, do-nothing union. Among their demands was the child care center. Students helped man the picket lines, and after it was over the wildcatters formed a permanent organization to try to change the union leadership and to press for the child care center. Shortly after that, another group of employees — secretaries and other office workers — formed a third group to fight for the center. These women did important research into the non-availability of child care in the city and country, the cost and set-up of good child care, etc., although they were later to be scorned by some SDS-WRAP women for lacking "militancy." I think it was good that any organization took place among these women, who are extremely isolated from each other and are trained to think of themselves as a part of their bosses, not as exploited employees.

The WRAP women took the lead in calling open mass meetings, coordinating, organizing, and arranging demonstrations. Some good ideas for the center, including the demand that it be controlled by the parents who use it, resulted. The university became scared enough at the thought of a joint movement by students and employees to send officials to rallies and set up a committee to "look into the feasibility" of the center. But the movement fizzled out by the end of the school year. One reason was that WRAP failed to press for a permanent steering committee or some body composed of both employees groups, who should have been leading the campaign, and who would have kept it up over the summer when the students were gone. Another — and related — reason was that the "most political" WRAP women abandoned work on the campaign to concentrate on the faction fights in SDS.

By this time, WRAP had ceased having the "personal" parts of meetings, and many women had dropped out as a result of that and of what it reflected about the leadership, the "most political" women. The women who dropped out said they "weren't ready" to do without the personal sessions and to "take the step into political work". What nearly all of the politicos failed to tell them is that you develop, both "personally" and "politically", through your own actions. This idea had been implicit earlier in the year, when one experienced and one inexperienced woman would always write a leaflet, go to speak to a new group, etc., together. But the vanguardist, authoritarian lines developing in SDS caused many SDS-WRAP women to begin to scorn their "less developed" sisters. WRAP shrank rapidly, and the women who were left stuck their heads in a cloud of rhetoric and no longer had time for what might have been a real movement of workers and students. (I might add that, from what I hear about compulsory group "love-making" in the Weathermen these days, that some of the "political" women needed those personal sessions at least as much as the non-politicos needed help in organizing.)

A couple of illustrations of mistakes made by WRAP leadership are interesting to contrast with what their "Constituency" was saying. For example, WRAP called a rally about the child care center and few people came. They proceeded with the speeches anyway. One of the women in the "secretaries" group turned to a few of us and said that if the hospital workers wouldn't come to a lunch-time rally across the campus, we should go to them. She took her baby out of its carriage and carried it, and stuck a megaphone under the blankets. We wheeled the carriage right into the middle of the hospital cafeteria floor. She took the megaphone out of hiding and gave a whole speech about the center and a mass meeting at night before the campus cops came and threw us out. Another example was the WRAP meeting at which many politicos were saying we couldn't organize the students around the child care issue because they weren't thinking about having children. A student who had never been to a meeting before got up and said, "I haven't had any political experience, but I think you're wrong. *You* may not be thinking about having children, because you are the kind of woman who goes on to graduate school and a career, or is so active in organizations that you don't want children soon. But most

of the women in college were sent there to get just enough education so they can make a little conversation with the professional husbands they will have. After these four years we may be stuck in the house for the next twenty. We are *very* interested in good, free child care."

It is no wonder, after being involved in or observing the mess the New Left is in, that many W.L. groups became so afraid of dogmatism that they spurned theory. Or after looking at the state powers that call themselves Marxist and the youth who want to repeat the same mistakes, that they spurned Marxism. Women have been told by men "theorists" of both the bourgeoisie and the Left that Marxism is purely materialism. What is *really* new about the W.L. movement, I think, is its rejection of simple economic solutions to women's discontent. We are saying, not that we want to be like men, even rich men, in this society, but that we want to be whole human beings called women — beings who have many choices of how to live, many opportunities to create — beings who cannot exist without a total restructuring of society.

It is this Humanism that makes this movement different from the Suffragette or any other movement for equal rights with men in the past. And this Humanism *is* Marxism. Marx combined materialism and idealism to create a philosophy of liberation that can end class, racist, and sexist society. He scorned "vulgar communism", such as the change from private to state-capitalism in Russia and China, as much as capitalism. He explained that it is *who controls* the means of production that determines all human relations in the society, the relation of person to person including man to woman. If the end of your philosophy is not freedom for everyone, it is not Marxism.

Marxist-Humanism has been bursting out in the last two decades — in this country, in the mass black and student movements, and now it is a potential of the W.L. movement. This is the even newer in the brand new women's fight. I can see a change even since last year, when W.L. stressed statistics on job discrimination to spread their cause. Now they are talking about redefining *all* relationships in society. Even the "grandmother" organization of W.L., N.O.W., an organization of professional women itself only a few years old, is considered too conservative and too centralized in authority. And, I think, a serious search for theory — for a key to the self-development of our *own* movement — is starting. Hopefully, W.L. will overcome its fear of structure and philosophy, and meet up with *all* the different women in the country, so it can form a mass movement that will link up with the other forces for liberation and create a society in which women can be *whole women*.



HISTORY AND THE NEED FOR WOMEN THEORISTS

Barbara B.
W.L., Detroit

Some people say that women can't be free until after the revolution. Well, no revolution has yet been designed to include women. The revolution is talked about as separate from Women's Liberation. This is true of Marxism; in the Left it's very definitely true. It's a very ingrained attitude to talk about "the revolution," and that revolution does not include women. To say that, after the revolution women will be free already precludes women's liberation from being a part of the revolution. To them, the revolution means workers, it means economic questions, the way it has been defined by the male theorists of the Left. My main point is that women have to challenge the male theorists of the Left.

The male theorists — Marx, Proudhon, Fourier, etc. — the Marxists, the Anarchists, all the way down the line, have not analyzed society in terms of woman's position in that society, but in terms of man's position in society. And women have never, ever, challenged this. The reason I say this is because the male theoreticians have dealt with an economy in which the male is the main producer. In other words, the capitalist economy in which the male is the main worker. This wasn't always true. In the beginning of capitalism, women and children were used as cheap labor.

But the male theoreticians haven't dealt with the substructure of society, the whole economy based on the sexual division of labor, the division of labor between men and women, which preceded capitalism, and which has remained the substructure, the foundation, of every economy which has ever existed. They have refused to deal with this economy as they have dealt with the male economy. The male economy, the male operated, male controlled economy, what I call the superstructure, depends on the substructure, the sexual division of labor. The main division of labor in the world is between male and female. The first division of labor in the world was between male and female. The first oppression was that of males over females;

This substructure of the sexual division of labor existed in feudalism, and in "primitive" societies. It exists in capitalism, and it continues to exist in socialism, simply because people don't recognize that the oppression of women exists as a separate entity. It has never been analyzed in itself. This is because women have never dared to challenge the male theoreticians in the Left. We have to do that if we are going to free ourselves.

None of the theories which have tried to explain how it was that women first got into their oppressed situation hold up under any thoughtful scrutiny. One argument is really a subtle variation of the biology-is-destiny theme. It says that women were oppressed and kept in an inferior role because they had to bear and care for children while men did the vital work of hunting for food. This is a spurious argument. The argument already implies the value judgments of this male dominated society — that child-bearing and raising is inherently inferior work. It could be just the opposite — that could have been seen as the most valuable work and have

had high status. Why didn't it? Also the argument falls down because (Malinowski — *The Family in Australian Aborigine Society*) women's work *was in fact* more important to the economy and food supply in even the pre-agricultural society — hunting was not the main food supply. Also women invented agriculture. Yet, women were oppressed and their work, which at one time included everything except hunting and weapon-making, was low status. The sexual division of labor argument doesn't answer anything. It only raises questions such as: Why is the sexual division so rigid and why is women's work downgraded?

The next argument is mainly put forth by Marxists and was first expounded by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Engels contended that women's oppression began with the introduction of private property, that the end of the property relationship would free women, and therefore that the class struggle would free women because it would end the property relation. Marx and Engels take property as the key to women's oppression; therefore only the working class can do away with property, thus freeing women. This makes women's liberation merely an off-shoot of the class struggle.

Engels theory — which Marx drew on for his theory of history — said that there was an early matriarchal period of history with a kind of equality between men and women and everyone in the society because there was no private property. Then private property was introduced and women were subjected to men in the patriarchal society. Although there was a golden "communist" age without the evils of private property before the emergence of the patriarchy, the advent of the patriarchy is seen as "progress" in Marx' theory of history because only with the emergence of the patriarchy could the whole process of dialectic begin and the possibility of civilization reaching the point of capitalism and the overthrow of private property relationships on a truly "civilized" basis happen. This is certainly a very blatant male supremacist assumption — that the patriarchy, i.e. male control, was necessary for "progress".

At any rate, the matriarchal state that Engels assumed has been shown to be a misconception by Morgan, upon whose conclusions about American Indians Engels so heavily relied. There have been matrilineal societies — descent traced in the female line — but not matriarchal societies — political, economic and social control by women. But aside from that, the basis of Engels argument is that with the introduction of private property, which he assumes to be first with herding, women were subjected and treated also as property. But does this follow as B follows A?

Why was there a peculiar form of *female* as property? Why weren't men as a caste subjected to women through property relations instead of the reverse? Women must have been oppressed *before* the introduction of private property for them alone as a *caste* (and also children) to be subjected in the peculiar way they were to property, if indeed this is what happened as Engels said. Engels gives no explanation or reason for women's being subjected to men through property relations. Engels and

Marx's answers as to the origins of women's subjection to men only raise more puzzling questions; they don't answer anything.

The basic motivation behind the oppression of women has been the fear of women by men. We start with the emergence of humans from the non-conscious animal world. The fear and terror inspired by the consciousness of death and the future or impending possibility of death begins to separate the human mind from the purely animal mind. Natural forces are seen by human beings as either benevolent or destructive or death-bearing forces.

But also, other human beings can be terrifying.

There is overwhelming evidence from all parts of the world that early peoples and even later peoples considered blood equal to life, that a person's life was in their blood. There were also taboos all over the world in early societies or "primitive" societies surrounding women as a group, particularly during the time of menstruation and childbirth. Women are segregated at these times. Men may die if they touch them. Women are impure. They are polluted beings feared by men at these times in particular. (This can be seen in later literature: Aeneas, the Bible, etc.)

Now if blood is seen to equal life and the spilling of blood is equal to the fear of possible death, then a being who bleeds periodically and yet does not die is remarkable, strange, magical and terrifying, all at the same time. That being is woman.

So the man protects himself against this dangerous being who bleeds but does not die and whose blood he believes may kill him. (One must understand magic in the "primitive" mind to understand why he perceives this.) He will have to insert his penis from where the dangerous blood has flowed. So he forms male only puberty rites — to put his life in his totem animal for "safekeeping" in a simulated death and resurrection ritual — and he makes this a required initiation for boys before their first intercourse with woman. The real underlying reasons for the castration complex of males becomes more clear as one understands that the magical belief that the touching of this blood, even the mere touching of his blanket by the menstruous woman, can bring him instant death. One can see his terror of placing his unprotected penis in the very place from whence this blood has flowed.

The taboos and rituals also appear around the hunt and war: fear of the blood of the slain, the purificatory rites, the sex taboos on women and often on men are enforced at these times. The original fear of intercourse with women due to the fear of blood and castration, i.e. death, caused a system of taboos on intercourse for certain periods. Taboos could only be enforced through self-repression of the males (as the ones who feared and had to contain their desires), and as repression imposed on women through fear (the bull-roarer, secret ceremonies, the death penalty, etc.).

The puberty rites and the warrior cults are intimately connected. The purificatory rites around blood of the slain in battle are much like the blood rituals and taboos on intercourse with women. I think this

can be explained if we posit that men in repressing themselves sexually from fear of death in order to enforce on themselves the sex intercourse taboos created an aggressive hostility (repressed libido) which was bound up intimately with puberty rites, the religion and the state. The first sublimation.

The political power grew out of the enforcement of the sexual taboos and this was the first repressive (to enforce the taboos — "laws") and the first oppressive (to those on whom the taboos were enforced, — at first basically women) power and remained in the hands of the males who had the need, through their fear, to repress and oppress. The political power or state has always been a repressive institution according to these origins.

Racism and imperialism are also very closely tied to these origins and are in fact results of the original repression of sex and the subjection of women. The repressed sex and fear of death in sex is sublimated and an aggressive paranoid kind of hostility is then directed to "outsiders" and the "territory" and imaginary boundaries where other tribes outside are "enemies" (as with the Typees when Melville visited them), and there are forays made to kill the enemies or destroy them.

Also, the application of the concept of class to women in the same way that it is applied to men is up for question here. In my reading of anthropology it is quite clear that class is basically a distinction among males. Women take on the class of the male they are associated with, while their main position is that of a caste — women — in relation to men. Also in tracing property origins and relations in ancient Greece, I have found them bound up with the taboos in marriage, boundaries and ancestor worship.

So we have tied together the fear of women and the subjection of women, starting with the menstrual taboos and culminating in the political consolidation of power by the males in the patriarchal family and state. The self-repression of the males (sublimation) through fear of women because of fear of death, through the idea that blood equals life, causes the eruption of this repressed sexuality in a particular form of aggression known as war. The whole warrior-big man-hero-powerful-cult of masculinity. Also, the projection of this repressed fear in the territorial fears and aggression and the projection to "outsiders" of the sexually repressed part culminates in racism. And the emergence of the political power of the males was in order to enforce a repression on themselves and other young males and women. And also, the rape of the land as man's fear and domination of women is closely linked to his fear and domination of nature, and it's no surprise that nature is personified as female.

So here we have some of the deepest roots of the hideously destructive — both outward and inward — development of "civilization". I propose that there has been little if any "progress" from "primitive" to "civilized" society. There has only been a refinement and perhaps even an acceleration of the basic rotten foundations of human society, where it somehow went wrong, got off the track, in the fears

of blood, women, taboos and repression of sex and subjection of women. I propose that we have been blindly hacking away at the branches (they have been important things no doubt and need to be attacked; I don't deny the importance of economics, imperialism, etc.), but not questioning the deep roots, not seeing the trunk of the tree on which all originated and *still depends* for its sustenance. We are simply a more sophisticated version of the same old fears and conflicts from which *all our institutions were built*. These blood taboos and fears and sexual repression are not something "quaint" in the past. The institutions we live in are basically irrational and are the results of these early basic fears and taboos — we still have the fears and repressions with us today in more concealed forms.

I hope this exploration I have begun to make into the questioning of theories of men and the beginnings of a development of my own view will help other women to do the same. We need more women to try to understand and carefully think through and re-think and re-write all that has been handed down to us by men from a male dominated world.

Theory to me means trying to understand. That's all it means. It is not irrelevant abstraction — with me it's a passion because I so deeply need to understand why things got to be the way they are, why when all the facts of the many women I know and my own life should contradict our oppression and all the stereotypes, that the oppression the institutions that enslave us go on in the name of all that is "rational", "stable" and "unchangeable" "human nature". I can't endure those male supremacist lies so I have to search out what the truth is, what the real reasons are, how it all happened in the way that it did. I know that if one does not understand how something happened one cannot change it — because one will not know what it is that one needs to change.



"BAREFOOT AND PREGNANT"

Ester Serrano
young Mexican-American

I do clerical work in the office of a large firm. It is really bad there for women. For one thing, we have no union, there is no job security and no benefits to speak of at all. What is interesting is that although the 70 or so women in the office have no union, the men who work in the plant — in the same building — are in the Teamsters. It seems to be good for them, because the bosses are really afraid of the union.

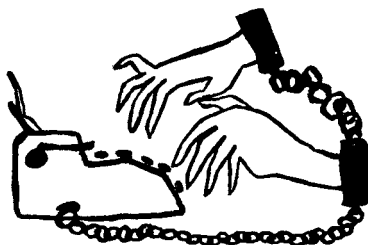
One of the worse things though is the fact that, to keep your job, you have to take everything the men say or do to you without saying a word. The other day I was walking up the hall with some papers in my hand; one of the salesmen walked up to me, hit me in the ass with some papers, and said, "What's happening, Baby?" I went and told my boss (also a man) about it. He said, "Well, that's the price you have to pay for being a woman." The men frequently make obscene remarks to us, and we don't dare talk back to them because it could mean our jobs.

Another thing in my office is that it is practically all white. Out of 70 women, there are only 6 or 7 Black women — and they work in the lowest paid jobs. I think they get \$1.60 an hour, which is the minimum wage according to law. I am the only Mexican woman there. I found out a few days after I started working there that when they hired me they thought I was an Indian from India. They discovered I was Mexican when I spoke Spanish over the phone to a Mexican customer. It was all over the office inside a few hours; people walked up to me and said "I didn't know you were Mexican," etc. It's really a racist place.

The majority of women work in clerical, secretarial, and switch-board jobs, although there are a few in the plant. The women in the plant area work on some sort of an assembly line. I don't know if they are in the union or not. The highest paid woman in the office gets \$120.00 a week. She's the secretary to the big boss.

As I'm new there, I have been trying to find out things from the other women about the office. But they seem really afraid to talk about anything. They say, "You'll find out for your self." It is obvious that some people try to get in good by making up to the boss. He takes advantage of this, and plays favorites.

The other day, the company gave a big Christmas luncheon for the



office employees. They even gave us each a two lb. box of candy — but everybody had to work the holiday week-end. Also, if you have to work overtime, you only get paid extra for time over 1½ hours — less than that you don't get anything. They load so much work on you, and with ridiculous deadlines, that they practically force you to work overtime on your own time.

One woman I work with, who seems to be a favorite of the boss, has caused a lot of trouble with the other women because she insists on running other people's jobs — to make it more efficient. She tries to change all the old ways of doing things, and the other women really get mad.

A lot of women there don't seem to like each other very much; there is a lot of bickering. But people do put on phoney shows of friendliness. I think this is because everyone is afraid of being fired. They're too afraid even to talk about what happens there. If you get fired, you get fired, and there is absolutely nothing you can do about it. Some women have worked here for up to 23 years, and are afraid. I think that if we had a union, people would be less afraid and would get along better.

There is one john for women in the whole place. One JOHN for 80 women, and some of the women in the plant use it too. There are three or four men's johns. The boss is thinking of converting the women's john into a men's john, and using one of the men's johns for the women — because the women's john is "nicer" and they need a nice john for customers.

Before I found this job, I looked for quite a while. At many places that I tried, they refused to hire me for two reasons, either because 1. I was married 2. Because I didn't have a high school diploma. Most of the jobs I applied for were really simple clerical jobs, such as filing, typing, and things like that, but they still demanded a diploma. At one place I went to, Uniroyal Tire Co., they wouldn't hire me for an office job because I'm Mexican and a couple shades too dark for their lilly white office. Of course they did offer me a job in the factory. Of course they didn't tell me that; I found out from a friend who used to work there. (By the way he quit a few weeks ago because they found out he was Mexican, and really made it bad for him.)

What really annoyed me was the place that refused to hire me because I was married. They said something like, "Sorry, we had a single girl in mind; we don't want any trouble with husbands." It was a sales job : I wonder just what I was supposed to sell, me or the merchandise.

In School

In my high school they had three curriculums : occupational, business, and college prep. The occupational curriculum had drafting, and several skilled trades courses. Not one single girl had ever been allowed into this curriculum. One girl in my class wanted to take a drafting course. The school wouldn't let her. Her mother fought the case and won. She was finally allowed to take it; but she was the only one.

They simply placed girls in the home economics courses as electives.

There was also a work program in the school. I worked throughout high school. The girls were always placed in the lowest paid jobs, usually the state minimum — and were not allowed to work more than 36 hours a week. The guys got much better paying jobs, and were allowed to work as many hours as the employer wanted.

At Home

I come from a very traditional Mexican family — the tradition is that women are totally subordinate to the men. The man's way of dealing with the woman is to keep her barefoot and pregnant. If the man says crawl, the woman asks "how far?" My grandmother taught me that men were the master and women were the underdog. When I got married, my grandmother sat my husband and me down and told us that the wife's duty was to do everything her husband said, never disagree with him, and be his slave. That was the only way to have a good marriage. There is a Spanish saying, "Believe in God, but worship your husband," and that's the way it's supposed to be. My ma did it, my grandmother did it, and all my aunts did it. That's all you see around you as you grow up, and it's not easy to resist doing the same thing yourself.



My husband, who is not Mexican, seemed to fit right in the Mexican male pattern. Although I asked him many times to teach me to drive, he kept refusing. He said this was because a man didn't have patience enough to teach his wife to drive and she should learn from somebody else. But although he never said it I think it was because, if I learned to drive, I would be too independent. Likewise, he didn't want me to get a job. I wanted to get a job because he was out of work and we didn't have any money. We got in lots of fights about it. Finally I made the decision. I was going to get a job and that was it. We had a really big fight, but I got a job. Now I'm working and he isn't. At the beginning we had lots of fights because I couldn't see why I should have to come home and cook and clean house after working all day while he was at home sitting on his ass. What I did was I let all the house work go and told him that when he got tired of living in his own mess, he'd do something about it. It didn't take long before he started doing a lot of the house work. He even does the dishes, something he would never do before.

I am not at all the typical Mexican woman. I saw my ma get beaten, and have to work to support the family, because my father would take off. I knew, even when I was young, that I didn't want to live that way. I figured that, someday or another, I would get out of that kind of life.

On The Women's Liberation Movement

I think the Women's Liberation Movement is a great thing — and it's about time too. I do think though, judging from a recent conference on Women's Liberation that I attended, that it may be starting out wrong. The first women who had courage enough to bring up the question of women were middle class white women. I got the impression from that conference that many middle class white women seem to think that it's their own personal revolution — they seemed to be really out of touch with other women — Black, Mexican, and poor white. I think the question must be discussed on many different levels, but the whole discussion should be brought more down to earth. I didn't understand a lot of what they were talking about, they used a lot of big words, a lot of psychological language that I don't understand. In general, a lot of the discussion was just a lot of intellectual bullshit.

What annoyed me too was that, at this meeting, many women seemed to be launching a big attack on Marx. I really don't understand why. This guy was good for his own time, he had a lot of great things to say about revolution and society. But in his time the Women's Liberation Movement didn't exist. I don't see how we can criticize him for not knowing everything about a movement which didn't even exist then. I think we can learn from Marx and people like that. I really got mad when those women were attacking him.

The Women's Liberation Movement has changed my thinking about a lot of things. I never thought about the freedom of women as a mass thing before. I thought that I could escape the oppression my-

self. I thought that I was never going to let anyone put a ring through my nose. I saw what happened to my ma. I saw the kind of hell she had to live with and told myself that it wasn't going to happen to me.

Now that I've recognized that this kind of thing happens to all women, maybe a different kind of hell, but never the less hell, and that women are beginning to organize against their own oppression, that many women are demanding to be recognized as human beings instead of live-in maids, I feel much stronger myself. I feel more determined to fight for myself and for what I think is right. I don't think that the Women's Liberation Movement will be a passing thing; I think it's here to stay, although the men are hoping that it won't. But too many women are too fed up; things are going to change. Things have to change!



ARA AND UNION HARASS WOMEN FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION

ARA worker

reprinted from N&L, June-July 1970

The women who work for Automatic Retailers of America at the Great Lakes Steel Division have been fighting discrimination on their jobs for a long time. ARA employees service the food vending machines in thousands of plants and offices throughout the country. At Great Lakes Steel, several ARA women now have cases pending with the Civil Rights Commission, but it looks like a long, hard fight.

One woman hired in as a vending attendant, and later started training for a serviceman's job, which had never been held by a woman before. The attendant's job is to give change, clean machines, and fill them. The serviceman's job (which the CRC now requires be called "vending service job") is almost the same, except that you drive and load your own truck, and pull money — and it pays more.

This woman was allowed to bid for the job when one opened up, and got it, but you have to work 30 days on a job before you are qualified for it. On her 30th day she was disqualified, not because of her work — she did a good job — but because she couldn't move the machines.

The contract states that moving machines is a repairman's job, so she filed a complaint with Equal Employment in Washington. They referred the case to the Civil Rights Commission, who set up an agreement with the company to put her back on the job, with back pay.

She got \$1550 in back pay, but the company still owes her \$675; she went back on the job, but a man with more seniority bumped her off it. She didn't get any help from the union (United Catering, Restaurant, Bar and Hotel Union, AFL-CIO) at all. They didn't even take the case to arbitration. She now works as a truck driver.

The women who have been fighting for upgrading have faced all kinds of harassment. Another woman who had filed with the Commission, and had more seniority, is on the service job now. But they added

more work to make it harder on her. During her 30 day trial, they followed her around and spied on her. The machines hadn't been cleaned for ages, but she was blamed for anything that was wrong with them. They gave her a list of about 30 things to do, something that had never been done to any man on the job.

The women are made to go through much greater training, and to qualify for many more jobs, than the men do, whenever they try to get upgraded. As one of the women put it: "They want to burn us out."

What angers the women most is that "the union doesn't seem to fight for the women the way they do for the men." They say the contract "seems to get worse every time one is negotiated."

Women have been truck drivers here for at least 15 years. This year when the contract came up, it said that the truckdrivers had to change flat tires. There is a service station which had always done this before. The woman who bid the service job went in one morning and found a flat on one truck. There were plenty of other trucks available, but she was told she'd have to take the one with the flat. It wasn't her truck — but she changed the flat anyway, just to show them she could.

One of the older women who has top seniority, and has been a fighter for years, had been helping some of the younger women with their cases. She was on sick leave, as a result of an accident at work. They suddenly put in the contract that if you're out on leave over two years, you're eliminated. Everyone believes it was done as retaliation.

The women are still fighting. They have now filed harassment and retaliation charges, and women from the Women's Liberation Coalition of Michigan have joined with them in a demonstration at the CRC.



ONE VIEW OF THE MOVEMENT

Judy M.
white student, New York

The question of women's liberation is being raised today with a new enthusiasm and intensity. Women are joining together in a conscious effort to fight male domination rather than accept the traditional subtle and unsubtle forms of submission. But for this movement to have a real social impact and theoretical focus, it must be able to see clearly the forces in society that have led to their subjugation. The oppression of women goes hand in hand with the exploitation and dehumanization of class society.

The woman question is of singular importance to a revolutionary movement. In the class struggle we must be able to free the creative energies of all of our militants. But male chauvinism is no more a "Woman's problem" for women to solve in isolation any more than racism is a "black problem". Anyone who is a revolutionary and concerned with creating a new society with truly human relations must realize the importance of the struggle against male domination. Clearly many

men in the movement are reactionary on this point and still bound by bourgeois notions and so it is up to the women to take the lead. But it is a dangerous trend when women's groups continue to see their problems as isolated from the movement as a whole. Without a new society, no one can be free. How can we be "liberated" as women when we are exploited as workers and oppressed as human beings?

Women's agitation today stands on the shoulders of the participation of women in the labor force and their "liberation" in terms of the "freedom" to enter into social production and become independent of the prison of the family. The growing dissatisfaction of women is another manifestation of the deepening crisis in our society and also of the more profound questions that the movement is asking. What is happening today is what happens in the beginning of a period where "revolution is on the agenda" — women are beginning to be conscious of the great contribution they have to make towards changing society. Women have always been fighters in the class war: the women of the Paris Commune, the working women of London's East End with Sylvia Pankhurst, in the early 20th century black women Abolitionists, and of course the many other examples.

It is also true that middle-class women are becoming dissatisfied with the suffocating future of conventional life in a time of general social questioning. There have been in the past, many important movements of bourgeois women like the suffragist and legal equality movements. Women are only *beginning* their activity in *our* age and we must look to the class content of the women's struggles to get an idea of where they are going.

We can identify the groups of women who are primarily concerned with equality within the capitalist system: groups of women in the professions (such as women faculty members, graduate students, doctors, fighting for equal professional status), groups starting day-care centers (that for the most part service children of the liberal petty bourgeois parents), etc. All these projects have merit, some more and some less, but few are relevant to the deeper issues in our society. These issues can become a dead-end when they imply a willing acceptance of the class character of the society as a whole. One specific reform that has gained adherents among women of all classes and for good reason, is the reform of the cruel and humiliating abortion laws. This has particular relevance to working women and welfare mothers who cannot, if they choose to do so, afford even reasonable safe abortions.

The primarily white "radical" women's groups that grew out of SDS and the student movement have to a large extent today, fallen victim to the faction fights of the suicidal left. They were and are for the most part a lot of noise with little substance. The bra "burnings", the anti-beauty contest demonstrations, the Witch groups, created a scandal among the middle class which is fine for what it's worth. But these activities and the discussions of radical women that I have attended have the danger of implying that women's problems are "psychological", that their problems are the result of the "consumer society" that makes

them buy junk to be what is called beautiful, and that women can be free if they free themselves of men's image of them. All these points have some validity but *ultimately* the problems of inter-personal relationships will remain as long as we live in an alienated, dehumanized society. Almost anything anyone can buy is junk. But to focus on consumption, on advertising and the like is not to hit at the heart of the problem at all. Boycott Revlon? A very superficial social critique.

Insofar as women of the working class become aware of their role in society, the women's movement will come in contact with the vital forces in our society. The welfare mothers are a good example. It is as yet unclear to what extent they identify with established women's groups. Working women in general seem to feel removed from the "official" women's liberation ideology and from the often absurd self-indulgence of their actions. But that is because the questions and answers offered by the women's groups to date are superficial and not relevant to their lives.



Paterson strikers marching up Fifth Ave.
to Madison Square Garden, June 5, 1913

A RESPONSE FROM A PARTICIPANT

Terry Moon

Women's Liberation, Detroit

One of the first things I want to try to make clear is that most W.L.M. groups believe that in order for women to be free there must be some kind of socialism. Women or men cannot be free under Capitalism. The thing that W.L.M. does see is that there could be a type of socialism and women would still be second class citizens. All women need to do to see the truth in this is to look at history. In Algeria, Cuba, Russia, China, the women are not free. Most of us believe that, because of what happened to women in past "revolutions", while we work for a socialist revolution we must also, and *not* secondary but equally, work for women's liberation. Men, as a ruling class and as individuals, have something to gain from keeping woman in her place. It is because of this that we need to fight just as hard for liberation as for socialism.

I don't believe that the questions and answers that W.L.M. deals with are "superficial." One of the things we work on is the right of women to control their own bodies, hardly a "superficial" demand. How to restructure the relationship between women and men so that the oldest division of labor, that is the sexual division of labor, is destroyed. There is some feeling in our group that if this oldest division of labor is not destroyed then the same systems will spring up from the root of sexual division of labor. It is these kinds of ideas that show us that when we work for women's liberation we *are* working for a socialist revolution.

From your letter it is clear that you don't understand all the reasons for actions against beauty contests. There are many.

1. Beauty contests demonstrate clearly the value women have for this society. As sexual objects, period. Women can be last hired and first fired because we all, even women, know where our place is. Women will allow themselves to do shit work as long as they think they are shit.
2. Beauty pageants epitomize the roles we are *all* forced to play as women. The parade down the runway blares the metaphor of the 4-H Club country fair, where the nervous animals are judged for teeth, fleece, etc., and where the best specimen gets the blue ribbon! So are all women in our society forced daily to compete for male approval, enslaved by ludicrous "beauty standards" we ourselves are conditioned to take seriously.
3. Beauty pageants are racist. Since its inception in 1921, the Miss America pageant has not had one black finalist, and this has not been for a lack of test-case contestants. There has never been a Puerto Rican, Alaskan, Hawaiian, or Mexican-American winner. Nor has there ever been a *True* Miss America — an American Indian.
4. The function of most pageant winners is to advertise something. Her body is being used so some capitalist can make more money. In other words, beauty pageant sponsors are pimps and make whores of all women.
5. The highlight of Miss America's reign each year is a cheerleader tour of American troops abroad. She personifies the "unstained patriotic American womanhood our boys are fighting for." The living bra and the

Dead Soldier. Women are used as Mascots for Murder. Miss America sells war.

6. Spindle, mutilate, and then discard tomorrow. What is so ignored as last year's beauty winner? This only reflects our society. Women must be young, juicy, malleable in order to "make it." This kind of thing makes growing old for women a nightmare.

7. Miss America shows us that in order to win approval we must be both super sexy and a virgin. That is why some women and most men prefer to call women "girls." It implies virginity. Beauty pageants legitimize the Madonna Whore concept.

8. Beauty winners represent what women are supposed to be: inoffensive, bland, apolitical. If you are tall, over or under weight, forget it. Personality, articulateness, intelligence, commitment, unwise. Conformity is the key to the crown — and, by extension, to success in our society.

9. In this reputedly democratic society, where every little boy can, supposedly, grow up to be president, what can every little girl hope to grow to be? Miss America. That's where it's at. Real power to control our own lives is restricted to a few old white men, while women get patronizing pseudo-power, an ermine cloak and a bunch of flowers; men are judged by their actions, women by their appearance.

I think that the implications that you have deduced from "long sessions of personal revelations" are not the same implications that the W.L.M. have. Because women's oppression has been so total it is necessary sometimes to talk about what has happened to you and why. Male chauvinism is so prevalent and so ingrained that it is not enough to intellectually know about it. We are damaged emotionally. We need to understand our oppression on more than an intellectual level. In our group we would talk about what happened to us and why. The "why" was very important to us. Why is it profitable to keep me hung up on sex? Who does it help when I believe that I have to stay home all the time, off the job market, for my kids? Why are abortions illegal and women made to feel guilty if they don't want children, when they don't want to produce more consumers and soldiers for the capitalistic economy? Who makes money out of women believing that they must get married and right away move into a separate house and buy their own stove, ice box, car, etc. etc. etc.? These kinds of questions and obvious answers are only going to mean something if they are *real*; if they are talked about and understood on more than one level.

There is another sentence in your letter that shows lack of thought. You write: "At least Capitalism has 'done a service' in freeing women from the utter prison of the family." On the contrary, now women have two prisons. They go out to the prison of work and come home to the slavery of the family, to the other job, the job that receives no pay, has no status and no recognition.

The last thing I want to talk about is your paragraph:

One thing you wrote — "The greatness and originality of the new stirrings of W.Lib. is the fact that they don't want to wait till the day after the revolution to *solve the problem*." That is very inter-

esting, but I fail to see how we can do that. I'd love to be able to create a new society without first destroying the old, but unfortunately that's completely utopian and impossible. And without a new society no one will be free.

You are making an assumption that is *not* what was said. You are assuming that W.L.M. thinks they can "solve the problem" without destroying "the old" society. That is not what was said. We are saying that we are not going to wait around and trust a left which has done nothing for women in the past and is riddled with male chauvinism in the present. We are saying *no* to our oppression *now*. We are working for our liberation *now* and consequently furthering a real socialist revolution, not one that just frees half the population.

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## THE THEORETIC CHALLENGE OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Bonnie McFadden  
white student

Dear Judy,

Thanks for your letters .... They have goaded me to write.

First, let me say that I think there is a very real relation between the National Question (which you discuss separately in the beginning of your letter) and the question of Women's Liberation; if not in specifics (I really don't think that secession from the Union is *the* answer for women), then in both content and process — *revolutionary process*. You say:

.... it seems to me that *it is precisely now*, after the decade of promise and *stalemate* and face to face with the imbecilic Third World position of SDS, that a re-evaluation of exactly what is the significance of the self-determination struggles and of struggles for national liberation from imperialist dominations is in order. Have the creation of new nation states weakened imperialism as Lenin wrote?



COUNTESS MARKEVICZ, DURING IRISH EASTER REBELLION, 1916

Can any nation free itself from the pull of the world market and the competing imperialist camps?

As Lenin made clear, there is no question but that nationalist revolutions, in which the bourgeoisie unites with the proletariat and peasantry to "drive the imperialist devils out," is not at all the same thing as a proletarian revolution. It can, however, act as a spark to the class struggle, and, if it deepens, develop into a class rather than a national struggle. It can "go beyond itself," not only internally — inside that country — but externally, to have an effect both on the "mother" country, and on the international situation as a whole. Marx describes this *process* for his day on the question of Ireland — the same country which Lenin referred to in his theses on the National Question. I'll quote from Marx:

.... After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years, I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against the English ruling classes (and it will be decisive for the worker's movement all over the world) *can not* be delivered in England, *but only* in Ireland...

(from a letter to Meyer & Vogt, 1870)

He goes on to explain that this is true, not only because the English aristocracy gains its material strength from exploitation of the Irish, but what he calls "moral" strength, i.e., they used Ireland and the Irish workers as a weapon (racism, etc.) against their own workers. The description of this manipulation of racism is all too contemporary.

This is history, but look at today. Right at this moment, the ramifications of the Vietnamese *nationalist* struggle (and it is that as well as more) is wrecking absolute havoc in the bastion of western capitalism — it has created a whole new generation of revolutionaries in the U.S. It has helped to bring about a near revolutionary situation here, although the New Left, as well as the Old, refuses to recognize the revolution at home, preferring to dump the whole responsibility for revolution on the Third World.

What is the other force that has created a near revolutionary situation here? It is the *Black struggle*. The Black movement has always been intimately connected with the class struggle in America — as we tried to show in our "Resolution on Race and Class" in *New Left Notes*, — but it has likewise always been conscious of itself as a *Black struggle*. "Freedom Now" as a movement has, as it has developed, and with its own identity, challenged capitalist society from top to bottom. And as for your statement as to the "stalemated" nature of the nationalist revolutions, I couldn't disagree more. The African revolutions of the 1960's woke up the world to revolution. Although it is true they could not escape the objective pull of the world capitalist markets, they could not isolate themselves, their influence on the subjective — the world revolutionary movement — was tremendous. The Algerian revolution nearly created a revolution in France; the African revolutions in general had a great influence on the American movement.

O.K. What does all this have to do with women? I believe the answer is a great deal. Women are a developing revolutionary force. And to understand that we must understand *process*. Like oppressed national



groups, women comprise different classes, but at the same time, even the female "bourgeoisie" are not truly bourgeois because they have virtually none of the control over the means of production that that term is used to signify. Historically, women were the first victims in the division of labor for value production — the first slaves, the first human beings to be objectified into property, into commodities owned by their husbands, as both Marx and Lenin point out. The relation of man to woman is the deepest, most revealing form of the alienation of the whole human race, as Marx shows in "Private Property and Communism." Being the oldest form of oppression, the revolt of women today has tremendous significance for the revolutionary movement as a whole.

You said something in your letter about the "bourgeois suffragette movement." Any one's right to vote may appear "bourgeois, reformist," etc., today, but historically it was a necessary weapon and *process* in the revolutionary struggle. Lenin refers to this in his essay, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism":

*All 'democracy' consists in the proclamation and realization of 'rights' which under capitalism are realisable only to a very small degree and only relatively. But without the proclamation of these rights, without a struggle to introduce them now, immediately, without training the masses in the spirit of this struggle, socialism is impossible.*

By the way, in this piece he was referring specifically to the right of divorce! And quotes Rosa Luxemburg to the effect that "Divorce is a national question — and I'm for that!"

You say, "But I cannot see how saying national independence struggles are a step towards freedom or socialism is anything but an abstraction." Freedom is most concrete and, as a movement progresses, it is constantly redefined in *action*. (The movement from practice to theory). Thus, the struggle for the right to a seat on a bus, the right to eat in a restaurant, the right to decent schooling, the right to vote — have led, through the fight for these things, to a total critique of capitalist society. Thus women — and through a damn rough struggle — won the right to vote, only to discover that it was insufficient to free them as human beings. Much the same is true for the old demand for sexual freedom: it didn't change our lives. Women have redefined what freedom means, and have continued the fight.

What I am trying to show is that the question of Women's Liberation, like the National Question, is far more complex in its effects than might first appear. It is a process, although dialectical movement is probably the correct term. We have to look at potential and development — self-development, and "the myriad connections of things" (which is, I think, a mis-quote of Hegel).

What is important for our time, as Raya has pointed out, is the fact that women are becoming *conscious* of themselves as an oppressed group in a different way than ever before. Demanding "Freedom Now," and challenging the totality of relations under capitalism, is qualitatively different than previous women's movements. And that is what many voi-

ces of women's liberation are challenging — and not only in capitalist society, but in the American Left itself. If there is one thing that characterizes the women's groups it is *their adamant attack on elitism and authoritarianism*. The very structure of most women's liberation groups is witness to this. They show the recognition both of the importance of self-development for the individual, and the necessity for true democracy within an organization. The small group structure has created some problems in communication between groups, between large numbers of women, but this is beginning to be worked out. There have been a growing number of groups who have set up "Coalition" councils where many women can come together, while still participating in the small groups. This has occurred here in Detroit recently. I've also been told that it has happened in Baltimore, Boston and New York.

When we in News & Letters talk about workers' struggles against speed-up and for decent working conditions, we know it is not merely an economic question, but a *human* question. As we are not the "vulgar communists" that Marx attacked in "Private Property and Communism," who think that socialism means merely the change from private property to state-owned property, but rather think socialism means a total transformation of human relations, beginning with the change in the human relations at the point of production, we, above all, cannot be mechanistic about forces for revolution. It is who *controls* production, not who *owns* it that matters, and that is a human question.

In "Private Property and Communism," Marx also speaks of the relation of man to woman as being the deepest, most revealing indication of all social relations among human beings — and historically, woman has been a slave, a piece of chattel, *controlled* by men. All human relations since the beginning of production for surplus value have been transformed into object relations. But for women, the oppression has been double, if not triple. As a woman she is oppressed, as a worker she is oppressed as woman and as worker, and, in this society, if she is Black, she has been oppressed because she is all three.

Because the oppression of women has been so intimately connected with the question of all *human* relations, with the essential alienation of all individuals from themselves and others, the *potential* of a women's movement is incredibly great. The needs, demands, of women are beyond "economism," beyond "vulgar communism"; neither provides any answer for women. Basic to the oppression of women is the whole totality of human relations in capitalist society — in any society in which people are not free to be self-determining, creative human beings. Thus, in China, as J. described it, women are "equal" in that they work at the same jobs as men, and get paid the same as men, and, up to the time of the commune movement, their status was improved. But, the commune movement has reduced the power of women to determine the conditions of their own labor and life. They have gone backward. (see article on China.) The return to the past is nowhere more evident than in the composition of the Chinese leadership— there are only two women in leadership positions and they are the *wives* of Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao. Appointed by Mao, neither was an independent revolutionary in her own right. The same is true of Cuba and Russia. And the same is true of every revolu-

tionary organization in this country, with the single exception of News & Letters. We are the only revolutionary organization in which the two most important leadership positions are held by women.

We must ask: why is it that in every so-called Socialist revolution, women were an important revolutionary force *during* the revolution (Algeria, Cuba, China, Russia, Africa), only to be pushed back into their traditional position *after* the revolution? Obviously this tells us as much about the revolution as a whole as it does about the revolution's relation to women.

You say in your letter:

... Women have played great roles in struggles not specifically 'women's' — the CIO, etc. ... what is happening today is what happens in any period where 'revolution is on the agenda' — women are becoming conscious of the great contribution they have to make towards changing society...

Yes, women do have a great contribution to make toward changing society. But is that all? I say no. It is in the struggle for their *own* liberation — as a self-conscious, self-organized force — that women can emerge, not only as contributors to revolution, but as a magnificent independent force for revolution, not merely practically — in action — but *theoretically*. And this is precisely what has been absent from all previous women's movement — and which is lacking when one talks of women having contributed to every previous revolutionary struggle. Women can emerge as the theoretic force which could transform and push forward the whole revolutionary movement. This is not to say, by any means, that we have as yet come anywhere near to this point, but the search for philosophy, for theory, is going on, in a self-conscious way. It's there, and we as Marxist-Humanists must recognize it, help it to be heard, and help to work it out. Because the oppression of women is so deeply rooted in the question of all human relations as they have been perverted throughout history by production relations, there is such great potential here for the development of a really thorough-going critique, a new *philosophical* break-through which could not but influence the whole course of revolutionary development throughout the world.

History shows that every revolution which has called itself socialist has betrayed women, the very women who fought to bring it about. *This in itself gives lie to the assertion that any revolution has, in fact, created a socialist society.* Socialism means a truly human, free society, in which each individual can be self-determining — if it is not this, it is not socialism and has no relation *whatever* to Marx, or to Marx's philosophy of liberation.

Is it possible that the absence of a self-conscious women's movement during these previous revolutions contributed to their betrayal? I remember a story that M. told about her experiences as a woman worker in the Communist Party in the forties. Anytime she tried to raise the question of the position of women in the Party — which was pretty awful — she was told that the "solution" to the woman question could only come after the revolution, and that women must subordinate their own "griev-

ances" to work for the revolution. (M. was expelled from the Party for persisting with her own "grievances.") This is, by the way, exactly the same story the C.P. told its Black members. Wait until after the revolution, ladies and Blacks, and you shall get pie in the sky. It is no accident that the Progressive Labor Party's position on women today is exactly the same as its C.P. "parent." And the SDS Weathermen's "Ladies Auxiliary" theory is but a variation on this same theme. The danger of subordinating women's liberation to "the real revolution" can be seen in the events of Chicago, where WRAP and SDS women were doing really important work with the hospital workers' strike there — until the SDS women abandoned the struggle for "more important things," i.e., SDS faction fights.

One of the most significant contributions of the Women's Liberation Groups thus far has been its attack on the elitist, authoritarian dead-end of the American Left. Because women bear the brunt of the Left's neo-Stalinism, they have been in the forefront in challenging this pernicious, anti-human, anti-philosophy. For example: the only force that made itself heard in challenging the totally Stalinist, undemocratic Panther-CP conference on Fascism was the women. At the same time that they exposed its authoritarianism, they also exposed its *real* thinking on Women — "The position for women in the Movement is prone" still reigns supreme throughout the Left, Black and white. Likewise I would suggest that women are taking the lead in recognizing the importance of self-development; and challenging the *separation* of mental and manual labor, not only within the whole society, but within the Left itself. This is a very concrete question for women in the Movement. They have always been relegated to the mimeograph machines while the men have done the "thinking." Women, like every single oppressed group in history, have been told that their minds, ideas, are worthless. All they are good for is manual labor. Now women are saying No to this, and demanding that their ideas be heard. An end to the division of mental and manual labor, the demand that individuals be whole human beings, working with body and mind, is such an essential part of Marx's philosophy, and it has been totally ignored by the Left — except for the women. Of course, this is still very much *implicit* in what women are saying, and has not been raised to a "universal" in any sense. But it is very much there — and we must help to make it *explicit*.

Much of the discussion on the Left about women's liberation centers on the allegation that it is a "bourgeois" demand, that any struggle around the woman question will divide the struggle against imperialism; that women "can't be free until after the revolution," etc. Of course, this is an old and discredited excuse for the chauvinism that it is. But it is very dangerous. What we have to learn from history is that the greatest danger to the revolution itself is the attempt to subordinate, to put aside, any struggle for human liberation which is making itself felt in the world. (And, by the way, Luxemburg's attempt to stamp Polish national aspirations out of existence was one of the most important reasons for the failure of the Polish revolution.) To say that no individual, Black or white, male or female can be truly free until after the revolution is to *divert* the revolutionary movement entirely. It is to ignore the historic

and contemporary evidence that many forces are necessary for revolution, Lenin made this quite explicit in his writings on the National Question, in which he indicated the importance of alliances with the peasantry and the oppressed national groups for the success of the Russian revolution — and this at a time when the peasantry was generally considered the “backwater of cretinism” by the Left.

To recognize that a truly self-conscious, independent women’s movement may, in this period, be a necessity for a truly human society after revolution, may be crucial to the revolution. It is in the *process* of fighting for freedom that people really develop, are called upon to exercise their creativity, their minds. If we don’t recognize that, then we might just as well appoint the “maximum leader” and take off to the Catskills to form the red army!

Perhaps some of our differences arise from the fact that I tend to see the Women’s Liberation movement differently, seeing “official” groups as part of a much broader movement. And, I have been dealing with it in terms of *potential*. I believe that what is being articulated by many groups is only the top of the iceberg; that when an idea is being articulated by the intellectual segment of a group, it might very well mean that “its time has come” historically. At the same time, these “official” groups have served a very important function, and they will continue to do so. You might not think that picketing a Miss America contest is terribly revolutionary — many things aren’t when seen in a vacuum — but that so-called “bourgeois” demonstration got a hell of a lot of publicity, and raised issues which have helped to make the movement grow. I think that going to small group meetings has been very important for many women in terms of political development; it has certainly taught me a lot of things. I simply refuse to write them off. It is extremely important to recognize one’s own chauvinism before one can even begin to think politically.

Our Plenum discussion in News & Letters in September brought out the fact that there are many voices of women’s liberation — we discussed welfare mothers and hospital workers specifically there. Here in Detroit, it appears that women in a variety of industries are beginning to form caucuses to fight both the company and the unions. This is, of course, still very much in embryo. Several newspaper articles have appeared which indicate this might be happening around the country. In one instance in California, a group of women workers were out on strike and called up the local women’s liberation group to ask for help on the picket line. This is the direction, helping to link up different women, that we in News & Letters should be taking.

Women who work in unionized shops or industries, although they must frequently confront their union as well as the company, are in a far better position than the majority of women workers — who are unorganized. And it is in the service industries, where the majority of women who work outside the home are employed, that there have been increasingly militant struggles for unionization. One example is, of course, the massive Local 1199 hospital workers campaign in New York, which was primarily a struggle by women, and particularly Black women. The same is true of the Charleston strike. Here in Detroit, there is likewise agitation going on

in the hospitals but, unfortunately, the unions involved seem to be hindering rather than helping.

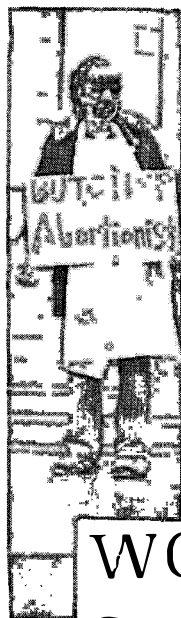
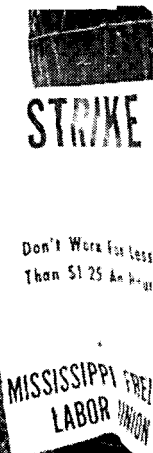
From my own experiences with union drives in the restaurant industry, there is incredible rage simmering beneath the surface, and, once it erupts, the women tend to be both more militant and better organizers than the men. (It seemed to me that men seemed to drift in and out of the service industry, whereas women understood only too well that they would always be there, that any job they got would be equally oppressive and equally low paid.)

Ultimately, the battles for women's liberation must be fought on the assembly lines, in the hospitals and restaurants and typing pools — where women are brought together in great numbers, where the enemy is not individual male X, but the institutions, the system itself which exploits women immeasurably. Where women have some measure of power — the power to withhold their labor — collectively. At the same time, it is from these struggles that a real comprehension of the oppression of women will flow, and its relation to the revolutionary movement as a whole. This doesn't mean that Marxist-Humanists have nothing to do except record what the many voices of women's liberation have to say. Theory comes *from* the movement of practice, but it does not stop there. We must pick up these new impulses and see how they relate to the theory of revolution "in general" that Marx developed and that we have made specific by working out the *Humanism* of Marxism for our day.



BERNADETTE DEVLIN, IRISH REVOLUTIONARY, 1970

## part II



WOMEN'S LIBERATION  
SPEAKS IN MANY  
VOICES

## "FREEDOM IS SOMETHING THAT ALL OF US NEED"

Mabel Hobsen

black ADC mother, Welfare Rights Organization, Detroit

(Several hundred ADC mothers here have kept their children out of school since September because they don't have the proper clothes to wear. They are asking for a school allowance of \$75 per child. They have been given \$11 per child.

They have staged sit-ins and demonstrations in their attempts to have the allotment increased, and have been supported by religious, labor and civil rights groups. But Gov. Milliken has insisted that, although he sympathizes with their situation, the state is unable to help them.

One of the mothers who has 12 children and has been threatened with a 90-day jail sentence and/or a \$50 fine if her children do not return to school at once, tells her story below:)

When you're on ADC, every day is an emergency situation.

There's a pressure on us all the time. They tell us we have to send our children to school. But when we send them, they send them back home. One of my daughters has been keeping up with her lessons from the girl next door. She's in the 7th grade. Their class was supposed to have a test and she knew she could pass it.

She put on some long wool pants and a heavy blouse and went to school to take the test. In an hour she was back home. When I called the school they told me I could send her when she was properly dressed. I had sent her in the best she had.

All this is having a tremendous effect on my children. They feel they are going to get behind, and they worry what they will say when they ever do get back to school. My 15 and 16 year olds say they would rather get married then go back to school now. My 15 year old went to jail on her own during one of our demonstrations. I've had six of my children go to jail with me. They know what we're fighting for, but they don't feel that they belong to their own group at school any more.

Gov. Miliken knows that any money that is allocated from the state level will be matched from Washington, but the politicians complain that the state would be taking too much responsibility. The truth is that it is the responsibility of the whole society. The ones who are really getting hurt are the children. They're being passed around like hot potatoes from the state to the county and back again.

Gov. Miliken said that the \$11 we got for clothes this fall will be followed by another \$11 in spring IF the welfare rolls stay the same. But things are getting worse every day. The welfare rolls will get bigger and bigger, not smaller. They make it impossible for us to get off welfare.

A woman in this society is in a world of turmoil. There is no such thing as a woman today. I don't feel like a woman anymore. I wish some day I could wake up and feel like a woman again. I would like to go back to those days.

But I can't because there are too many problems to overcome. You



have to accept the role of being man *and* woman.

Raising children in a society like this is turmoil. I have twelve of them. I have to be a father to my sons and a mother to my daughters. Then I have to be a father to my daughters and a mother to my sons. And this is all day long until they are old enough to be on their own.

I have never been a lazy woman. I have worked through every one of my twelve pregnancies. Sometimes I worked two jobs. Once I worked from 8:00 in the morning to 5:30 in the afternoon at a dry cleaners, and from 7:30 to 3:30 in the morning as a bar-maid. I got off work at 2:30 one morning and had my baby at 3:30.

I never heard of ADC until after my husband left me and I had to go to the hospital. I left Ohio, where all my children were born, and came to Detroit because I found out through Welfare Rights Organization that in Michigan I could buy a house. In Ohio you could work and supplement your ADC check, but in Detroit they deduct from your check if you work.

I moved because in Ohio I was paying \$136 rent for five rooms. There is a space law there that each child must have so much space, but there just were no big places available except in the projects. And there is so much discrimination that it would have been four years or more before I could have hoped to get in one of those.

Welfare is supposed to be a temporary thing. But I see my children falling into the same category I am in. I'm not worried about myself. I'm worried about the youngsters who will have to take over tomorrow. I know they have to get an education to get out of the rut we are in but I sometimes worry that if I scuffle and get them an education in this society the way it is now, they might grow up and forget to be human beings.

It doesn't make sense. If a mother abandons her child and the child is placed in a foster home, the foster mother gets \$300 a year for clothing allowance. But if a mother wants to raise her children herself, she is expected to do it on \$11 a year. They want to take my children because I refused to send them to school without sufficient clothing.

We went downtown to see the welfare officials and they said we could stay as long as we weren't a nuisance. But if we weren't a nuisance to them, they'd just walk by us all day long. I've blocked doors. That's the worst thing in the world according to them. The worst thing in the world, to me, is children who don't have enough clothes and enough to eat. I've had six of my children go to jail with me. They know what we're fighting for.

I started working with the Welfare Rights Organization in 1963. I was one of the founders. We walked 149 miles through Ohio and got a coalition, and spread out from coast to coast. We are a group of women who have joined together — a group of women who know what it is to fight, what it is to be walked on, what it is to be hit on the head. Ever since the first time I spoke out at a demonstration and one of the reporters printed our addresses in the papers, I have been getting all kinds of hate mail. I've been called unprintable names. One person asked where Eichmann was now that they needed him. Ano-

ther said I should be shot and my children should be gassed.

I have been dragged down the steps, and they made sure my body hit every step. I have been beaten on the head. But I didn't turn around. Because I was fighting for something I wanted — and it wasn't for me, but for somebody else.

Sometimes you have to fight for somebody else before you understand what freedom is. You never really have it, but you recognize what it is by going out to fight for it for somebody else. You think about the next generation that's coming behind you, and I'm not just thinking about my children, but my grandchildren.

Freedom is something that all of us need. Women really *need* it. Freedom is a beautiful thing — but as women, we will lose something in gaining our freedom. We better know what it is we are really aiming for. Freedom is a responsibility that you have to be able to shoulder. I know the burdens that will be on my shoulders. But I know that I can't live without these burdens.



## WHAT IT'S LIKE IN A SHOP

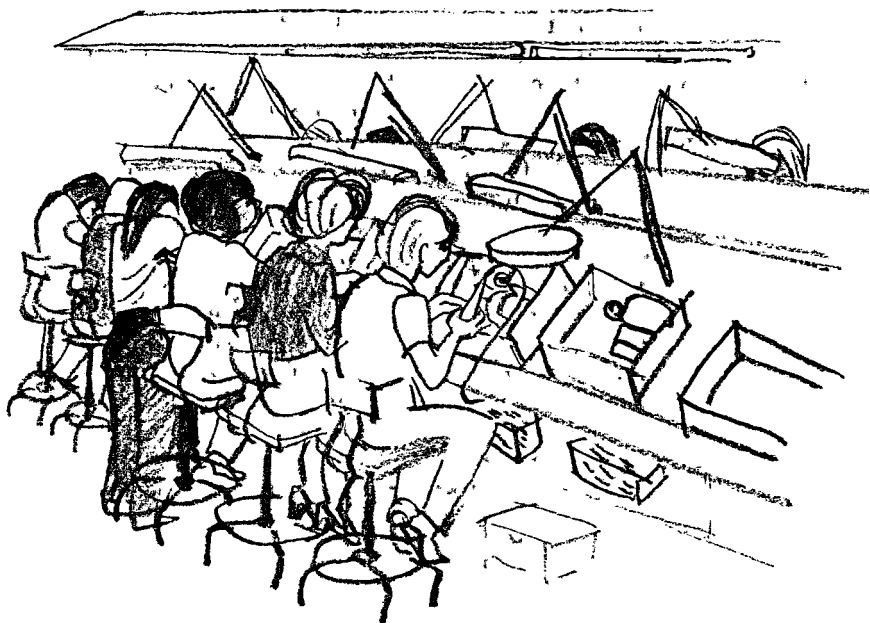
**Pam N.**  
**young white worker**

I don't know how many of the young women here are of middle class background. I'm not, but I guess I thought I was. My dad's a working man; he's on early retirement because of physical disability — he was in a job accident at Great Lakes Steel. Anyway, I went to college for a year. I decided not to continue for both financial and political reasons. I decided that I wanted to work in a factory for political reasons; but I found that, because I couldn't type, this was really the only kind of job open to me, aside from Go-Go dancing or working in a dry cleaners.

Because I was a young woman without dependents, the only factory that would hire me was a small non-union plant. It's really hard for a woman to get into any of the big factories, like Ford's or Chevrolet's because they have hundreds of women on call for any opening.

I started working at a shop which makes parts for the big companies. There are about 300 workers in this plant. About 2/3 of the workers are women. The women do the real hard labor, the shit jobs. The only men that were hired in there were either foremen or young men, some much younger than me, who were being trained as set-up men, and getting paid about twice as much as I was. Also, the men drove the hi-lo lifts which were used to move around the huge wooden crates, the same crates I had to move around by myself.

In my plant there were production quotas. I'd have to put out 900 pieces of production an hour, on a machine which was 3 times as big as me. The machines were old and very dangerous. In working them, the women would have to put their hands under the machines. Many women lost their hands, or parts of their hands, or became crippled because of these machines.



The machines break down all the time. On my first day, I was working on a machine for 15 minutes when it fell apart and hit me. I reported it, and the foreman laughed at me. He came back and fixed it using only one screw to hold it in place, although it was supposed to have two screws. I didn't want to keep working that machine— but I didn't want to lose the job right away either — so I kept working it. I worked it for about 10 minutes more, and the part flew off again.

You're supposed to make an average of 900 parts an hour. But they don't take into account the time it takes for the foreman to close a machine down; even though it may take 15 minutes for the foreman to get everything checked, to make sure there are enough parts there, etc.

The majority of the workers in the plant are women, but there are no women foremen. The foremen that work with the women — and I don't know if this is accidental or not — are all very good looking.

The day before I quit a young girl of 17, who was married and had a small baby, lost part of her finger in a machine. This was someone I knew personally, but I had seen many people with hurt hands going into First Aid. The day I quit, I was asked to work a machine that had already slipped 3 times that day. I had to put both hands under it. When it got to this point, I had to quit. The thing is, I was in a position where I *could* quit, most of the other women there couldn't.

During the two months that I worked in this plant I was working with a Collective for women's rights. The Collective was made up of some liberal middle-class women who went into this factory to organize working women. They never got anywhere because they could not accept the factory women as they were. They couldn't work with them. Here, you're working with people that are prejudiced. You

can't go in on top of them and try to preach revolution without first understanding them, digging what their whole scene is about. I quit the Collective before I quit the factory.

The Collective approached things the wrong way. Like they really tried to bring things down heavy on these women. They brought down things like imperialism and prejudice really heavy. Like, we're going to awaken you working class women, we're going to give you a flag to carry, and we're going to tell you how to carry it. Like, you're the people that can make the revolution, but we're going to tell you how.

The first thing and the only thing the collective has done so far is to put out a pamphlet, a great big pamphlet, supposedly on Vietnam. In it they ran down the Black question and prejudice in something less than three paragraphs. You can imagine how much that accomplished.

I think I've learned more from working in a factory than from any collective I've ever been in. I've learned from the women, I've learned more by sweating it, and rapping with the other women about their kids. I've learned about the especially unique problems that a woman in a factory has. When you're working in a factory as a woman, you're working as a man. You get rid of a lot of the prejudices I assume you run into in offices, where women work as women. In the factory they don't. The woman next to you is sweating just as hard as you are, she's gotten just as dirty, and her hands are just as ugly or more. She's worked just as many hours as you. And she can't kid you too much about her sweet home life. She knows better, because she's there.

I've got to leave, but I want to say one thing about this meeting. Like this whole room is really explosive, I've been feeling it all night. I can feel about three or four different things that are going on here. There's the young radical women's groups here. Then there's this woman, a white worker. She came here tonight off the line. There's the black women, and there's News & Letters. I really think we must listen to each other; we must hear what each group has to offer to the whole. That's the most important thing right now.



## WOMEN IN TEACHING

A.H.S., teacher

"Teaching is a woman's job," people say. "It's so nice to have a profession in which you can mingle with little children, which gives you the summer off and which doesn't take too much effort." But those who say this haven't been in schools lately, haven't had to cope with sophisticated curriculum, with aggressive children (from six to sixteen), with stubborn, rigid administrators who hold their positions by virtue of their being men — hardly through competence or education. Those people don't have to carry papers home for evening or weekend work; they don't have to take courses, workshops, or read current material to keep up with the demands of the job.

I started being a teacher thirty years ago. In that time I have acquired three degrees, have been recognized in professional publications, have written curriculum and have spoken to school groups on aspects of education. But the highest I have been able to rise in the educational hierarchy has been to that of department chairman. When I apply for an administrator's job, although I have the credentials and am supposed to have the kind of personality that works well with people, I have always been told, "Why are you so ambitious? You don't really want to bother with administrative details. Stick to teaching." Yet young men with very little to recommend them have risen to superior jobs, one after another, all around me.

When I applied for the job I hold now — chairman of a large department in a high school — I was told, "We've been looking for a man for two years. But, I guess we'll not be able to find anyone with your experience, so you have the job." I was also told that my department had too many women in it. I was instructed to hire more men.

Educational literature is constantly boasting of the increase of men in teaching positions. Now, with the teaching shortage over, it will be more and more difficult for women to get jobs; the tendency will be to employ men. Men, who have been avoiding the draft, apply for teaching jobs in the inner city. Some of these young men are bright and are good teachers, but only for a short period of time. They are hardly career teachers and their activity is peripheral because they know they will not be at it for very long. Yet, administrators always say, "Beware of the young girl teacher. She'll get married and pregnant before you know it." It's true that some women do go into teaching, then marry and have children. But many women come back to their jobs shortly. Their attendance record is good; they are conscientious and serious. I had two small children when I went back to work. I had to pay exorbitantly for child care; but in ten years I have never been absent because of a child of mine having a problem or being ill. I have never missed a deadline.

I don't want to end my career stuck in the same job, doing the same thing year after year. I want to use my skills to grow and develop. But I don't see any chance of anything except holding on to my tenure until it's time to retire.



## UNTIL OUR MINDS ARE FREE

Nasara Arabi

Since the birth of 20th century man we Americans have achieved perhaps the most technologically complex and advanced society in the history of the world. What of the woman in this society? Has she advanced as rapidly and as extensively as "man"? No!! We, as women, should be asking why.

Women in the U.S. make up a majority of the population, yet in the professional, scientific, and skilled occupations we are a very tiny minority. This is not because women don't have the physical or mental capability to do the work, but because of the myth that it is "man's work", and women have for too long accepted these views. They have allowed themselves to become the servants of men by accepting the most menial tasks in the business world as well as in the home. Instead of emancipating themselves they have allowed the traditional discrimination in the home to carry over to the office.

The housewife who is paid nothing is expected to work twelve hours a day and then be grateful that her husband works eight hours and condescends to support her. Those women who try to escape from the house by working at a paid job end up with two full time jobs, because they soon find they're still doing the same amount of housework as well as their job. The vast majority of men refuse to do much at home because "women's work" is demeaning to them and because they feel that only their jobs are hard, while their wife's job is unimportant and less demanding than theirs. Actually, if the truth were told, men would not put up with the working conditions, salaries, and amount of work expected that women do in their jobs.

Let's also examine what happens when a woman goes out to look for a job. For example, what criteria is used to judge her qualifications for an office job? Contrary to popular opinion she is not judged on her intelligence, skills, or past experience. All that is secondary to the main qualification: her sex appeal and appearance. If she passes that test **then** her skills are considered, not before, and even then if she looks good enough the qualifications are stretched: How many 180 pound ugly secretaries get hired no matter how fast they type and take shorthand? No employer would admit to you, and often not even to himself, that he hires this way but anyone who has ever worked in the personnel field knows this to be true.

If a woman educates herself to try to escape from the secretarial and general office routine her problems have only begun. She goes out with BA (or MA, or PhD) in hand and unless she sticks to government jobs in traditionally woman oriented occupations such as teaching and social work she finds herself constantly told: "Yes, I know you have your degree but can you type?" The business world has no place for a woman college graduate. In fact a male high school dropout makes more money than a female college graduate according to one survey I read. Women are not even considered in most companies

for management trainee positions and even when they are, their promotions are much slower than those of a less capable man.

Women who aren't educated and who, for one reason or another, can't or won't do office work are in the worst position of all. The only things left are jobs at bare minimum wage, or less in sales or hospital work, or factory jobs that pay a bit better but have really terrible working conditions and are much harder and lower paying than men's factory jobs. These jobs are practically slave labor and are the jobs taken by the desperate who have to work and are the most exploited group of all: lower class women.

What can we do to wage our battle for our liberation? First of all, we must liberate our minds from the weight of a heritage of demeaning ourselves. Until our minds are free and we *feel* equal to men we cannot begin the task of changing the society we live. We must liberate ourselves and then help our sisters to liberate themselves so that together we can tear down the old and build a new world of dignity and pride in which we can all use our abilities to their fullest extent.



## A WOMAN IN A "MAN'S" JOB

Mary O.  
cab driver

I work at a "man's" job, driving a cab in New York City. To me, it's better than sitting at a desk and shuffling someone else's papers all day. When I go out in the morning there's no boss breathing down my neck except the meter, of course. I get along fine with the other drivers at the company; they know I do the same hard day's work and that I'm not just hacking for "kicks". And we get along fine because my boyfriend works there too.

But out on the streets I have to defend myself as best I can because if you're a woman cabbie, you must be some kind of FREAK. All women get abuse from men on the streets; I get stared and giggled at, pointed out, and am the object of the kind of coarse remarks which many men consider compliments. When these men are in my cab, it is even worse. They are all types — white, black, latin@s, young, old, hippies, businessmen. One of my defenses is to say that I am married when asked. A "no" to that question must be some kind of green light, but even the most persistent macho is respectful of My Being Married. I have developed a thick skin, though certain remarks just can't go by unanswered; a woman's freedom is so horrible a thought to so many men that I've felt in danger on occasion of a couple of discussions. Often I've been told "my man" must be some kind of \_\_\_\_\_ to let me be out working at "this" job, and that I should be home having HIS babies! However, many working women are glad to see another woman behind the wheel. These have been my most inter-

esting rides because we have been able to talk just as PEOPLE, and because we face many of the same things on the job. One woman told me she felt safer, too, because women don't drive like maniacs and she didn't have to worry about anybody making a pass at her. It seems they miss a lot of sick cases when prospective drivers are screened at the Hack Bureau.

Of course they didn't miss me, just because I'm a WOMAN. I had to wait for hours to talk to the psychiatrist there, even though I passed the psychological exam. They don't even bother to give a driving test, though that would be more to the point; I *know* there are many men who equate virility with reckless driving. But I have to fight the myth of the "woman driver". Though I've been bumped in the city, I've never even come close to having an accident in nine years of driving and more than 1500 hours of hacking. But when some people get in my cab and see that I'm a young woman, they lock the door, grab the strap, and huddle in a corner. I've even had people on the street stop hailing as I went to pick them up, for the same reason. Once in heavy traffic a man bumped me and dented his car. It was obviously his fault and he started to drive on, but when he saw I was a woman, he got out of his car and started to yell that I should learn how to drive! However, I've been complimented many times on my driving, especially by other women.

It's a rough job, but no rougher for a woman than for a man. All cabbies have to put up with air pollution, traffic, and the general inhuman mess which is called New York City. All cabbies see and are part of the ratrace called capitalism. (We have even been automated, in the form of "hotseat" meters; we have to pay for any error.) As a driver, I see the need for a total change all around me, every day; not just on my own job, but in this whole dehumanized system. But as a woman, too, I believe even more that there must be a change in the most basic human relation, that of man to woman.



## CLOTHES AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Nancy Homer  
Women's Liberation, Detroit

I dress casually and simply: I wear jeans, shirt or sweater, short jacket, and comfortable shoes. My feet hurt if I wear flimsy shoes, so I usually wear boots with inch thick soles that make me feel as if I'm walking on air. I'd be very comfortable, if it weren't for other people.

I've tried to decide whether people are staring at me, or whether I'm self-consciously uncomfortable around them. Maybe I walk around with a scowl on my face that attracts attention, or merely imagine what's happened to me. But I'm no daydreamer, and I have examples to prove that I haven't imagined this staring. Sometimes I look angry;



I don't trust people on the street anymore than anyone else. Usually, though, I'm walking, thinking, or looking into store windows, at buildings, or at the street. I am self-conscious; I'm conscious that I'm comfortable in my clothes; I don't, however, feel embarrassed about my dress. After all, I'm not bizarre.

People have a right to look around, but I remember a few general rules: eye contact shouldn't last for more than a few seconds; you don't smile as if you thought a person crazy; you don't talk about that person in front of her/him; you don't point; and you don't make obscene comments or gestures. But I initiate these reactions. Are people bored or curious? Do they think I'm a hippie, lesbian, or advocate of Unisex? Do they worry because I'm not a "lady"?

When I walk down a street I'm stared at. It happens every day. People concentrate on my body instead of my face, and decide whether "it" is woman or man. It isn't good-natured; they grimace or smirk and walk on, or make a comment.

They complain to each other as if my clothes were a personal affront. One says, "She's a man." Another, "What's she trying to prove?" Or "These kids... you can't tell one from the other these days." One basic complaint centers around not being a "lady". After standing in a bank line for twenty minutes, I shifted position and turned. An old "gentleman" blurted out, "Is you a LADY?" And I answered to twenty people in the line, "No, not a lady. A woman."

They react strongly because I don't fit into their feminine categories. My fashion type isn't Paris, Harper's Bazaar, or Vogue, secretary-office-career, traditionally feminine, or not especially hippie. I don't care about fashion. Even men are supposed to care, although they can pass with being neat and clean. So I have both men and women on my back. I should be fashionable; I've got to be recognized as some fashion type, and preferably as a nice girl, who wears comfortable clothes once in a while, but otherwise conforms to some feminine clothes pattern. They ask me to modify: "Please grow your hair long, straight, and wear hair ribbons, so we can recognize you as a girl who is caught wearing these clothes." Or "Please smile charmingly, so we can tell you're a charming little girl."

To comments, I either answer or not. Obscenity is harder to take: It's usually shouted at me as I walk alone on a quiet street. I affect some men (and it is always men) to such an extent that they need to violently attack me for it. By obscene gestures and crude words they tell me I'm wrong, that they are MEN and aren't I sorry I'm not one. They never stop to think that I don't want to be like them. I simply enjoy dressing comfortably and the way I like.

I have repeated too often "dressing the way I like," but it's the only answer for these critics. My clothes are part of a change in attitude: real friends accept my clothes and this change. Other friends can't get past the clothing. One observed, "I can always tell when you're angry; you go out and buy such ugly clothes." (He wanted me to wear low-cut blouses, slinky dresses, high-heels — my feet would die — and the rest.) He couldn't understand that I wasn't interested in that fashion pattern and slinky dresses didn't fit my personality.

I do have a personality and I question whether or not it must be low-cut. I responded, "My clothes may be ugly, but they're not as ugly as yours." I also gave him a calm explanation about my clothes. They were not ugly and it was his own prejudices that kept him from realizing that.

His prejudices against my clothes are the same as society's. A woman - cannot dress comfortably, or the way she likes, either because it is drummed into her to dress "femininely", or because there aren't more comfortable clothes in women's departments - one obvious example is women's shoes.

But one must question, in the end, why people act with such hostility towards a girl (who considers herself a woman) who does not conform to the "womanly" standards this society sets for her. One would conclude that the only way a woman can "rebel" is by her dress - since society thinks it's so much more important than what she thinks.



## THE FACTORY PITS WOMEN AGAINST EACH OTHER

**Joanna M. Jackson**  
**black cannery worker**

I work in a factory preparing food. Recently, the women who make up one of the departments were fussing and angry because the work was slow and the night shift hours were cut down. The older women were squawking more than the young unmarried women, who need the money more because of not having husbands. The new boss lady picks favorites out of the department, so these old married women would go to her with some sob story, and get put on day shift for weeks at a time, instead of taking their turns on the night shift. The others had to work a lot of night shifts because of it, so they began to get angry.

Under the old boss, the highest seniority employees had preference over the lower ones, but this new boss makes her own rules. One woman who works night shift all the time asked to go on the day shift for one day in order to go to court. The boss had her take the day off instead. Another woman, one of the best workers, also wanted her shift changed just for one day, and the boss wouldn't do it. Yet she was working some of these married women who are all lower in seniority on day shift only.

There is another boss who has a member of her family working under her. She changed one person's shift so the relative could go to a party. Another time there was supposed to be a bus strike and the boss changed a woman to her relative's shift so this person could ride her home. The one she changed raised sand because she had a few other women she was taking home on the shift she was on, and besides, she wasn't even friends with the relative.

A friend was telling me about the evening shift in her department. There is a stoolie girl on it who often takes the boss home. One night when there were six or seven sorting tables and only two working tables, this big stoolie boss girl, as the women call her, told her table when they

finished sorting not to help the other table. Certain white women, when black women are sorting, have a way of putting all the food on their table and less where the table is all white, so naturally the black women work harder. The white women know this and try to get to the job early and get an all-white table, so sometimes this makes all the black women work at one table. That night, the table that had black women got twice as much to do as the table with only white women at it. So the first table decided to slow up and take their time. Well, this stoolie told the boss, and the next day they put everyone from that table on the evening shift for the next week too. All the women with less seniority were put on the day shift. Some of the women blew their tops.

A few of the women told the main union steward how they were working some women too much day shift and not going by the union rules. He said that someone had called the union office and reported what was going on, but they wouldn't give their name, so the union wouldn't do anything about it. But the next week the day shift boss called some of the women to come to work on day shift. It seems she was afraid of getting in trouble, since she knew she was reported to the union and the head lady boss.

A few weeks ago, the women in one department decided what they needed was a stewardess, so they went to the union and the union told them they could pick a woman from their department. They had a man for a steward, but he could care less about what the women's problems were. One day right before the election the boss came in and told the women to vote for the two older women who were running, because she intended to have the three younger women work in another department most of the time. Now, you and I know she had no right to tell anyone who to vote for. She knew the women she wanted them to pick would be for anything she did, if she just did half way right by them. One woman told me, "When she told us how to vote, I told the girls no matter how we voted, one or the other of the older women would get it. The one they wanted was a dumb white woman who does everything anybody tells her. She has no mind of her own. What better person for a union to want in. She won, too. I figured she would when I say a man steward, before the election, talking to her personally and taking her to the office for a special talk. I told the women, as soon as she is educated by them into their tactics, she still won't do a thing to help anybody. And if she does, we will all have to suffer for it." But a few days ago I heard they had a problem in that department, and the new stewardess wrote up a three page grievance and came in early to see the head boss about it. The "dumb girl" may have fooled everybody!

There is a shift in one department with only one black woman on it — token integration, I call it, because they have six regular black women who do the same job and they could even up the score.

Now they are working the old women against the young. On one shift they let the older women come to work at one time and the young ones a half hour later, and everyone gets off at the same time. I just can't wait until someone explodes.

I think we are all being punished for some women going to the union

by not letting us make any money at all for Christmas. Every year there has been overtime work at this time of year, but this year nothing, not even regular time. No one can make anything unless you work like a fool, and this I refuse to do. I can work fast, but not just for the sake of being greedy and fighting over piece work, and this is what I think they want the people to do.

\* \* \*

About the Liberation of Women — I have been hearing more and more about this on the radio, and someone I know whose husband works in a mine said that one night the men were drinking in a bar and two women came in and talked to them about their jobs. The next day these same two women showed up at the mine employment office for jobs. They asked for specific jobs; they didn't want to start at the bottom and work their way up. The woman said the boss told them they couldn't hire them because there were no separate wash rooms for women. The women said they had better start building them because they were coming back. My friend thought they were funny. I told her they didn't have to be, that these women probably learned the jobs during the war and felt they could do them as well as any man.

I thought about all the secretaries who have been nothing but a secretary all their lives, and some of them should be bosses, because they do run the business while the bosses are out. I agree that women should be executives and bosses just like men. If we had a woman for president the world would be a much better place to live in. I think, too, if a woman does the work a man does she should get the same wage, even if she is married. This thing of having a scale for men and one for women shouldn't be, because some women work harder than men and don't get paid for it. -- It's true in office work as well as factories; I know this to be a fact. When the time comes that women want to really stand up against all the ridiculous things that are pitted against them, I will walk right beside them.

## A WALL STREET JOURNAL

**Susan van Gelder**  
**temporary office worker**

Rosemary came around the desk and shrieked. "Oh! I hurt my leg!" she hollered. There, in the middle of her thigh, was a long, faint scratch.

For the rest of the afternoon the conversation was dominated by Rosemary's wound. "You are such a klutz, Ro," Susan, another secretary, kept saying. Tony, Rosemary's boss, offered to wash the wound. Rosemary was horrified. "No!" she cried, "You'll give me blood poisoning!"

"Now I'm gonna get a huge black and blue," she complained to Susan. "I am such a klutz!"

And on and on. Trade was slow in this large stockbroker's office, and Rosemary's accident was a welcome change from the more usual forms of work-stretching and time-filling. Nevertheless, I found her preoccupation with the little scrape, and her self-deprecation, excessive and strangely frightening.

Although this event took place on my second day of work, I had already seen great differences between the male role of stockbroker and the female role of secretary. For example, men filled idle time by discussing the market trends and transactions and relevant world news, as well as with banter and teasing; but the women gossiped only about their personal lives, or telephoned friends, or fussed with hair and make-up. There was a teletype machine from the *Wall Street Journal* which continually provided news bulletins, but no woman except me ever read its print-out. One woman who had been working there a month did not even know what the machine was, although it was clearly labelled. The clothing of these women seemed as if it should be sexy: dresses were short, tight, bright, and stylish, but the overall effect was unreal and repellent. I sensed that fundamentally women here were objects, not only in the eyes of the men, but in their own opinion as well.

I was working in this office as a temporary clerk. The training I received would have been more appropriate to program a computer, not to teach a human being. "You put these letters in this blank space," I would be told — never why. If I asked another woman for the reason, usually she could not give it, whether she had been there a long time or not. Very often someone would give an unfamiliar order; then, when I was too slow, impatiently do it himself. And that was the end of it, unless I demanded an explanation for future reference. There were stock guidebooks which explained a lot of the symbols used in the clerical work, but the only way I discovered them was by exploring people's desks. So it appeared, in general, that the women were taught their jobs, and carried them out, entirely by rote.

I disliked sitting idle, so one day I brought in a newspaper. I was told not to read it there, even if I had no work to do. It didn't look right. After that I would read paperbacks under the desk, or write letters, but people gave me strange looks whenever I was absorbed in something. One morning Susan asked me to help her. I was delighted to be busy and worked away at it for a couple of hours. Susan suddenly noticed and said, very tense, "Stop! I want you to stop!" She took the pages I had written over to her boss. "Do you see how much there is? Eight pages and that's only half!" she wined. She returned to her desk and told Rosemary, "I'm getting a temp. in to do this. They must be crazy to give me so much to do!" I was amazed. The task would have taken one or, at most, two days of steady work.

Such attitudes, however, make sense in the context of the work. The financial world is remote from humans and their needs; moreover, the women have very mechanical roles to play in that world. The men did not seem to want real people to work for them. The office had every convenience, from electric pencil sharpeners to automatic tele-

phone-calling machines. These were by no means vital to the functioning of the office; they were status symbols for a hierarchy whose highest expression might have been robot-secretaries. Furthermore, I don't think it was accidental that men were the brokers and women the secretaries. The sole woman visiting stockbroker was analagous to the one "Negro" family in a small town.

The whole situation made the women very insecure — as unreal people who had tasks that were totally meaningless. This, I believe, is a condition which creates that false bright sexuality I spoke of, and the intense alienation and antagonism among the women. The familiar hostility under the sickeningly-sweet conversation of all women in such a situation. "The girls in the office" — a very apt phrase. How can they grow into real women? I don't really know — by getting out of Wall Street and into work where their performance directly affects the lives of people? Here, at least, "Women's Liberation" means "people getting down to real things."



## **FIGHTING THE COMPANY AND THE UNION: WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO DEFINE OURSELVES AS WOMEN**

**Betty Thomas Mayen**  
**white worker and union activist**

Recently I went to work as a vending truck driver, servicing food machines in the Great Lakes Steel complex in Ecorse, Michigan, the largest steel mill in the state. I worked for the Automatic Retailers of America, one of the biggest food and vending machine companies in the country, who, by the way, retain as their lawyer Clement F. Haynsworth.

I met and worked there with four women who had been fighting a lonely, gutting and debilitating battle for better working conditions, promotions, and upgrading for easier and better paying jobs. They began to work together at first hesitantly, but then with more confidence.

The initiative was taken recently by a woman of around 34 years old from Alabama, married and a mother. She was trained as a service person to the vending machines (traditionally a man's job), which has better pay and easier work than the jobs that women usually do there — lugging around heavy trays of food to the vending machines and filling them. Although she had trained for the service job — to repair the machines — the company refused to hire her for that job. She was advised by a 61 year old woman worker who has long years of seniority and who is a bit of a sage on union organization, and who, though she is not fully aware of it, is a woman of vengeance and justifiably so for her own sex. The older woman advised that she go to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, which now has in its set up the words "Sex" and "Age". The Civil Rights Commission decided against the company, and awarded this woman \$2,000 in back wages, and forced them to give her the service job salary and status until the next job opening for service, at which time she must be given the position.

Another young woman of more or less middle class origin, 28, dj-

divorced and the mother of a child, has been fighting with the company and the union (AFL-CIO, Local 1064, United Catering, Restaurant, Bar and Hotel Union) for a service person job, and she has been denied the job by the company and blocked by the union.

There is also a Black woman, 20 years old, who is a student, divorced, and has a child. She is an outspoken militant who the company is harassing in an effort to force her to quit. Her audacity, drive and guts, her insistence on being treated with respect as a Black woman, drives the company and the union boys right out of their trees.

The fifth woman is myself. I'm 45, married and have three children. The company "terminated" me 3 days before my 30th day there, the day which would have placed me in the union. Two of the days were my earned days off; on what would have been my 30th day, the company worked an unauthorized, casual employee (a woman) on my job. This was a violation of the union contract. I was advised of this by the older women in our group. She said that it was illegal and that I should fight for my job.

She gave me a copy of the union contract, and I went to the Local 1064 union president to file a grievance. He reluctantly told me to do so. I filed the grievance properly as advised by my friends and cited chapter and verse which knocked the company and the union right on their collective asses. The women who advised me felt that the company got rid of me because I was friendly with them.

Subsequently, the steward was told by the Local 1064 president not to file my grievance. The company told me that they did not have to tell me why I was terminated, in fact they wouldn't even tell me if I was terminated. At first they said I was being laid-off after fighting with them, they slipped and said I was fired.

I filed a charge of discrimination for reasons of my sex against the company and the union with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. The other women are hanging in there giving the company and the union hell on up-grading, bidding on better jobs, and new contract demands, etc. We keep in touch with one another by phone and occasional friendly gatherings. The two cases are pending with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission now.

What do we have here? I believe that women are re-defining *themselves* as women and demanding and fighting for better jobs and bucking the whole male supremacist, oppressive, exploitative set-up of their situation. They are hanging together because one woman alone can be cut down, and this they have learned.

Eldridge Cleaver, in his book **Post-Prison Writing and Speeches**, quotes Stokely Carmichael: "The most important aspects of struggle for Black Power was the right to define. Black people have been the victims of white America's definitions. White people define Black people as inferior, as Negroes, as niggers, as second-class citizens. ...But now Black people must demand the right to define themselves."

**Women, one half of humanity, yet viciously oppressed, must also demand the right to define themselves.** They are learning that to fight and struggle for better jobs, upgrading, and better pay, is not un-feminine. In many cases, they are fighting for their damned lives. They know that

pulling an eight hour shift and going home to another five or more hours of household drudgery is gut rending, mind killing, and that it must cease. They are given low pay for the first and no pay for the latter. They are learning that they are more than child-bearers and rearers, household drudges, and a piece of ass.

Yes, we are half of humanity — and the humanizing force in society. The oppressed morals are superior to that of the oppressor, and the slave's morals are superior to that of the slave master. The great majority of oppressed, because they know the horror of being oppressed, will only free, never oppress. We demand not only the right to define ourselves as women, but to end all oppression of all people. Now, and by any means necessary. What is needed now I believe is an educating, self-learning, re-defining process which includes the all important sphere of the relationship between the sexes. Right on Ladies, Right on!



## THE BIAS AGAINST WOMEN RENTERS

Estelle E.  
office worker

As a woman and a mother who works, I have found greater discrimination in housing than in employment. This has not been in one city or state only. There is a wide-spread bias against women renters from one-parent households.

Questions such as, "Where is your husband?", "How do you support yourself?", "Who will take care of your child?", are followed by statements such as, "We don't rent to divorcees," "We don't allow small children," "We don't allow pre-teens or teens."

Landlords look upon women with children as being incapable of running a home without a man. And I'm using "landlord" as a collective term — the women landlords are as bad as, and many times worse than, the men landlords, because they manage with words and/or looks to refer to "moral character."

The fight for Women's Liberation today centers around white, middle-class young women. Without actively including black, brown, or yellow women the fight is one-sided.

All must participate to end the exploitation. But to do this it must be understood that it will take a *complete and total* change of society. Women can't be free regardless of the extent of changes concerning only them, if men are not, and vice-versa.

It is absurd to think that (1) women should fight only for their own freedom, and (2) race doesn't make a difference because all women are exploited.

A society which exploits, exploits all men, women, workers, students, blacks, whites, browns and yellows. Only the degrees are different. And one person or one segment of the society can't be free if all are not.



## BLACK WORKING WOMEN WILL REBEL,

L.D., black student

The black woman occupies a unique position on the occupational-economic ladder of capitalist exploitation. That is, she is on the lowest rung. For some, strange, totally inexplicable reason she is the most exploited — member of the labor force while simultaneously encountering the least amount of capital, (a neat trick). She is the last to be hired, and the first, to be fired, because of her two original sins — she had the audacity to be born black and the stupidity to be a woman. Yet, it is because of her original "sins" that she will perhaps play a leading if not baffling (to those who consider her to be a sweet but dumb Aunt Jemima) role in the restructuring of American society. She has the least to lose — the caring for Mrs. Crabgrass's snotty baby; and the most to gain — fulfillment of her blackness and her womanhood. However, it seems apparent that the major impetus for the black woman's rebellion will not come from the professional black woman, but from the vast working class.

Quite often the professional black woman has it "made" in a materialistic sense (discounting closed housing, few promotions, etc.). Also, she probably has a working husband. Her immediate needs are cared for. Her mere sense of identification with the struggles of the black working class woman does not match the extra thrust the working class woman receives after a soup bone, greens, and cornbread dinner; nor the hopelessness, despair, and bitterness she feels as she senses the "future" that her children have in store. "

It is because of, also, her deplorable \$1.60 an hour working conditions that she will not in all likelihood wait for the Great Rebellion of the New Left before asserting herself. It is because of such hard-hitting and outrageous stunts as the one pulled recently at Wayne State University that she will unleash her rightful fury. The University, in an attempt to silence the demands of the largely black cafeteria workers, shifted the operation of the cafeteria to Canteen, Inc. The new management moved quickly, deceitfully, and racistly. Immediately, the workers, many of whom had worked at the University for as many as 15 years, were stripped of their seniority and placed on a three month period of probation.

The bitterness of the employees at this tricky move can easily be sensed in the cafeteria. There is an extra amount of thrust behind each plate of spaghetti "whirled at" the customer. Each dish of ice cream is topped by a chocolate frown. "So great is this inner bitterness that it is even directed toward black customers.

Yet, unhappily for all the "Canteens" and "W.S.U.'s" in the U.S., the customers are only the "displacement objects" — the real objects will soon be attacked. General work stoppages, sporadic violence, and demonstrations will perhaps, in the '70s, replace the "whirled spaghetti." The press may call the rebelling black working-class woman wild; *Newsweek* may forgive "her behavior" as being an "outgrowth of her white woman envy" (it's the latest craze and may even replace her penis envy). *Time* and Moynihan will gleefully and hopefully call attention to her rebellion as further evidence of the "crumbling 'Negro' family structure." "Some"

black domestics will privately reprimand her for spoiling a good thing. Yet, the older black women who can remember slaving for \$2 a week may finally experience a private sense of fulfillment.



## **"WE SHALL NOT BE SOLD"**

**Anne Chapdelaine**  
**white working student**

Women's oppression is not only a class question but one of principle and self-development as well. Treating it as strictly an economic contradiction cramps the complexity of it into the circle of either the home or the factory and fails to take into consideration all its perverted manifestations in the rest of society.

Frequently we fail to point out and criticize examples of male chauvinism because we allow other things to snow them over and cover them up. For instance, when someone like Joe Namath says: "I like my Johnnie Walker red and my girls blonde", and he likes his Cadillacs pink and his lamina rugs white; but if he should decide he wants his Cadillacs blonde and his girl pink, she better paint herself pink, because she's a commodity just like the rest and if she wants to get paid for she had better look right.

This leads to the problem of the double standard of morals men have going for them. It is not only acceptable for a man to sleep around outside of marriage but it actually enhances his reputation. Just the opposite is true for a woman; if she is not a virgin then she is a used toy and the going demand for wives is that they be new toys.

There is also a different level of self-respect for men. It is perfectly all right for a woman to take her clothes off to music in a glass cage or on a stage and to wiggle her ass a little, but if a man did the same thing he would look ridiculous. And on this subject it seems like a lot of people who are supposed to be radical are extremely reactionary. I get tired of the low level of discussion that the topics of strippers and prostitutes generate. For strippers especially, it is difficult to get a thought any deeper than "if she enjoys what she's doing, why shouldn't she do it?" I might enjoy shooting smack too, while I'm up, but the come-down is hard and the life that goes with it is pretty empty. It is impossible to look at stripping as an isolated act that only takes place for ten minutes on stage, and not to recognize that there is a whole tragic life style that goes with it.

The theoretical development of the woman question is crawling along at a painfully slow pace and this is tolerated (as if to say that since we've waited 10,000 years for men to accept the fact that there is a problem, we may as well wait a couple thousand more until it is solved). One reason for this semi-stagnant development is that people fail to go through a total re-analysis on things they have always taken for granted; and also because they fail to recognize that just because the oppression is subtle, that doesn't mean it isn't real.

Every economic system known to man since his origins has done its best to make women lead a dependent and abject life. First, economically because it has made it impossible for her to compete in the market place, and second, socially and psychologically because it has bound and shackled her to the man's castle by making security so great a need that it blots out the need for freedom. Wherever men have been slaves or serfs, women have been slaves of slaves and serfs of serfs. Wherever men have been used for nothing but their ability to apply brute strength and muscle, the women's breasts that nursed them to life have been scorned as weak. And whenever a man has had to subject himself to the most depraved of acts to make a dollar, he at least knows that he did not have to resort to the most depraved of all which is the sale of his own body.

It is simple enough to see that women receive lower wages than men in factories and no wages at all in the home, but we must go a step further and recognize that the tentacles of economic oppression have reached far out into all types of social structures and that they have poisoned all hope for true human relations between men and women until these contradictions have been solved. But they will not be solved until we escalate the war against ignorance. And women will not even be on the right track going the right way until they recognize and struggle against all manifestations of that contradiction.



## HOW LONG MUST WE WAIT?

Mary Curry  
black hospital aide

I got off ADC when I got the chance to get a job in a hospital here as an aide. My first day at work was supposed to be spent observing and getting acquainted with the hospital. But when the week was out, I was still confused about what my routines were supposed to be, because there was just so much I was expected to do. I could never seem to catch up.

When the hospital is short of help because of absenteeism, which is most of the time, those who come in are supposed to make up the work of those who haven't. The work is very hard.

Right after I hired in, I asked an Aide who had been there longer if there was a union in the hospital. She said there was supposed to have been a union coming since March and that when she had hired in at \$1.60 an hour, they had promised her a raise in two months. But it never came. We aides still get \$1.60 an hour.

We wondered what had happened. We thought maybe the employees had become afraid of losing their jobs. Some had been working at the hospital for years and were afraid they might not find other jobs after 13 or 14 years, if they lost that one. We knew that unless everyone voted together to get the union in, some employees would be thrown out as "troublemakers."

The first union meeting I had a chance to attend, the union spokesman from Local 79 AFL-CIO sounded real good. He answered questions

from the floor about employee grievances and conditions of work, and explained what the contract would offer the employees, especially in the line of pay-raises. Starting pay for aides would become \$1.75, house-keepers \$1.60, first and second cooks, \$1.95 and \$2.15. They also discussed holiday pay, double-shift work, time-and-a-half-pay when you are called in on your day off, and a 15 minute coffee break for the afternoon. As the union man answered the questions, it all sounded great. But nothing has changed yet.

How long can we be expected to live off the low wages we are getting with the cost of living going up all the time? One worker said that in 1966 she was getting \$1.01 an hour. Now she is getting \$1.44. All people are entitled to dignity and unity. We have to get together and demand it.

I left ADC to take this job and my check isn't much more than when I was on ADC. I used to get \$112 every two weeks; at the hospital I get \$115 every two weeks after deductions. With three children and myself to take care of, that doesn't go very far.

We hope the union is one that will really represent the poor working people and protect their rights. But we can't help wondering. The union man that is supposed to be speaking for us is very well-dressed and well-fed. He doesn't appear to us to have any problems putting food on his table. What we want to know is how long must we wait for a decent salary to feed our families? From March to October is just too darn long!

*~~~~~*

## THE FRUEHAUF CLERICAL WORKERS' STRIKE

Woman striker

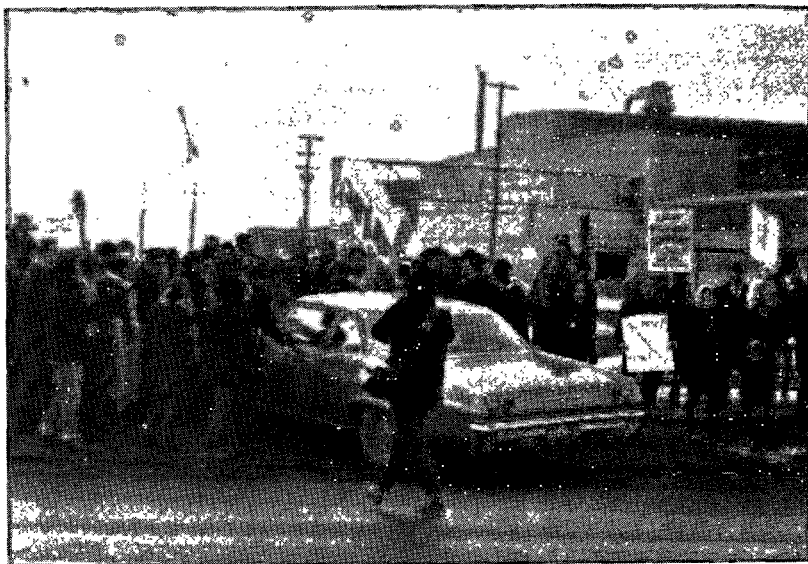
reprinted from N&L, March 1970

*Three hundred clerical workers, 80 per cent of them women, were on strike against Fruehauf Trailer in Detroit for over 6 months this year. The office workers elected UAW Local 889 in May of 1969, and the company refused to negotiate a contract until a year later. The following story was written by a striker in March.*

In recent weeks, the police have increasingly clubbed and arrested picketing strikers and supporters. The company's latest responses to the picket lines have been to build a cat-walk from the parking lot to the building so the scabs no longer have to face the strikers, and to try to get an injunction against mass picketing.

The cops have been really brutal. They've hit several people with their clubs, and they're always shoving the women — punching us in the chest with their sticks.

Fruehauf has been holding out on negotiating a contract because they really don't want us to have a union. The factory workers in their plants are unionized — they're in the UAW — but they're men. Most of us clerical workers are women. Office workers have never had a union at a Fruehauf plant.



The company is really horrible to their employees, especially to women. For example, my supervisor there is a woman. She should have been given a promotion five years ago, but they kept hiring men off the street to take the job. The men kept quitting, so finally the company gave up trying to keep men on the job and gave it to her. But I'm sure she's not getting the same salary the men got. That's one of the things we're demanding to have in the contract, that people be promoted on the basis of seniority and not brought in from the outside.

What happened to me, just because I'm a woman, was that I was supposed to get a promotion, but they wouldn't give it to me because they said that since I was getting married, I wouldn't be staying there much longer. This was totally false.

Right now the company is trying to get an injunction against mass picketing. I don't think it will hurt us as long as it's just against us and not the outside people that have been helping us on the line. I think the big demonstration by Women's Liberation was really good.

I'm all for "Woman Power." When Women's Liberation first came down, it was in the middle of January, and we were all kind of down in the dumps because it was freezing out there, and it was just the same old faces we'd seen for two months. We were cold and disgusted. Women's Liberation came and helped move us, and gave us spirit to keep going.

Last week there was a rumor going around that some people wanted to go back to work. I don't think many felt that way. If we went back to work without a contract we'd be insane. I certainly wouldn't do it; I'd get another job first, and I have four years seniority there.

part III

THE HISTORIC  
PAST, PRESENT,  
AND FUTURE

...AND THE  
NEED FOR  
PHILOSOPHY

S. Handschu



EXCERPTS FROM AN UNPUBLISHED ROUGH DRAFT OF AN ESSAY,  
"OUR ORGANIZATION", written by Raya Dunayevskaya, 1951

...ON WOMEN IN THE POST-WAR WORLD, and the OLD RADICALS

During the war, women by the millions left the kitchen for the factory. The physiognomy of the labor force changed very considerably, and with it, the relationships in the home. But this is by no means a completed battle. The revolt of the women, which began during the war, did not end with the end of the war. Quite the contrary, it has intensified. It is a daily, an hourly struggle in which the woman wants to establish *new* relations with her husband, with the children, with other women, and other men.

From all this, the radical parties were as isolated as they are from the mass movement in general. But the new imprint that the women were making in society as a whole, could not leave the parties unaffected, and the struggle burst out there when the men began to return from the war and resume their old posts, even as it did in bourgeois society. But it was so wrapped up in Marxist jargon that it was not always easy to see that between the party and bourgeois society there was no basic distinction on this very basic question.

To get a concept of the smaller battle in the party, it is best to see it in society as a whole first. The mass movement into the factories was looked upon with suspicion by men in the same manner as the first movement of the Negroes into industry, before the CIO: would they bring their working conditions and standards down? And just as the Negroes proved to be loyal fellow workers, so did the women. Only the women looked at the men with suspicion, too: will these try to dominate them in the factory as their husbands, fathers, brothers do in the home? **They were determined that no such thing should happen.**

When the women as human beings proved to have a *class* loyalty, the men loosened up sufficiently in their relations to note that in fact something new had happened on the American scene: not only the women in factories, but even white collar women, telephone workers and such, took to the picket line and mass worker approach. They said of the awakening of these new strata in the population: "I didn't know they had it in them."

They also didn't know that the women workers would "have it in them" to come home and wish to establish new relations there, too. There the men stopped. The woman was still expected to do all the housework and take care of the children, and stay at home while the men went out to play poker. The women, however, took their new role in production seriously; they gained a new dignity and a new concept of what their relations to their fellowmen and fellowwomen should be, and they refused to submit to the subordinate role in which they had been placed in the home before they got their factory jobs. So where they could not work out the new relations, they took to breaking up the homes, even where it meant the woman would become the sole support also of her children.

The politicians thought all that was needed to reestablish the stability of the home was to give the women a few posts in the government, business, the army, and point with pride to the expanding American economy and all the gadgets for the kitchen to make life easier for "the little woman."

Not so the women. They categorically refused to remain an appendage to the men. They wished to have not only sexual but human relations with them. They were out searching for a total reorganization of society. In that search, some women also came to the radical parties. These radical parties failed to recognize this new concrete revolutionary force in society, but that force recognized them, for it had set up new standards by which to judge this so-called revolutionary movement.

In that same period, at the end of the war, a fight broke out in the Workers Party, over their failure to grow. They looked, not to the type of propaganda they had put out which was governed by their view that the American masses were "backward". No, they looked only at the people who had carried out the line and, since these happened to have been women who had replaced the men in all posts where needed, it was against them that the fight had started.

For the first time our tendency, which had never paid any attention to struggles between members for posts, began to pay attention to this one. For it was clear that this was not an individual question, but here a social problem was involved.

We came to the defense of the women who had occupied the post of city organizer which was now being contested: "What is this bourgeois nonsense of the men returning to their posts as if the women who had done all the work during the war years were not genuine political leaders, but just substitutes? But this new element was buried in the old political terms: it is your political line, not the person executing it, which brought about this mess, and stultified the party's growth."

Our own use of old political terms, instead of seeing the entirely new element — that the Woman Question, in and of itself, was playing a new role, not alone outside, but inside the organization — left us unaware of the significance that women, in increasing numbers were workers. One woman in particular had a special problem, since she had a 12 year old child and no husband. But we paid no special attention to this problem as if, to the extent that it was not just a personal but a social problem, it was in any case unsolvable under capitalism. That is the monstrous trap that awaits all who do not see the new in a situation, and we ourselves almost fell into it.

What prevented us from so doing in this case was our ranks, and especially the women. First, one thing was clear. There was a new type of response to certain historic incidents which would stress "the affinity of the struggle of Negroes and women in America." The new women members in our tendency would listen, for example, to the relationship between the Women's Rights Movement and the Abolitionists, to the fact that Frederick Douglass was the only one, even among the Abolitionists, who was willing to chair the women's meeting, as if this was something that occurred not in the '30s of the last century, but something that in one form or another they were encountering right now daily, at the bench, and in the home.



These historic questions assumed that contemporary coloration because of the urgency of their present revolt. What was pushing itself outward was the intensity and totality of the approach. By continuing her revolt daily at her home, the women were giving a new dimension to politics. She was by-passing the specialized organization of women and looking for a new, a total way out. This our own women were sensing by their association with their shopmates and the proletarian housewives in their neighborhoods.

It was from these new social types among the masses outside that our women were getting new impulses. They were finding their best friends, moreover, not among the so-called revolutionaries on the inside, but amongst their shopmates on the outside. If this had brought them into conflict with the petty-bourgeois women in the Workers Party, it reached even a greater intensity when they began talking to the women in the Socialist Workers Party, which our tendency rejoined in 1947, when it looked as if they were at least retaining their revolutionary perspective on the American scene.

Our rank and file women first came into conflict with the women in the SWP because some occupied the same subordinate position that women did in bourgeois society: they worked to support their men, who were "leaders" in the party. They were equally hostile, however, to the women leaders in the party who looked to them like the career women in the bourgeois world. These weren't the new social types they were meeting on the outside, who added a new dimension to the American character by their present revolt. Not at all. They were women with a "mission" — to lead other women. The struggle was one of the rank and file against the leaders, male and female.

The first incident came about as follows. Our ranks had been talking to their shopmates and to the neighborhood women and from them they began to get tales of revolt, described rather broadly above, but very vividly and concretely by these women from the outside. One young woman of our tendency stated that the Woman Question was not something merely historic, and she for one was not interested in the development of matriarchal societies, but instead would like very much to talk about the women of today; the revolt that is still going on.

When she was permitted to present her little talk, the male intellectuals listened, amused, while their outstanding woman leader stated that the only real solution was for women not to be women. This was the very woman who, in electioneering, wore tight skirts, with a slit on the side, and advised our woman comrade, who was her junior in campaigning: "You've got to use sex."

The mannishness of these SWP women, on the one hand, and their mawkishness, on the other hand, was too much, not only for the women in our tendency, but the rank and file women in the SWP also began to rebel. It was impossible, they said, to bring around proletarian women and have their leaders appear as nothing but "exceptional women." There was nowhere a concept of the question being a *social* question. These women leaders had merely reduced the whole fight to fighting for positions in the party itself, and accusing all and sundry who opposed them of "male chauvinism." ....

## WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN CHINA

Jade  
refugee from mainland China

The Women's liberation movement in China goes back to 1919 — to the May 4th Movement — when the Chinese intellectuals introduced Western ideas to China. They tried to reform Chinese Institutions, taking the West as a model. Up to that time in China a woman's position was much, much lower than a man's. They could not go out socially at all, and most women had to stay home at all times. They had no say in any family decisions and had no right to own property — this was very important. In the country there was a practice of selling girls as wives. According to the custom, at marriage, the man's family paid a sum of money to the woman's family for the purchase of the bride. The families arranged the marriage. When the bride went to her husband's home, she had no rights at all and had to obey her mother-in-law in all things.

In 1919, when the May movement started, the slogan was "Revolution in the Family." They wanted to free the young generation, the sons and daughters-in-law from the control of the parents. Women were a strong force in that movement. At that time, they wanted to liberate women to allow them to go to school; at that time only men could go to school. Many upper class and middle class families, who were influenced by the West, let their daughters go to school. Among the educated classes, the rich class, there were some intellectual women whose situation improved greatly.

The movement succeeded to some extent in the big cities; but in the country, due to the backwardness of communication and the production method, they were still very backward. Women there had little freedom, especially the young women of the poor peasantry. Also, in the poor families, when they had too many girl children, they practiced infanticide on females. They thought that because women do not work in the fields they are a burden. A poor family needs labor power. When families come, they sometimes sell girl children in return for bags of rice or some sweet peppers. The other family takes the child, and she works for the family as a daughter-in-law. When she grows up and is of marriageable age, the family does not have to pay a bride price for her. She is married to the son of the family. This is called "child-bride," and is practiced by very poor families.

The Nationalists and the Communists did not do much about this during the Civil War. The Nationalists definitely didn't care to do it, and the Communists at that time had begun the Long March escaping Chiang Kai-Shek's extermination campaign and couldn't do anything. After the Communists took over the country, their slogan everywhere was the emancipation of poor men and the emancipation of women.

Another practice which the Communists helped to stop was that of concubinage. When the Communists took over property from the rich landowners, the rich were no longer able to support many concubines. But in the country many old ways persisted, especially among the poor.

Daughters-in-law are property, slaves of the family. The mother-in-law can make her do anything, she can be beaten at will and cannot get away unless her own family will buy her back to pay ransom for her.

When the Communists took over, they instituted a new divorce law which permitted women to divorce their husbands. This was not possible before. This occurred in 1949. It used to be that women who went out to Communist meetings in the town would be beaten by their families when they came home. Many women were killed this way, so many. This was wide spread during 1951-53.

At that time, the Communists had just taken over; they were not very deeply rooted in the country. They developed their connections to the country more during the period of the land reform, and the women were very active in this movement. When the Communists started the land reform movement, they sent cadres into the country. They didn't know who was with them and who was against them. It took them two or three years to develop roots in the country.

I felt very happy in 1950-51 because you saw so many women involved in political activities, and women were much more equal; they were paid the same as men and were doing the same work as men. There were many good changes during this period.

Recently I went back and read through the newspapers of this period. The biggest topic in the newspaper was the new marriage law. The Communists put much effort into this. I think that by 1955, in the main, in the country remnants of the past times were over. At that time they published the national rules on the issuance of marriage licences. After the old marriage laws had been abolished in 1949, there were no new laws to replace them. So the cadres in different places made up their own laws. They had a lot of power. Many of the cadres, made up of men, were very prejudiced against women; they wouldn't do anything to help women and made up their own marriage laws accordingly.

In one case when a certain woman went to the cadre to ask for a divorce, the man cadre leader got very mad. He told her that, if she did not go back to her husband, she would be sentenced to one year in prison.

In 1955, the Marriage and Divorce Law was instituted, along with land reform. This was extremely important for the women. It meant that when a woman got a divorce she was entitled to half her husband's land. She could own it and control it. What was interesting was that the land that the divorced woman obtained was, of course, adjoining that of her ex-husband. It was often the case that it was more efficient to farm the land cooperatively with the ex-husband; but the woman was an equal partner in this arrangement. Sometimes the couple even re-married; when the woman returned to her husband's house she was now respected and treated as an equal, by both the men and the mother-in-law.

Things were much, much better for women at this time, especially for the single women — better than in Hong Kong and the U.S. probably. You were respected and protected by laws. At that time there were women on all the committees, in the city and the country. In the country, the peasant committees which had the power to take land from the rich

landlords, had to be 1/5 to 1/4 women, by order of the Central Committee. But even 1/5 to 1/4 was hard to get. Most women were illiterate and never spoke publicly. You had to induce the women to speak up. Many did not know what a meeting was. This is why it was so hard in the beginning.

When they organized the first stage of the Communist Party in the beginning of the 1920's, the leaders of the Communists were students and intellectuals in the cities. Among them were many women. They did organize a Women's movement as a branch of the Communist Party. The leader was Chou En-lai's wife. They were the first, and many of them got killed. Some were trained in Russia. I think that this was the organization which really did the work prior to 1955.

By 1955, women were socially, economically and spiritually equal to men. You cannot depend on your husband as long as you earn as much as he. You could not stay home and be lazy; every body had to work. Only the older women and sick people stayed home as housewives. So you worked in the day, and the husband shared the housework at home. So I think it was pretty fair in Communist China up to 1955. The reason I put the date as 1955 is because up to this time, women had land. Then in 1955 they started the cooperative (Commune) movement, and they took the land away.

The cooperative movement was very coercive. I was there, and it seemed that women resisted this movement. Many did not want to work in the Communes, in teams. They wanted land of their own. After they took the land from the landlords, it became their own land. But in the cooperative movement they had to give up this ownership of the land to the team, to the collective farm. The men took over again when it became cooperative.

All the peasants resisted the Commune movement, but the women resisted most; that's why it was a failure. This was at the time of the Great Leap Forward. The Great Leap Forward referred to industry; the Commune Movement to agriculture. It was generalized in the slogan "Three Red Banners," one for industry, one for agriculture, one for politics.

When women had ownership of land, people were organized in family units. This was the best time for women. With the Commune movement, they could not even manage their own family affairs. When their land was taken away, they became like factory workers. You had to work in the collective or in the commune. Conditions on the communes were very poor; the level of material life was very bad. This was because the Communist government was trying to squeeze out as much as they could from agriculture in order to have produce for export, so they could get industrial goods in exchange. The living standards for the peasants were so low that it was just like forced labor camps.

During the 1957, "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" period, the Chinese Communists followed the Russian Communists in denouncing Stalin, in what was called "De-Stalinization". At this time the Chinese Communists asked the people to criticize the party. A woman student at the university became very famous at this time for her criticisms of the Com-

munist Party. I was told by one of her professors that she was very able. She talked out and attracted many followers. She had a huge following in Peking University. She criticized the government for being backward, feudal, and for not being democratic. The Communist Party became very frightened at the signs of discontent. And they attacked these people as rightists. They said this girl-student was influenced by some intellectuals, and she was viciously attacked.

There were two very great woman writers in China at this time. One was a bourgeois, very gentle woman who left China in the early fifties, then returned to teach at Peking University. She committed suicide during the Red Guards Movement because she couldn't stand the attacks that were being made.

The other writer was very tough. She was the first to write about female psychology and sexuality. One of her books was in the form of a woman's diary. There was a big scandal about it; all the men writers attacked her. Her husband was killed by the Nationalists, and she was imprisoned by them. She was a Communist. She was also a very independent thinker, very tough. During the "Hundred Flowers Campaign" she dared to criticize the government. After that she was very much attacked. They even tried to make her husband denounce her, but he remained loyal. This was very rare. When the Communists attacked a person, they always got your husband or your family to attack you. This has caused so many tragedies. If the family won't denounce the person, the entire family may be killed. Her husband was loyal, and the Communists attacked them both. She was sent to a labor camp.

Life is very hard now. Everything is controlled by the military. I think this has caused greater suffering for women than for men. By Communist law, the wages for men and women are equal, but all the wages are so very low — except for those of the high officials and technicians. Your salary cannot support a family. The salary can support only yourself. When you get a divorce, you cannot get any money from your husband to help support your children. I think that is why, with the Commune Movement, it is harder to be a woman. You have no one to help you; you must work and take care of children and the house.

On the question of women in politics. There is so much nepotism now. Only the wives of leaders are given leadership positions. Mao's wife is a good example. Although she was technically the head of the Women's Movement, she never did any work in the Communist Party. She was a third-rate movie extra. She went to Yenan, the Communist capital during the Civil War, as did many other dissatisfied Nationalists. Mao's wife and Lin Pio's wife are the only two women now in the Party leadership. This is very degrading and shows that the liberation of women has by no means been real in China.



## PAGES FROM A SHOP DIARY

**Olga Domanski**

**Graduate, Fisher Body Assembly Line**

**"Zig Zag Spring" Department**

The department was only a month old when I hired in. The company had never hired women in this particular plant before, except half a dozen left from the first "shingle-cut" era.... The foreman had a reputation as a particularly poisonous Simon Lagree. He had, according to the Union, been so hated by the men that the company had felt it wiser to remove him from the department over which he had lorded and "save" him for a special job. The special job for which they were saving him was the job of breaking in the new women's department.

In this industry, workers were considered as temporary employees for a period of three months. If they lasted that long without being fired or laid-off or quitting, they acquired their coveted seniority — the only small measure of official protection they had against the company...

Ordinarily, a new worker is hired in to work among a group of workers who have already acquired seniority. The company tries to use each new employee as a "whip", squeezing more work out of the new hire, in the hope that a precedent will be set that could be used as a standard for the whole group. Sometimes it works. More often, the others, knowing the tenuousness of a temporary employee's position, will take the ball from him, and so manipulate things that the seniority employees (who are in a position to call the committeeman) are responsible for any slow-downs, and the new employee left in the clear....

However, in our department, the ordinary situation was reversed and the entire department was composed of new hires. This meant that for three months, the foreman could run roughshod over the department in the knowledge that by the time the women had acquired their seniority and could fight back on more equal terms, the production standards would have been set and precedents for working conditions already well established...

There was not too much need of a few older women to put us wise, however. It was clear to me from the first week in the shop that it is the production setup itself, and not some particularly foresighted leader with a good idea, that organizes the workers. Every girl in the department seemed to burn inwardly waiting for the days to pass until she had her seniority and could explode. In the washrooms in the morning, the girls would stand in line at the three wash basins to take turns soaking their stiffened hands in the steaming hot water. Everyone took comfort in the fact that it was the normal and not the abnormal thing to wake up in the morning with your arms tingling and your fingers so stiff that you had to pull electric light cords with your teeth. Everyone joked about it, and swapped symptoms, and comforted each other, and made confessions about going home at night and bawling. Each such confession would produce embarrassed grins, and more like confessions. The solidarity in misery was overwhelming....

During the first three months, while everyone sweated out the "waiting period," the feeling of solidarity and closeness seemed much stronger than it did later. The girls seemed to realize the reason for it, and the necessity of it...and we were all tremendously grateful for it. It was common to hear one of the girls remark, "I would have cracked if it hadn't been for the rest of the girls." Or, "The only thing that makes this damn shop bearable is the girls and how swell they are"....

Because we were working ten hours a day, and four hours more on Saturday, there was an awareness on everyone's part (the girls often spoke about it) that we spent far more time with each other — at least waking time — than we did with our own families and outside friends. And that our relations with the people we worked with were far more important in deciding our lives and our welfare than were our relations with almost anyone else....

The girls had been waging a campaign for seats. They were temporarily using boxes, and during the night shift, the boxes had been removed. One of the girls, who happened to be feeling very sick on account of her menstrual period that day, asked the acting foreman to get the boxes back. He snarled a refusal. She called a committeeman. But her nerves got the best of her, and she began to cry, called a relief girl, and started to the rest room to compose herself. As she passed his desk, the foreman snapped at her again, and when she stopped to answer him, more tearfully than ever, she cramped and doubled over in pain. The foreman, in great embarrassment, turned his back and started to walk away hurriedly while one of the other girls nearby ran to her and half carried her to the rest room. The girl involved was, far from being a popular girl, one of the most frequent targets for catty remarks in the department. But when the girls saw the scene between her and the foreman, they reacted as if she had been their beloved little old grandmother, and the foreman had beaten her with a club. The entire department was furious. They offered themselves to her as witnesses that he had struck her, or that she had fainted and he had walked away. They hissed at him and booed him when he walked down the aisle. They cheered when the committeeman came up and shouted, "Don't let him get away with it!" They put in call after call for the committeeman on any grievances they could think of. They messed up jobs, and fouled up the production schedule, and made life so miserable for the foreman that he finally stayed out of the department entirely....

Most of the women were married and had children. They had two work days — first at the shop, and then at home. And they resented their relations to the men at both places.

The department, to begin with, was situated like a harem. The women were not scattered among men, doing jobs side by side with them. They were isolated in one corner of the shop, in one department. They were treated as "creatures apart" — something very special — but special in a very negative way. The "specialness" of our department lay in the fact that the work we did had been recently reclassified by management from heavy work to light work; this is the way management distinguished "men's work" from "women's work." It was apparent that the designa-

tion had nothing whatever to do with heaviness or lightness, but only with rate of pay. The only reason the company had reclassified the work was to see whether women could handle it — at, of course, a lower wage rate than men had handled it in other shops, and as a matter of fact *were* handling it at the same time in other shops. It was a fact accepted by everyone (the girls, the men, and even management) that we were doing men's jobs and were treated like men in every respect — except our pay checks. The girls rubbed it in to the foreman, the union, the men up the line at every opportunity.

At first, the girls were a bit amused by our harem setup; then they grew resentful of it and wound up in about a year jokingly "guarding" it. Whenever a man walked through the department and stopped to talk to any particular girl, the rest of the girls would set up a terrific racket of wolf-calls, gun-buzzing, and hammer-banging until the man would run in embarrassed terror and the girl involved was left red-faced but laughing.

Everywhere about them men were doing easier work and getting higher pay for it. The foreman was a man. The repairman was a man. The supervisors and time checker were men. When visitors came to watch from other plants they were always men. And none of this brigade did any *hard* work. All except the repair men wore white shirts and nice ties and kept their hands very clean. Sometimes if one of the girls got particularly annoyed at one of them peering over her shoulder to watch while she worked, she would maneuver her air gun into such a position that the excess oil that shot out the back of the gun in a fine spray would shoot directly on the spectator's fine white shirt. They always moved.

Occasionally when too many girls were absent, the company would have to fill in the vacant spot with a man recruited from an overmanned department downstairs. On such occasions the men would seem absolutely stunned by the terrifically fast pace the girls were expected to keep up. More often than not they would become exhausted within an hour, or miss so many jobs and spoil so many others that the foreman would have to come over to assist or else replace the man altogether. These men would tell the girls they were "nuts for working like race-horses," and shortly after the department opened up the resentment of the men toward the women was apparent. They knew the company would speed up us first and then spread it to the entire shop. They also knew that if the girls did a hard job faster than the men did it, they would soon displace other men on other jobs.

The girls would try to explain that they didn't have seniority and couldn't help the position they were in. But their reaction was contradictory. They knew the men were right and kicked themselves for being used as race-horses by the company. But they couldn't help resent the men because they did less work and easier, lighter work and got paid more for it. And in addition, they frequently expressed pride in the knowledge that they could work harder than men, and faster than men. Their bitter philosophy was, "Oh well, everybody knows that the harder you work, the less you get paid in this life."

When a hapless male was shoved into a vacant spot on the line for a



day, the girls would let him suffer for a while in grinning silence, and then smiling at one another would crack a joke with him and offer some bit of advice to make his job easier.

Most of the girls talked freely with each other about their home problems and complained to each other about husbands who expected them to do all the housework on top of their shop jobs. They compared husbands, how much their husbands helped them at home, husbands' attitudes toward their working, etc.. In almost every case, the girls were convinced that their husbands had easier jobs, and the bitterness of their resentment toward "demanding" mates knew no depth.

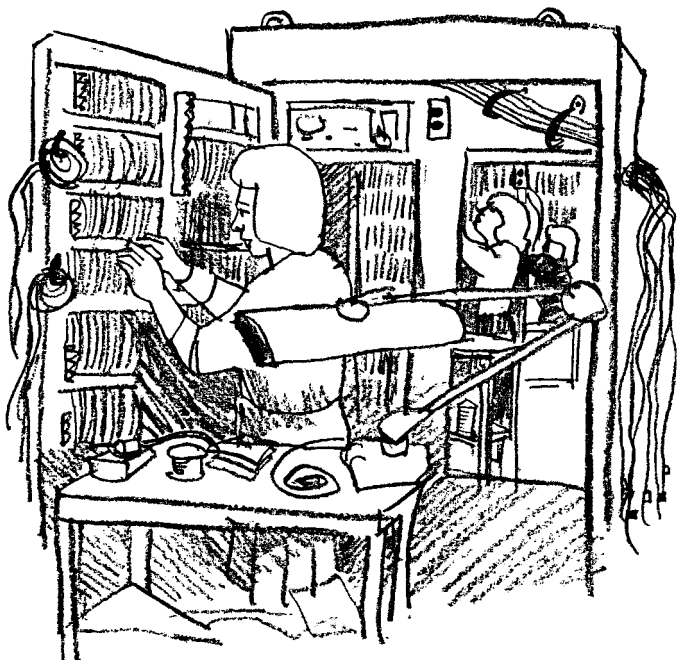
Many of the single girls got married within a year after they were hired in, but there were a few single girls scattered around the department. When any of them was overheard complaining about the shop, the foreman's favorite reply was, "Why don't you get married and get out of here?" At this the married girls would give him a sarcastic laugh and advise the single girl, "Get married and you'll get a *life* sentence in here." Many of them had quit when they first got married: Then at the birth of the first child they had found it impossible to get along on one man's wages and had gone back to work. There was a general feeling that the very time when a woman should be home taking care of her family was exactly the time when she was driven *out* of her home....that a family (just the thing that should have kept her at home) was the thing that forced her back into the factory.

Many of the girls were divorcees with several kids. Their lives were not only doubly, but triply difficult. In addition to the shop job and the care of their home and kids, they had to squeeze in "dates" and social affairs to keep from going stark mad.

Most of the girls were working because they *had* to. They kidded themselves for a while that they were only going to work until the house was paid for, or the furniture bought or a car paid up. But even as they offered forth these reasons for working, and set time limits for themselves in the shop, they would laugh at themselves and say, "Who'm I kidding — I'll probably be here until I collect my pension." All of them were determined that their children should never set foot in a factory. One girl admitted that when her daughter had said she wanted to be "just like her mother," she had taken her by the shoulders and shaken her....

There was a state law prohibiting women from working over 54 hours a week, or ten hours in any one day. In our shop the men had to quit when we did on account of the way the lines were set up. With the excessive and back-breaking overtime we got for months at a time, the men were very open about their gratitude for our presence in the shop and the overtime limits we therefore imposed on the company....

The girls exploited the "biological differences" angle to the fullest in their attempts to have their relief periods lengthened. In most shops a rest period is provided morning and afternoon, and a relief girl for emergencies in between these rests. Our first foreman expressed great surprise when asked about a rest period, said he had never heard of such a thing, and provided one relief girl for forty women. The union had advised the girls that if they really had to go, the company knew they would leave



the line, relief girl or no relief girl, and their advice was to call for relief, wait a reasonable length of time (ten minutes or so) and then inform the foreman that you were going to leave the line if the relief girl didn't come immediately. A few brave souls used the routine. And when he found out it wasn't just a bluff, the foreman would rush over himself and take the job if he couldn't get a relief girl immediately. Of course, the normal elimination process was generally made much more difficult by the tension and excitement of such a fight every time you wanted relief, and in a year and a half there were over half a dozen operations for hemorrhoids in the department, all attributed by the girls (and undoubtedly correctly) to the inhuman control the company exercised over even our bowel movements. The girls eventually became quite calloused about having to discuss many of the most personal and intimate matters with the foreman, and often used the crudest language they knew in an attempt to embarrass *him*.... And in time the girls got more relief girls and longer relief periods, simply by taking them and explaining about those "certain days" if they were bawled out....

The girls seemed to feel as if the union "owed" them something. They knew it was a good thing and defended it against the company. But they felt they weren't getting all they should from it. The union fought for a year to adjust the rate in our department upward toward the rate men were getting for doing the same work elsewhere. When they finally won the case, it meant large back-pay checks for everyone. Some of the older women got more than a hundred dollars. They accepted with thanks, bought the committee a bottle, but when asked by the union spokesmen how they felt about it, said drily, "It's fine....but it still isn't as much as the men are making. When do we get the rest?"

## THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT AS REASON AND AS REVOLUTIONARY FORCE ~

By Raya Dunayevskaya \*<sup>1</sup>

Deep in the Siberian mine,  
Keep your patience proud;  
The bitter toil shall not be lost.  
The rebel thought unbowed ...  
The heavy-hanging chains will fall,  
The walls will crumble at a word;  
And Freedom greet you in the light,  
And brothers give you back the sword.

As unrelated as this poem by Pushkin about the Decemberist revolt of 1825 may seem to be to the Women's Liberation Movement of our day, the very fact that, in 1953, the political prisoners in the forced labor camps in Vorkuta used it as their freedom song illustrates both the universality and the individuality of liberation struggles. Clearly, the poem celebrated not only a fight against Tsarism. What the 20th century Freedom Fighters aspired to, in fighting also against Communism, was not a return to the old, but a reaching out for a totally new dimension.

It was this aspiration, not only for a particular type of freedom, but for total liberation, that enunciated a new stage of the consciousness of freedom. It is in this sense that the American woman has suddenly begun speaking of her enslavement. All the talk about the American women as "the freest in the world" has not, and will not, stop their feeling chained, their concept of liberation as something a great deal more than simply not being a chattel slave, and having the vote. Their point is that *so long as they are objects* (even where that means an object of love), they are not truly free. They refuse to stand up and shout "hurrah" for such type of "love." They demand to be whole human beings.

Ever since the myth of Eve giving Adam the apple was created, women have been presented as devils or as angels, but definitely not as human beings. Only one philosopher, Hegel, related the myth, not to sin, but to knowledge. No doubt the concept of knowledge is an improvement on the concept of sin, but that hardly takes issue with why woman is blamed for the expulsion from Paradise. In literature, we seem to have been found guilty ever since. The portrayal of women in our day as either dumb blonds or devils keeps up to date the male chauvinist myth.

Let us begin with Greece, not only as the birthplace of Western Civilization, but the birthplace of the tragic drama. Take the *Oresteia*, the greatest trilogy in dramatic literature. Until fairly recently, I seem to have seen nothing male chauvinistic about Athena's speech. I am sure I am not the only one. The pursuit of the furies, after Orestes murdered his mo-

\*Raya Dunayevskaya, author of *Marxism and Freedom*, incorporated in this lecture given to the Ethical Culture Society, Philadelphia, April 26, 1970, some of the points she had made in her talks with WRAP, Chicago University, April 1969, and with a group of the Women's Liberation Coalition, Detroit, July 1970.

ther for having murdered his father, is so unrelenting that the audience is happy when Athena pronounces him not guilty:

So for Orestes shall this vote be cast.  
No mother gave me birth, and in all things  
Save marriage I, my father's child indeed,  
With all my heart commend the masculine.  
Wherefore I shall not hold of higher worth  
A woman who was killed because she killed  
Her wedded lord and master of her home.  
Upon an equal vote Orestes wins.

### Literature and History: The Black Dimension

All history being contemporary history, we cannot help but look at the same drama with eyes of today, with the consciousness of today's Women's Liberation Movement. This time, when I watched the drama — in Ypsilanti where we tried to recreate the Greek tragedies and comedies in a (more or less) genuine Greek theatre with a Greek director and Judith Anderson as Clytemnestra — I was saying to myself: Well, what do you know, here is Athena telling us that since she sprang full-grown from the forehead of Zeus, it seems that a mother is nothing but a receptacle for the seed of the man and that, therefore, Orestes has not really committed the greatest crime on earth in murdering his mother. Though the words are spoken by a woman, it is a typically male chauvinistic speech. What I am trying to say is that this awareness is what the Women's Liberation Movement of today has brought to today's feminism.

Whether we are talking of the women characters in Greek tragedy — Clytemnestra, Medea, Electra — or whether we look at Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth or that horrible creature in *King Lear* — Goneril — or we come down to the 20th century, be it Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* or Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies*, dramatists seem to be doing nothing but updating these characters. The whole point is that literature, even at its greatest, reflects the male-dominated society under which we live, which, in turn, affects all of us, women included. We will not escape male chauvinistic speeches coming out of our mouths until we tear this alienated society up by its roots.

As against the myths of either pre-history or literature, the history of the struggles of women for freedom show women in a very different light. This is especially clear in the US, where the black dimension became a catalyst for liberation long before the Women's Liberation movement of today. It arose during the Abolitionist movement, when the Sojourner Truths and the Harriet Tubmans were speakers, "generals", leaders, while the white women were still, mainly the ones who arranged the picnics, raised the money and in every way were subordinate to the male Abolitionist leaders. When the white middle-class women saw the black women being and acting as leaders of the Underground Railway, the white women decided to be more than handmaidens. The "Suffragette" movement arose out of the Abolitionist Movement.



HARRIET TUBMAN



LUCY STONE



SOJOURNER TRUTH

For some peculiar reason, at their very first convention in 1848, the women still felt a man should function as chairman of their meetings. They soon found out that, though the Abolitionist Movement was by far the most advanced movement of the time, it nevertheless held many prejudices on the question of women. The men Abolitionists, who were giving their lives to end slavery, nevertheless refused to chair the meeting of the women. The only one who consented was Frederick Douglass. (In fairness to the founder of Abolitionism, it should be said that when the Anti-Slavery Conference in England refused to seat the American women delegates, forcing them to sit in the balcony, Wm. Lloyd Garrison, who was supposed to give the main speech to the Conference, refused to do so. He sat with the women in the gallery, as a protest.)

So long as they were related to both the black and the proletarian women, the Suffragettes, even though they were middle-class women, went very far in fighting for more than just rights for themselves. But after the abolition of slavery, Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott and all the middle-class women who continued the long bitter fight, nevertheless showed a narrowing of the struggle along class lines. When they finally did get the vote, it was far removed from what the proletarian women needed and were doing. This separation along class lines has not stopped, so that today we must face those degrading TV commercials that try to sell us the idea that the hard-fought battle for equality has been met by our right to wear mini-skirts (at least until fashion dictators tell us otherwise) and having "our own" brand of cigarettes!

As against the past, all of the past, including some of the revolutionary past, and the women who made it in a man's world, today's Women's Liberation Movement not only refuses to stop short of total freedom, but refuses to wait for "the day after" the revolution to obtain it. On the contrary, she will be part of that historic process of making freedom real for all.

### **The Newness of Today's Women's Liberation Movement**

The uniqueness of the WLM is seen also in this, that even the women in the revolutionary movement are saying: "We are not waiting for tomorrow to get our freedom. We're beginning the struggle today. We are

not leaving it to the men comrades to gain freedom 'for' us. We're struggling for it ourselves. We refuse to subordinate it to another movement; the WLM itself is a revolutionary force toward total liberation for all. The very emergence of an independent WLM is proof of the validity of its independent existence. That wasn't created from above; it wasn't built by men, not even by male revolutionaries; it won't fold up so that a political party, as some 'general will', should be pre-eminent."

And I should add that, in distinction to my generation whose aim was to be "just like men" (since they seemed to be having all the privileges), the new generation of "feminists" do not wish to be "just like men." The young women feel that men, too, are alienated beings, and they want to be whole human beings. Having seen revolutions as great as the Russian Revolution go sour, and the Chinese revolution — or Cuban, for that matter — remain incompleting, they have added to their sense of world revolution that it be not only against the old exploitative system, but aim for a totally new society on truly human foundations.

Put differently, they do not consider the relationship of woman to man to be a "private matter" either before or the day of or the day after the revolution. Precisely because it had been dealt with as a private matter, it was easy to play the game of waiting till "the day after." If we are to begin that liberation struggle today — and that's what the women have begun in the past few years — the relationship of man to woman cannot be treated as a private matter, as if it were only a question of husband and wife, or mother and child, or single girl to parents. That is only one more way to make women feel isolated and helpless. Once there is a Women's Liberation Movement, the whole atmosphere of the country changes, so that even where it is a question of establishing personal relations with sweetheart or husband, with father or brother, you don't feel alone any longer, just as you don't feel alone when you fight for the right to have abortions.

Collectivity and individuality have become inseparable not merely because after you have had your fight at home, you can come to the WL meeting and hear of others' struggles, but because of the heightened consciousness which makes you see, be it man or woman, that he or she "is only individualized through the process of history." <sup>1</sup>

I am sorry to criticize the organization before which I'm speaking — I do appreciate your inviting me to speak on Women's Liberation. But it shocked me to hear that you still use the word "auxiliary" — Women's Auxiliary of the Ethical Cultural Society. Women are not "auxiliaries." As you saw, the historical origin of the Women's Liberation Movement,

(1) Although the *Grundrisse* as a whole has not been translated into English to this day, the passages both on individualization through history and Marx's view of woman in primitive communism, which differ sharply from Engel's occur in the section that has been published under the title *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. See especially pages 85,91,96.

even when it centered around getting the vote, was born in opposition to being mere auxiliaries to the Abolitionist Movement. Today, as we shall see later, it is far, far beyond the political struggles for vote or property rights. When I spoke to the Women's Liberation group at Chicago University, they presented me with statistics about how few women are professors, the restrictions on promotions, etc., etc. Women workers are presenting their demands, It is clear that the struggle will not stop until there will be total liberation.

What is involved now is a whole new philosophy. Where Hegel had moved the myth of Adam and Eve from the theology of sin to the sphere of knowledge, Marx looked at history as a development of labor, and, therefore, of the need of a totally new way of life, a philosophy of liberation he called the new Humanism. In his early Humanist essays, he kept reiterating that so long as we talk only about different property forms, we will never get to new human relations, least of all the relationship of man to woman. Private property, Marx insisted, has made us so stupid that we think only of possessions. We are constantly substituting a "to have" for a "to be." But the abolition of private property would not, alone, bring about a new society, as the vulgar communists thought; this Marx insisted, only "negates the personality of man," not to mention the most fundamental of all relations, that of man to woman.

It is this type of totally new relations that many in the Women's Liberation Movement are aspiring to. There are many different varieties of groups, from the so-called grandmother of them all — the National Organization of Women (N.O.W.), which is directed to the professional women — through WRAP which was concerned not merely with the status of women in academia but with actual class struggles (especially those that regard women hospital workers and their demand for a nursery for working mothers), to the Women's Liberation Coalition of Michigan that retains the decentralized small group nuclei. I am mostly concerned with those in Detroit who have issued this pamphlet, *Notes on Women's Liberation — We Speak in Many Voices*, which has black and white and Chicana, both proletarian and students — and who do not separate "culture" from a total philosophy. The many voices include the apolitical as well as the Marxist-Humanist, but the latter are a minority, *deliberately* a minority among the many voices. I would like to read to you two of the pieces by black women contributors. One Ethel Dunbar, criticises the white woman:

Men have run this world out by organizing it into a hate-society. Today that is why white women can't sit down to discuss with black women about women's problems. White men have taught them for so long that they are better than black women, that it keeps coming out all the time. I was at a discussion several weeks ago on the question of women's rights... where one white woman,

an old politico, said she had just left a caucus in her union which had been discussing the problems of women in the shop. The question came up of white women fighting for higher pay, because even black men were getting higher wages than white women. Being a black woman, it made me angry to have it put that way, because it sounded as though white women thought they should make *more* than black men. Black men do hard, hard work. And there is something wrong with that whole way of thinking... White women have to make sure that they do not let white men mix up their thinking.

The other black worker was concerned, instead, with the fact that black women workers "are so busy with other fights around the job and racial discrimination, and they feel these are more important to do first. But really they should all go along together, because they are all in the same vein. I am fighting for someone who is a woman as well as black; to me it is the same fight... I am divorced and it's hard to be alone. But I have enough to do without taking on any more projects, and men are projects."

To try to deny that men are "projects," to feel so self-conscious about women being "apolitical" (and because of that "backward") that you think preoccupation with male chauvinism is to the detriment of "socialist politics" leads, of necessity, to degrading the very concept of revolutionary socialism to a variety of reformism, "a radical feminism commensurate with the reformists' political sophistication and efficacy."<sup>2</sup> In conclusion, therefore, I wish to turn to a criticism of the "Left," old and new, and to do so from the vantage point of Marx's Humanism.

## Marx's Humanism and Today's Marxists

It is not only the young Marx who had demonstrated the decrepit state of capitalism both through exploitation of labor and through an analysis of the five senses in the alienated state that exploitative society imposes on them: "In place of all the physical and spiritual senses, there is the sense of possession, which is the alienation of all these senses." Fragmentation of the individual would continue, the mature Marx of the *Grundrisse* states, so long as we do not reunite man as doer and man as thinker. Indeed, insofar as the enslavement of women is concerned, it occurred within *communal* society itself before the institution of slavery. Furthermore, the free, unpaid labor of wife and child continued after

(2) Most of the quotes that follow are from Claire Moriarty's article in "On Women's Liberation," *New Politics*, Spring 1970. However, I'm actually taking issue with the whole Left, old and new—Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists, independent socialists. It just happens that Claire Moriarty has expressed these politicians' views best.



the abolition of chattel slavery.

Marx's whole point is that nothing, nothing short of a new "thorough-going Naturalism or Humanism," that is to say, the self-development of men and women (and, for that matter, children, for we all live and suffer from living in what Marx called the "pre-history" of humanity), the reconstitution of being as a laboring, thinking, passionate, whole *human* being signifies a *new* society. Thus the abolition of private capitalism is but the "first negation." This too must be transcended for "only by the transcendence of this mediation (communism)... does there arise *positive* Humanism, beginning from itself."<sup>3</sup>

As we have shown, this is not only the young Marx (1844), but the Marx of the *Grundrisse* (1857). Indeed, it is Marx at his highest point of activity (theoretically, in *Capital*; practically and politically, in the Paris Commune) and all the way until his death in 1883. *The fetishism that Marx lifts off from the commodity-form* is not only for purposes of showing that what appears in the market as an equal exchange of things is, in reality, an exploitative relationship of capital to labor at the point of production. It is also, and above all, *to demonstrate that "the fantastic appearance" is true. This is what human relations have become in class society; labor has become reified, made into a thing as if labor were no more than an extension of the machine. Therefore the old must be overthrown, root and branch;— its "ideology" (false consciousness) as well as its exploitation.*

Instead of either grasping the link of continuity of today's strivings with that which Marx saw emerging, or *listening* to new voices, today's "Marxists" themselves are the best examples of Marx's concept of ideology as false consciousness. They look upon themselves as "the leaders," or at least the politicians who can offer "a rational reassessment of feminist ideology," and look down upon today's new women rebels as "apolitical," as if politics were the equivalent of a philosophy of liberation. They are insensitive to the distrust the rebels entertain toward them because they cannot conceive that the Women's Liberation Movement has a point when it considers the politicians as no more than still another group that wishes to transform them into mere auxiliaries of *other* movements. Whether they are asked merely to form a "Committee to Support the Socialist Workers Party Candidates," or they are invited "to build a labor party," their disgust is the same. They are sure they are *being used*, when someone like Claire Moriarty rushes to the wrong conclusions that "Just as the 'Negro problem' is, in reality a white problem, chauvinism should be the concern of men."

(3) Marx's now famous *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, 1844*, have undergone many English translations. I'm quoting my own which appeared as Appendix A in *Marxism and Freedom*.



ROSA LUXEMBURG AS A SCHOOLGIRL

The truth is the exact opposite. While socialists were busy proclaiming the impossibility for Negroes to solve the "Negro problem" "by themselves," the blacks proceeded to create their own independent mass movement. It is not labor or "socialism" which acted as catalyst for both the anti-war movement and, indeed, gave birth to a whole new generation of revolutionaries, but the black revolution which was both catalyst and reason, *and continues to be that ceaseless movement today*. To hold that the women rebels are now to consider male chauvinism "the concern of man" may sound as thunderous as Simone de Bouvoir's *Second Sex* (it is she who proclaimed it early and loudest), and may produce a few more women who have made it in a man's world. But the *movement* was created, not by her, but by these "apolitical" women who took matters into their own hands.

The whole attitude of today's "Marxists" to Women's Liberation is not helping, but endangering the movement *just when* it is trying to overcome its own empiricism and distrust of ideologues and is beginning to search for theory, for a total philosophy that is a way of life in search of other life forces of liberation who would look to be whole men as they look to be whole women. Communists, Socialists, Trotskyists, Maoists and even Fidelistas cannot, after all, hide the fact that, despite the countless revolutionary women, and many martyrs, there has been one, only one, woman who has served not only as revolutionary muscle but revolutionary theoretician — Rosa Luxemburg.

We need theoreticians who can face today's problems. It is true that women theoreticians can be "created" neither via isolation from men, nor by spending all their time denouncing male chauvinism. But why be so fearful of "excesses" on the question of fighting male chauvinism, and why be so eager a beaver in getting women "to participate" in the working out of "political strategy" that you are led to plunge into assinine assertion? Thus Claire Moriarty writes so glowingly of technology that it would appear it has indeed "eliminated" nothing short of the "inconvenience of pregnancy"!!! Naturally she didn't mean the absurdity that loose phrasing makes it sound. But how could she have slipped into such bizarre expressions?

The answer lies deep in the recesses of the concept of the backward-

ness of the apolitical women. So weighted down is she by this elitist concept that she is led inexorably to vulgarize Marx's greatest discovery: Historical Materialism. She so sharply separates the ideal from the material that she can write: "Given our position as historical materialists, we understand that changes in consciousness do not precede but accompany institutional change, hence, it is relatively fruitless for women to attempt to combat male chauvinism."

There, the cat finally is out of the bag. Along with the concept of the backwardness of the apolitical women is the concept of the immobility of the males from their dominant position. Poor Marx! To all the vulgarization the bourgeoisie attributes to his discovery of historical materialism, we now have an independent socialist blaming that historic discovery for making it "relatively fruitless for women to attempt to combat male chauvinism"!

Material conditions, it is true, determine consciousness, not vice versa, as we look at a historical stretch of the development of mankind through history. History is process, is dialectics. Every unit is invested with its opposite. The future is inherent in the present. The opponent forces to the existing society not only fight it, but gain the consciousness both about the significance of their fight and an intimation of a direction toward that future. Otherwise Marx would never have been able to work out a philosophy of revolution; we would have remained the one-dimensional men and women Herbert Marcuse thinks we are.

The dialectic, even in the bourgeois idealist Hegel's concept, was a great voyage of discovery for all because it let us see the antagonistic duality of opposing forces living in the same nation, country, world. Hegel's genius saw that the very process of laboring produced, in the slave, a "mind of his own." Marx expressed this more concretely and comprehensively when he said the very alienation of the laborer produces "a quest for universality." If that were not so, humanity might as well wait for the moon to visit earth!

Compare the confining walls built by today's Marxists with the vision of Marx who could describe wealth in the future in the *Grundrisse*:

When the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers, etc. of individuals, produced in universal exchange? What, if not the full development of human control over the forces of nature — those of his own nature as well as those of so-called "nature"? What, if not the absolute elaboration of his creative dispositions, without any preconditions other than antecedent historical evolution which makes the totality of this evolution — i.e. the evolution of all human powers as such, unmeasured by any *previously established* yardstick — an end in itself? What is this, if not a situation where man does not reproduce himself in

any determined form, but produces his totality? Where he does not, seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?

The uniqueness of today's Women's Liberation Movement is that it dares to challenge what is, including the male chauvinism not only under capitalism but within the revolutionary movement itself *and* speaking even with female voices. To fear to expose this male chauvinism leads to helplessness. To face reality, and to face it not through sheer voluntarism, but with full awareness of all the forces lined up against us, is the one way to assure the coalescence with other revolutionary forces, especially labor which is so strategically placed in production and has its own black dimension. No doubt we will not fully overcome male chauvinism so long as class society exists. But we can and will break up its monolithism. We can and will witness the development of women themselves not only as force but as reason. We can and will be a catalyst not only for our development as all-round human beings, but also for that of men. The first step in that direction is to meet the challenge as it appears, everywhere it appears, any time it rears its head, under no matter what disguises. The first act of liberation is to demand back our own heads.