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Motion Forward Motion Forward Motion

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COMPARABLE WORTH

pornography debate

pop culture & 'nam

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Dear friends,

Four summers ago 1500 public employees in San Jose, California struck to win women workers equal pay for comparable work. This dramatic strike followed by a matter of weeks the Supreme Court ruling that women could sue for wage discrimination even where it was not a question of equal work. Suddenly, what some had prophesized as the "issue of the '80's" began to look like just that. In the years since, comparable worth has become a rallying point for women workers and unionists nationwide. In last fall's long and hard-fought strike at Yale University, comparable worth came to symbolize the determination of women unionists and a whole community of support to make an issue of the degraded and disrespected position of clerical workers at liberal Yale.

It is this side of comparable worth, its ideological and political challenge, that is of greatest significance today. Comparable worth challenges the notion of "women's work" as of less value than other work. It rejects the idea that wage-earning women's needs are less. And it does so at a time when working women-headed households are increasing in number and attracting greater attention in public discussion. Embrace of comparable worth is an important forward thrust of women's consciousness and organizing today, under the highly unfavorable conditions of the Reagan administration.

This ideological dimension is important to labor's prospects as well. Union organizing for comparable worth represents another step towards a more equal partnership between the women's movement and the unions: it represents a bit of unions letting the women's movement into labor organizing.

It is this side of comparable worth which has also called forth the "looney tunes" label from the Reagan team. Alongside all the old gains they are battling to dismantle, in comparable worth the Right has something new to deal with. Times are tough for progressives, but the people are doing more than running for cover. While the Right has the upper hand in determining actual policy on rights for women and minorities and virtually all domestic and foreign issues, on a number of widely different terrains, the battle lines of the coming years are being drawn. The continuing spread and seeking of new grounds for struggle on the part of the women's movement is a critical part of this. Here we highlighted comparable worth organizing, the complex fight against women's oppression through pornography, and the reclaiming of a place in the women's movement by minority women.

Other articles in this FM contribute to the broader theme of finding new grounds on which to contest the Right. An editorial looks at the sudden emergence of foster parenting by lesbians and gay men as a matter of contention. A report on recent student organizing argues that student anti-apartheid protest is more than just the issue of the day; it may be the tactical opening to a revived campus radicalism. An article on popular culture brings out the ideological battleground that the Vietnam War is today. A review of the recent AFL-CIO report on "Workers and Their Unions" illustrates the pressures for new approaches in organized labor as well.

Rounding out this issue is part five of our "Party Up" series, this time on the question of allowing organized tendencies in Marxist parties.

Finally a word of thanks to a number of new subscribers who responded to our recent mailing. We're glad to have you!

Forward Motion is a magazine of socialist opinion and advocacy. Editorial responsibility for *Forward Motion* is exercised by the FM collective.

Forward Motion welcomes letters and articles. All items submitted for publication must be typed, double-spaced, and signed as you want your name to appear. At this time, all correspondence should be addressed: *Forward Motion*, P.O. Box 1884, Jamaica Plain 02130

The editors will read all materials sent to us and, to the extent possible, acknowledge them and let you know their disposition. We cannot, however, be responsible for the return of manuscripts unless you also send us a self-addressed stamped envelope. Letters may be edited for space.

Editorial: Bending Foster Care Policy To Anti-Gay Politics

In 1984, Don Babets and David Jean applied to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) to become foster parents. The two men made their application as an openly gay couple. Ordinarily, it takes four to six months for DSS to approve foster care parents, but in the case of Babets and Jean, it took DSS one year. Eventual approval came from the DSS central office; a DSS assistant commissioner personally informed Babets and Jean of DSS's decision to place two brothers, ages two and three and a half, with them. What happened after that was national news.

On May 8, 1985, the *Boston Globe* ran an article about the placement of the children with Babets and Jean. The article focused on objections to the placement by some of the couple's neighbors. Within 24 hours, the state removed the children from the couple's home. They have never been returned and in all likelihood, never will be.

Within three weeks of these events, the Secretary of Human Services and DSS announced a new policy on foster care placement. They stated that the interests of foster children are best served by placement in traditional family settings, meaning "with relatives, or in families with a married couple, preferably with parenting experience and with time available to care for foster children." Henceforth, only in exceptional circumstances will the state place foster children with an unmarried couple or a single person and only with the express approval of the Commissioner of DSS. Additionally, such placements can be made only after it has been demonstrated that no traditional family setting is available or likely to be available.

If it wasn't clear enough that this new policy was directed at lesbians and gays, the Massachusetts House passed an amendment forbidding foster placement, adoption, guardianship or day care center operation to lesbians and gays. The House also voted that homosexual preference shall be considered a threat to the psychological and physical well-being of a child. Since the state Senate passed a slightly watered down version, the two versions must now be reconciled by a joint committee.

DSS's new policy is against the best interests of the foster children of the state, the only factor it claims its policy considers. Single people as well as any non-traditional families are affected by this new policy. At the moment, 28 percent of the foster care placements in Massachusetts are with non-traditional families. Many of its placements are with families where both parents work. And social service workers will sometimes place sexually abused girls in families with a woman single head of household for clinical reasons. There is a shortage of foster care homes in Massachusetts. Is DSS going to

remove 28 percent of the foster children under its jurisdiction from their present foster homes and keep these children in institutional settings while it scares up a bunch of traditional families, preferably ones where the woman stays at home?

The new DSS policy implies that a home without a man is no place for a child to be, the traditional and chauvinist view. It further implies that a woman's place is in the home. (The *Boston Globe's* editorials explicitly supported this notion.) The policy also excludes single heads of households, a family formation prevalent today, particularly in the Black and other minority communities. It implies there is something fundamentally wrong with the families these children are raised in. Lastly, DSS's policy is an invasion of privacy and can lead to many obvious abuses. The Salem witch hunts easily come to mind.

The proper question to ask is whether DSS is going to review the so-called traditional families with which it has placed children to determine whether children are properly cared for and supervised. But when it comes to lesbians, gays and single people, DSS policy makers can get pretty high and mighty about the best interests of the child.

An attack on lesbians and gays is, of course, at the heart of this matter. These attacks are outrageous and unsupported by any evidence. The placement of children, especially those in a state of crisis, is a matter which must be taken very seriously. That is precisely what the state did not do. Their actions were based on homophobia and ignorance, not on the best interests of the children. DSS claimed that in making its decision, it relied on specialists in the field. Yet these specialists acknowledged that they were not relying on any evidence which supported their conclusions. Lesbians and gays have been and will continue to be loving and nurturing parents. There is no basis to claim that any child, including a child whose life is in a state of crisis, often times from sexual or physical abuse by biological parents, cannot be properly cared for by a lesbian or gay person.

Forward Motion calls upon all its readers to join with lesbians, gays and single people to speak up and to join the protests until Massachusetts and every state recognizes that what makes a good parent is a good parent.

—Michelle Welles for the FM Collective

Interview:

Comparable Worth: Issue of the '80's

Participating in this roundtable discussion on comparable worth in Boston were: Ronique Goodrich, a Black nurse in a municipal hospital who is active in her SEIU local; Meizhu Lui, a Chinese-American who works as a dietary aide at Boston City Hospital, is active in her AFSCME local, and is a founding member of Union Members for Jobs and Equality; Celia Wcislo, president of SEIU Local 285 representing clerks, technicians and nurses across the state of Massachusetts and a clerical worker herself; and FM correspondent Bill Fletcher, a Black activist who has been involved in many anti-discrimination struggles in the union movement. Susan Cummings conducted the interview for FM.

FM: What kinds of inequities does comparable worth deal with and what kinds of remedies does it provide?

Celia: Comparable worth looks at the fact that certain jobs have been segregated—and not just between men and women although I think it has probably come to mean that because in fact a lot of the more pronounced segregation in job types is between men and women—it looks at that segregation and then asks does the pay attached to each one of those jobs make sense or is that pay differential really just a reflection of discrimination within the society.

The system is a mess. At a recent hearing we requested information on the job evaluation system the city uses—the Hay system. Each job has point values. We know how they give points for everything you do. But they won't tell us if you've got 200 points how much dollar value is attached to that. The reason the Deputy Director of Personnel for the City of Boston gave to the NLRB as to why they didn't want to give us that information is that it would cause social chaos because at least 50 percent of the jobs in the city are misclassified.

Bill: Comparable worth is a theory that goes beyond the idea of equal pay for equal work. It deals with the reality that there are many jobs that are predominantly male or predominantly female. The jobs that are predominantly male are generally valued more by the society and by the employers and the wage level in these jobs is usually substantially higher than the jobs that are predominantly female. This is true even though the level of training and experience may be just about the same.

Comparable worth is a very strong theory. But it runs into some legal problems because up until very recently there hasn't been anything in the law that's really dealt with this phenomenon.

I think that there are different dynamics that go into racial segregation than sex se-

gregation in the job market and that the issues have to be looked at separately. For example, in the construction industry you have a relatively large number of minorities in the Laborers Union. Now the average required skill level of a laborer is low compared to a sheet metal worker or pipefitter. So you can't make a comparable worth issue between laborers and sheetmetal workers.

Celia: Comparable worth could be extended to race. And has, in fact. The first case that was ever filed in court was based on race. But it has evolved to become predominantly a women's issue. An article by Judy Scales-Trent entitled "Comparable Worth: Is This A Theory for Black Workers?" makes a really important distinction. She points out that women often get something out of the jobs they are doing. Though women may be conditioned by society to take up helping and service jobs, they have often invested time and money in training for these jobs and they don't necessarily want to get out of them. This is much less true of the jobs that Black men are often relegated to. She uses the example of taxi drivers. Most Black men, if they had the chance, would love to get out of that kind of job. They're not being taxi drivers because taxi driving means anything to them. But most women don't want to give up nursing; they don't want to give up social service work; they may not want to give up clerical work. Plus they are often locked into these jobs. They have to make a choice between sacrificing money to do something they feel good about doing versus going into a man's job. Comparable worth says women shouldn't have to make that kind of choice. It says those jobs are worth as much as men's jobs; the better paid men's jobs.

Ronique: I think that the difference in pay between male and female jobs was originally based on the argument that men were heads of the household and that therefore they needed more money than women to support their families. And most of the women who were working at that time were minority women, so nobody cared. But since that time many women have become heads of households because there has been a large increase in the rate of divorce, and unwed mothers and single mothers by choice. And these women need the same amount of money to care for their families as do these men.

Meizhu: I'd just like to add a couple of statistics. One out of every ten women is a single head of a household so that's ten percent overall. Two out of five women of color are heads of households—that's forty percent. Eighty percent of all women work in twenty occupations out of 427 occupations listed by the Bureau of the Census and those twenty are concentrated in clerical, sales and service.

FM: One possible objection to organizing for comparable worth might be that it accepts the inevitability of sex segregated jobs. How would you respond to such an argument?

Celia: If jobs were paid equally I think you'd find a lot of men that would cross over. On the one hand comparable worth assumes yes, segregation in the job market will probably continue. On the other hand, by raising the pay in women's jobs I think it will encourage this segregation to break down over the long haul.

Source: *Economic Notes***Table 1****Median Annual Earnings for Families
With Wage and Salary Earners, 1984**

	Number of families (millions)	% of all families	Median annual earnings
Married couple families			
Only husband works	10.8	26.2%	\$21,476
Only wife works	2.1	5.1	10,712
Husband and wife work	13.3	32.1	33,904
Husband, wife, and other family member(s) work	3.2	7.9	47,736
Husband and other family member(s) work	2.3	5.7	36,452
Families maintained by women	6.4	15.4	14,976
Families maintained by men	1.7	4.2	20,852

Source: U.S. Department of Labor.

**Table 2
Industries and Occupations
Of Women Workers, 1984**

	Millions of Women Workers
Record and office clerks, book- keepers, bank tellers	7.2
Secretaries, stenographers, typists	4.8
Retail sales workers	4.5
Food preparation and service	3.2
Elementary and high school teachers and teachers' aids	2.8
Registered and licensed practical nurses	1.8
Building and private household maids	1.6
Nurses' aides and orderlies	1.5
Textile and apparel machine operators	1.1
Childcare workers	1.0

Source: U.S. Department of Labor.

**Table 3
Women as % of All Workers
Select Occupations, 1972 and 1984**

	1972	1984
Carpenters	.6%	1.3%
Brickmasons	.6	.3
Electricians	.4	1.2
Plumbers, pipefitters	.3	1.1
Auto mechanics	.5	.8
Firefighters	.5	.7
Rail transportation	—	.5
Registered nurses	98.0	96.0
Secretaries	99.2	98.3
Typists	96.2	95.7
Childcare workers	95.8	95.2
Textile sewing machine operatives	94.8	93.2

Source: U.S. Department of Labor.

Meizhu: It's a real right-wing argument—a sort of Phyllis Schlafly type of argument to women—to say that comparable worth will mean women will be more segregated than ever. One example of how that *isn't* true is in Minnesota. There was legislation passed in 1982 that grew out of a comparable worth suit and won thousands of women upgradings and increases in pay. Yet in the subsequent years female employment in male dominated jobs increased by 19 percent compared to only 5 percent in female dominated occupations. So comparable worth certainly didn't have the effect of making women stay where they were in this case.

Celia: Comparable worth gives women more opportunities to work their way out of their present jobs. If a woman has a better paying job then she can afford to save some money to go to school and make other plans instead of leading a subsistence life. It could encourage women to crossover and find new jobs.

Bill: I agree with your arguments. But I've been wondering about this question because the issue of comparable worth arose only within the last few years and after a period when there were attempts to break into a number of male dominated jobs. For example, down in the General Dynamics shipyard roughly ten years ago the company hired women in greater numbers than they ever had before. (And by that I don't mean any great numbers. It's just that before there had been zero.) But a lot of the women got driven out of the yard by the chauvinism of many of their co-workers as well as of their supervisors. I was wondering whether comparable worth was being raised now partly as a response to relatively unsuccessful attempts to break down segregation in the job market.

Ronique: I don't think so. I think that women have various interests and they do various things. Women are getting into new fields and it's primarily because they have a desire to try them. And, of course, they need the money.

FM: That's true. But while affirmative action has opened up some jobs and a certain percentage of women have been able to take advantage of that, for a lot of women getting into a man's job has never been an option either by inclination or whatever.

Celia: But I don't think that comparable worth was a reaction to being pushed out of men's jobs, though some people might have reacted that way. I do think exposure to some predominantly male jobs makes you suddenly see that these jobs are no harder than the crap that you are putting up with every day. Yet they are making twice as much as you and you say, "What is the logic behind this?" There is no logic to explain it. There is no logical reason why a staff nurse in the City of Boston should get \$10,000 less a year than firefighters. I mean firefighters, except when there is a fire, sit there and cook and play poker. They do that for a certain number of hours and then they risk their lives for a certain number of hours. People on the hospital floor are nervous wrecks by the end of the day; they work overtime without pay; and they are making \$10,000 less a year.

Ronique: Plus nurses are exposed to a lot of hazardous diseases that are comparable to firefighters risking their lives. We work with patients that have certain diseases that can't be cured. And if you get it, you got it!

Bill: Physicians' assistants are a graphic example of job discrimination through job segregation. I was talking to a doctor friend and she said that physicians' assistants' positions were basically created for men after the Vietnam war when medics were coming back.

Ronique: Yes. And they get more money. Yet physicians' assistants only have certificates while nurse practitioners have a license. Not just in Massachusetts but across the country. But the physicians' assistants make more money because they are men.

Celia: At U. Mass we recently had two positions posted the same day. One was for a secretary who had to handle work for three departments, had to know three languages and be an excellent typist. There was also a job posted for the ticket taker in the parking lot. That job was three grades higher than the secretarial job! And it wasn't even outdoors!

FM: It is interesting that you use examples of nurses and skilled secretaries. One possible pitfall of comparable worth is that it will become a remedy available to workers in the most skilled "women's professions"—teaching, nursing, library science—but not to those in less skilled jobs like clericals. How big a problem is this?

Celia: I don't know if that's true. All the initial cases—San Jose—were all clerical workers. And then nurses got involved. Washington state was mostly clerical people. And Yale. Minnesota. If you think about the major cases a lot of them are in municipal employment which is almost all clerical. Now nurses are often included in that and sometimes teachers. But I think nursing has become big because nursing is organized and has taken it up as an issue in a big way. Nurses are a very graphic case of highly skilled, highly educated people who fall far behind other folks. I think it's like any other reform. It's who takes it up. Look at the ERA and affirmative action. I think it's who is fighting for a reform that determines how broadly it's applied and who's affected.

Bill: I don't think we hear so much about nurses and comparable worth just because they are organizing strongly for it. I think it's an employer tactic. They are holding out a bone. Insofar as they are going to accept comparable worth, they're going to accept it for nurses and teachers and librarians. I think that they are trying to define comparable worth on terms most favorable to them. I think in the future we will see a real struggle over who comparable worth should apply to.

Meizhu: I read one thing that said that inequities are the biggest at the lowest end of the pay scales. For instance, compare the wages of groundskeepers at the hospital who are all men and really don't need that much training versus, say, nurses aides, who actually have a lot more skills yet are lower paid than the men. When I started to read some things about comparable worth it seemed like most of the examples that they use are always nurses and librarians. It's funny that there are such dramatic examples at the lower end yet they don't use them. And that makes me think that there is a little bit of bias towards professionalism on the part of the unions or whoever.

Ronique: But I think, too, that people who are in those professions fight a little bit

harder than people who are at the lower end of the pay scale. I think that people at the lower end of the pay scale are more threatened because they feel that if they fight harder they'll get tossed out.

Celia: They may be unorganized or they may not have very effective organization. A lot of professional organizations do a lot of lobbying and have a whole back-up of people who can get their case into the media.

Meizhu: We also need to deal with the perception—and also the reality—that the movement for comparable worth is led mainly by white women. How can we help to bridge that gap and convince people of color that this issue can work for them and draw them into the process? One thing is to have evaluations by race as well as by sex. I think out of eighteen states only one—New York—is looking at race segregation too. That's just going on now. It will be interesting to see how it comes out.

Bill: To make comparable worth relevant to people of color really depends on how comparable worth is defined. If it is defined not just in terms of nurses and teachers but the bottom sector then it will be relevant.

Meizhu: Women of color have to be in the forefront of discussion of how job evaluations are done and what jobs are fought for in any specific contract. I think the reality of the situation is that women of color identify more by race than by sex. They've had to break into white women's jobs before they've been able to worry about pay equity. And they are very concerned with what is going on with their men. It's easier for them to unite with their men than it is to unite with white women because historically that's how it's been done in this country.

Ronique: I think that's only half true. I think that because Black women have always been in the workforce and will always be in the workforce that comparable worth is a very real issue in their lives. There are more women of color that are heads of households than anyone else so therefore they have to worry about themselves even more than they worry about the men.

FM: It is probably true that people of color identify more with affirmative action as an issue. Could someone summarize how comparable worth is different from affirmative action?

Meizhu: The difference is that comparable worth only deals with wages whereas affirmative action deals with people getting hired in the first place, recruitment, promotional opportunities and a lot of other things.

I feel that comparable worth is a form of affirmative action. The definition of affirmative action is something that takes positive steps not only to eliminate discrimination and unequal pay for equal work but goes beyond it to redress past discrimination. And that's what comparable worth does. It says that women have been discriminated against for years and we're going to do something to redress that. So some of these cases have won back pay for women. (For up to ten years, I think, in San Jose.) I think it is important to say that because often comparable worth and affirmative action are

seen as totally different things and played against each other. Even if it's not strictly true I think that politically it is important to say.

Celia: Affirmative action deals with career ladders. There needs to be a way for women and minorities to move up and out of where they are initially brought in. Affirmative action says that there has to be a logic to who gets hired initially and to the procedures used to move up and train people. Comparable worth doesn't deal with that at all. It just looks at the structure and compares wages within that structure.

One without the other is incomplete. I think what happened over time is that people found affirmative action was incomplete. You'd have 200 women at the bottom of the clerical scale. Say you were going to create promotional opportunities for women and minorities that would open up ten higher paying jobs. But you are still left with 190 people who have no recourse except to wait for those people to die or quit. There was something limiting there.

Ronique: Comparable worth and affirmative action are both important to achieve equality. But I also think that affirmative action would be more beneficial to the male population of minorities. And I think that comparable worth is really for females. Minority males have been pushed to the bottom of the ladder in the workforce more than anyone else. They need affirmative action to get out from under.

FM: Right now comparable worth is really catching on, while affirmative action seems to run up against one roadblock after another. One theory is that the popularity of comparable worth corresponds to the declining success of affirmative action. Do you think this is true? What is the state of affirmative action, and will interest in comparable worth help or hurt goals associated with affirmative action?

Ronique: In the last few years a lot more non-minority women have gone into the work force. Before people didn't think about the women who were working already—minority women. And also the country is moving more rightward and the Right-wing is undoubtedly more racist, more against affirmative action, more against anything that upgrades minorities.

On the other hand, in nursing it's easier to deal with affirmative action than it is dealing with comparable worth because of the amounts of money involved. There are such large numbers of women in this field while there are a much smaller number of minorities. One out of twenty women are nurses. And we would be comparing nurses to firemen, policemen, and doctors because in many ways the jobs are comparable if you look at the amount of work and the amount of hazards.

Celia: It will take a strike of the nurses to get comparable worth. For comparable worth we'd have to shut the place down.

We also need to remember how few women were in unions say twenty years ago, and what a small role they played in them until recently. It's only been in the last fifteen years that the unions have touched any women's issues—and then always dragged along, kicking and screaming. The combination of more women coming into the labor

market and women who came out of the women's movement getting into positions of power in the unions have both contributed to making comparable worth take off as an issue.

FM: It does seem that the public sector unions in particular have played a big role. Nationally they've become very prominent and they represent a lot of women.

Celia: It wasn't even legal for public sector workers to unionize until 1963 when federal employees started to organize. It was only after that point that public employees began to unionize in any mass way. It would make sense that in ten years these unions would start taking up issues that were particular to the public sector. And the public sector is predominantly women. The public employee unions had to come up with some issues that spoke to who was being organized; who was in the workforce.

MeiZhu: So far comparable worth hasn't hit the private sector that much. There are tons of women—especially women of color—who are in really low paying jobs in the private industry. For instance, more than fifty percent of all women stitchers in the country are Chinese. There aren't that many Chinese women so if you think that more than fifty percent of stitchers are Chinese that is a huge concentration there. A lot of them are not organized and they can't speak English that well. So how are they going to push for comparable worth studies of their jobs?

B.C.

By Johnny Hart



FM: How would you describe the stand of the unions on comparable worth? Would you say they are fighting harder for comparable worth than they did for affirmative action?

Celia: Well comparable worth doesn't involve moving people around—who gets hired, who gets promoted, who gets laid off—so it might not stir up the sort of internal divisions that came out of affirmative action. When you start getting into people's jobs and messing around with that you hit at a much deeper level of anger. Of course, the impact of comparable worth hasn't really been felt yet because the first case was in 1981. It's only been four years. People haven't gotten to hate each other about it yet—although the potential is great! Now if management gave all these comparable worth raises and they gave no wage increases to the rest of the group for that year then you would see holy hell break out. They have chosen not to do that. Now that's a good question why they haven't done that.

Ronique: I think the present system of things has a white male dominance and I think it would be more popular for a white male to support anything that has a white person as a counterpart.

Celia: The top levels of many unions, and the AFL-CIO as a whole, have given the nod to comparable worth. But when you look beyond this, you find a lot of resistance and hostility.

Meizhu: Yeah. In our recent contract we won an upgrading of grades three and four. The president of the local representing the Parks and Recreation Department said, "The only fours I have are women. They are matrons. And my men would really be angry if they made the same amount as they did." There are definitely those attitudes. I do think it would be more likely that our union would take up comparable worth than affirmative action. We've never even been able to get them to talk sensibly about affirmative action.

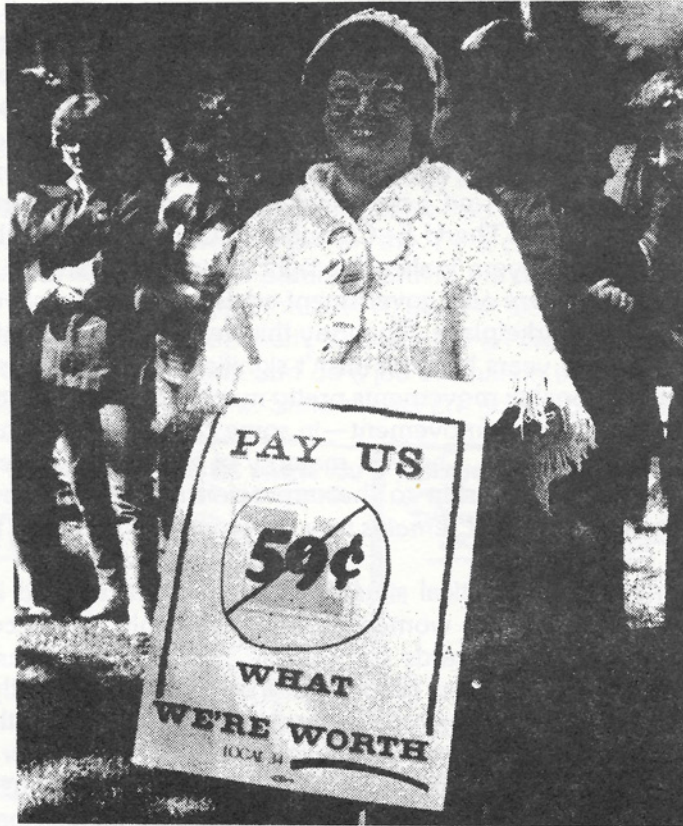
Celia: We were talking about whether we could do comparable worth in the City of Boston and Meizhu was saying, "Well, perhaps we could do it at the hospital. But no other president in AFSCME would support it because they are all men." But it's just not clear how much support you would get from the District if one local president is saying "Yes" and fifteen are saying "We're going to kill you if you do this." I also feel the amount of back-up and support you would get from the International is something of an unknown even though AFSCME has done a lot around comparable worth nationally.

Meizhu: If you look at the places where comparable worth suits have been filed it's where women were more than fifty percent of the workforce too. When it comes to affirmative action and people of color they are never a majority. Or if they are in a shop where they are a majority it doesn't really come up.

For example, affirmative action was never used as an organizing tool by AFSCME even though they organized Blacks during the Civil Rights movement. With comparable worth they have definitely used it as an organizing tool. For instance, in Connecticut there was a comparable worth suit—really a job evaluation study—that was filed by some public sector workers who were their own independent association. AFSCME jumped in and co-filed it and really helped out and got the thing moving. Later, they won representation. So they used it to gain more members which is fine. But it is a little different than what happened with affirmative action.

Celia: I think where comparable worth really has a chance to be successful is in locals with lots of women. In this situation the leadership—even if it is all white guys—has felt politically backed into a corner and was willing to jump in front. I think about San Jose and the feminist city council there. The leadership of the union was all women. They were putting a lot of heat on AFSCME to do something and AFSCME filed the legal suits. But when the local went out on strike, the national leadership wasn't quite sure what they had gotten themselves into. I don't think they necessarily wanted a strike over comparable worth.

Even in the Yale strike, which helped to focus so much attention on the issue, the union did not start out explicitly calling for comparable worth. It was the media who picked up on the issue. The organizers—who in this case were sympathetic—jumped right in because it was a great way to make Yale squirm. An organizer from Yale spoke to us and basically said, “Yeah, we used the issue. In fact some of what we were looking to get in our contract was comparable worth and we’ve learned a lot about it and it was a great issue. But we didn’t call it that. It became that.”



An example of another sort of response to the comparable worth issue is provided by the IUE at GE here in Massachusetts. A group of women were doing almost exactly the same job as a group of guys but were in a lower grade and getting paid less. The women filed a grievance to have their job redefined as the same job even though it was slightly different. The union refused to file it as a sex discrimination case. The women did a MCAD (Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination) suit on their own and eventually won a good settlement. Then the union lauded the victory. They were out there saying, “Oh, yes, we fought this sex discrimination.” But in fact, they had fought the women tooth and nail until the very end over calling it sex discrim-

ination. If these women had said they wanted all the jobs women were doing re-evaluated they would never have gotten it with the support of the union. Maybe if they had a good MCAD case the union would have gone along eventually.

Meizhu: I think you have to look at the different political situation in the sixties when affirmative action came in and now. In the 1960s the unions were riding high and they didn't feel like they had to unite with anybody. It was the minority communities pushing for affirmative action. At that time, the federal government played the role of supporter and actually stood behind affirmative action in a number of cases.

Now in the 1980s the situation is reversed. The unions are on the run, the Right-wing is on the rise, and the unions see that they need to get more people into their ranks. Women workers represent a big group that they might be able to get behind them. Today it is the federal government that is stonewalling at every opportunity. There was the Pendleton [Clarence Pendleton, Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, a Reagan appointee—ed.] statement about comparable worth being the looniest thing since loony tunes. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce said that comparable worth would "crimp employers 'inalienable right' to set pay strategies." There are Right-wing economists—who are also government advisers—that are saying comparable worth will disrupt the marketplace. They say this despite the fact that there have been shortages of nurses for years but that hasn't significantly raised nurses' wages.

FM: The oppressed nationality movements pretty much had to force the issue of affirmative action on the trade union movement—in some cases suing unions along with corporations for job discrimination. The vast majority of the unions never really embraced the issue and their relationship to the oppressed nationality movements remained largely adversarial. And that *remains* true today when it comes to an issue like affirmative action.

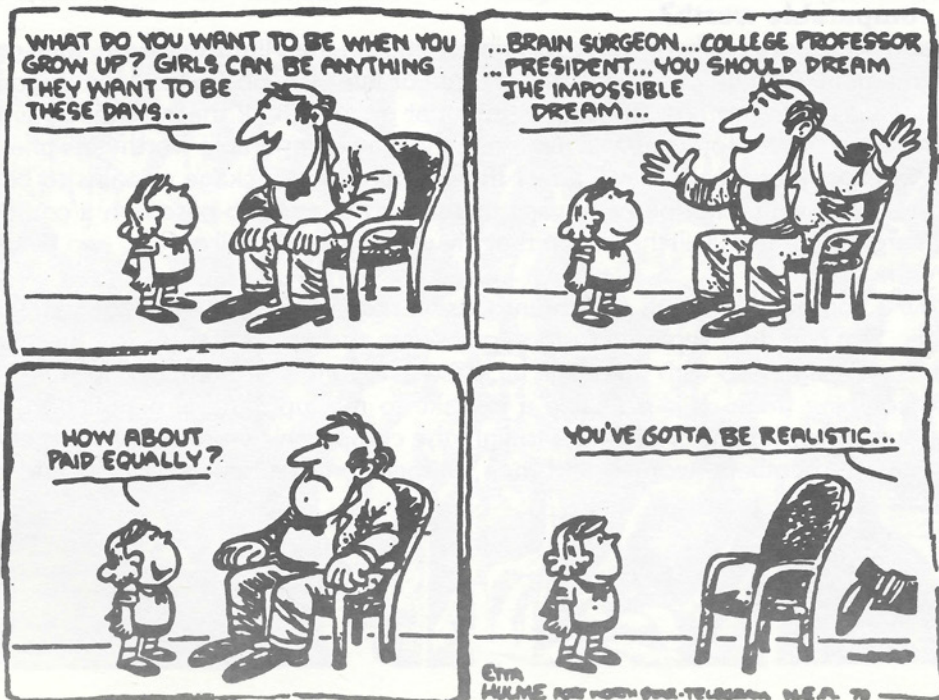
The changed economic and political situation the unions face—and in particular their need to bolster their ranks with women workers—certainly help account for the unions' more accepting attitude towards comparable worth. The unions also know from their experience with affirmative action that they can expect costly legal suits against them by women workers and women's organizations if they turn their back on women's demands. But as you pointed out, government is a lot less favorable to anti-discrimination cases these days so women might not be as successful. Just last month the EEOC refused to act on a sex discrimination case based on the comparable worth argument brought by AFSCME. It involved women working for a local housing agency. The women claimed that they were paid less than men in the agency despite the fact that their jobs required "equal or more skill, effort and responsibility."

Bill: The labor movement has definitely taken a different attitude towards white women than it has towards people of color. You can look at the different way CLUW was treated compared to the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. I think that we as activists can't be taken in by that. The Left needs to define comparable worth in terms that insure that people of color benefit. And that means insuring that comparable worth reaches down to help those at the lower end of the wage scale.

FM: A number of states have extensive job evaluation studies underway aimed at implementing comparable worth reviews. Is this largely due to legal suits brought by unions or women's organizations? What relation does state job restructuring have to union collective bargaining agreements?

Meizhu: It seems like it's a coalition of both unions and women's groups. In Massachusetts AFSCME has a lobbyist that really has been doing a lot of work behind that.

Celia: Here in Massachusetts, all the unions got invited in right away. The state recognized they had to have them on board or there would be a reaction. Governor Dukakis was very smart. In the Washington state case, the court held that not only was there discrimination, but the state—which had done a job evaluation study—was liable for not doing anything about it. As a result, they awarded the women workers involved retroactive pay of \$800 million. Well as soon as that came out, Dukakis dropped the study because he didn't want to be legally liable. So they have never done a job evaluation study. What he did was he got on the TV a couple of months later and said, fine, we agree we have to do comparable worth in the state. We don't need a study. We will just print out any job category that has 70 percent women and we will compare it to other ones and we will upgrade them. Dukakis did an end-run and did not really thoroughly look at the whole system and do a job evaluation in the state. Now I think a lot of people will get things out of it. State nurses are going to get a lot. Probably certain



clerical titles will get a lot. But I think there will be a lot of people who will fall through the cracks. And you'll never have a rational evaluation system.

FM: Is there a danger that comparable worth — where it has gained some momentum in the public sector — is going to be a bureaucratic, top-down affair? Will the unions end up running behind things, yelling, "This is great. We fought for this." but not really having that much to say about what it really accomplishes?

Celia: In Massachusetts I think Dukakis really got out in front and outfoxed everybody. And none of the unions involved really stood up to him. As far as comparable worth becoming a bureaucratic, top-down affair, this is no different than any reform you might have. If the ERA passed, what would it mean unless there were people out front fighting to make it as broad as possible? Any law is just a law; any change is just a change. Unless there are people making it is broad as possible then the powers that be will make it as weak as possible. So I'd say, yeah, that's all a possibility but that's a possibility with anything you do.

FM: To conclude, can you summarize the relationship between union contracts and women's organizations, union, and government studies endorsing comparable worth?

Celia Well there really isn't any set relationship. In the Minnesota case, they came to an agreement. The unions negotiated a three or five year phase-in of the upgrades so that it wasn't going to cost the state a lot all at once. I think that's probably what the unions are going to do. They will negotiate the way comparable worth gets phased in. Now whether that means it will affect the overall wage package remains to be seen. Say you are giving a ten percent wage increase to one group based on a comparable worth argument; then will that mean that the wage increase will only be two percent for everyone else?

How a comparable worth settlement gets worked out has to be negotiated with the unions. You can do it separate from negotiations and argue that solving these inequities has nothing to do with the wage increase everyone else is entitled to. Or you can try to combine them. It is probably a mistake to mix up general negotiations with a comparable worth fight. You've got to fight the comparable worth issue independently to get union members, women and men, to focus on that issue politically and understand it. ■

Women of Color Conference A Long Journey For Chinese-American Women

Editors' Note: *The following is a speech given at the conference of the Massachusetts Women of Color Organization in April, 1984. The organization is now renamed Women of Colors Unified.*

Here I am, a Chinese-American, a woman of color, speaking to women of other colors: Black, Latina, Native American. How did I get here? My mother would never call herself a "woman of color," and it has been a long process for me and many of my other sisters to come to this new self-identification. Learning the history of my people and that of the other "minorities" in America is what brought me to this place.

Ironically, I have to start with a man, because the history of the Chinese in America is largely a male history. In 1850, there were only seven Chinese women here.

My father arrived in Seattle Chinatown in 1921 as a boy of about twelve. When he stepped off the boat that carried him forever away from the peasant village he was born



in, who can say what he felt. He never said, because the Chinese don't like to talk about or show their emotions. But he must have felt the pain of loss: he had little hope of seeing his mother or sister for a long time. For several generations, his family's men-folk had come to America, leaving wives and girl children behind. It would be 57 years before my father and his sister set eyes on each other again. There were several reasons for their long, forced separation.

It was not just that men came to work and couldn't afford to bring their families over. It was a question of race. Like Blacks, the Chinese stood out because of their skin, their features, their hair. One issue the Civil War dealt with was the status of Black citizens. Whites on the West Coast didn't want to worry about whether the Chinese would ever compete with whites for jobs, housing, or education. They had a simple solution: deny the Chinese citizenship, because "aliens" don't get equal rights. In 1882, a national Exclusion Act was passed, barring the Chinese from citizenship. Women in particular were denied entry. The history of the Chinese in America is a history of racist exclusion, particularly the exclusion of women. Because without women, there can't be families, and without families, there can't be home, and without a home, there would be no desire for integration, and with no desire for equality—no problem for white America! This law was the first reason for my father's separation from his sister.

Because men outnumbered women by 20 to 1 in those days, Chinese girls were sold or stolen and brought to America as prostitutes. Sensationalist reports of raids on those establishments published in the style of the *Enquirer* contributed to the derogatory stereotype of Chinese women: sexual objects, Suzie Wongs.

My grandfather, father and male cousins ran a Chinese restaurant. Others had laundries. These were safe jobs, because no white man would lower himself to do what was considered "women's work." Among our people, both the men and the women do women's work, which is undervalued and underpaid, and which contributes to the stereotype of Chinese men as effeminate and weak.

There were some women in those early years—wives of citizens or merchants, who were exempt from the Exclusion Act. They had to be tough. A very few became independent, like Tye Leung who in 1898 ran away from Chinatown and worked with church people to rescue girls from houses of prostitution. She went on to become the first Chinese woman civil servant in 1910, only to lose the job when she married a white man, which was illegal, in 1912. It was hard for these few women, isolated in a sea of men, and coming from a culture where women are taught that they have no needs, let alone rights of their own. Their role was defined as servant for their father, or brother, or husband, or husband's family, with no possibility of independence. So we have thousands of years of experience at enduring, thinking first of the welfare of others and of ourselves last, years of making the best of our unlucky lot to be born female.

The American women's movements, like the suffrage movement, didn't move Chinese women. But events in China did. The 1911 revolution overturned the feudal order, and there was talk of women's rights. Imitating Chinese events, Chinese-Amer-

ican women's organizations were formed, but they faced East: their purpose was to help the nationalist government in China rather than to fight for rights in America, which they could not consider their "home."

It was not until 1943, almost within my own lifetime, that the Exclusion Acts were repealed. Chinese women immigrated in a huge wave that reduced the ratio of men to women to two to one. Chinese men began to move out of the bachelor ghettos, have families, and get jobs in the white community. But even though the Chinese became citizens, as my parents finally did in 1952, their status still depended on the attitude of the American government towards the country of their origin. In 1949, there was a successful communist revolution in China. The door to China was shut from 1949 to 1976. That is the second reason why my father and sister couldn't meet for so long—how could anyone travel to or from a country that America said didn't exist? And under McCarthyism, many Chinese lost their recently acquired jobs in the white job market. My father's generation learned the painful lesson that when you have a yellow face, you are always treated like a foreigner.

A New Generation

I grew up in the 50's, and I'm the first generation of Chinese that has been allowed a normal family life. But with American citizenship, and introduction into the American mainstream, my generation faced a new set of problems and a new form of racism: the problem of cultural identity.

My father's generation faced overt discrimination. But he simply kept working harder, kept smiling, kept trying to prove by example that the Chinese are, indeed, good citizens. I wondered: why wasn't he angry? Why didn't he demand his rights? Not being allowed for so long to become an American had a positive side: he was clear about his Chinese identity. He walked encased in the armor of Chinese pride. No matter how much he was rejected or mistreated, he knew that he was a member of an ancient and glorious civilization. He had a different value system. The most respected person in China is the scholar. Money was not valued as much as knowledge. My father was full of knowledge, so being passed over for a job promotion wasn't all that bad. In China, people want harmony; in America, everything is in conflict. So how could he let himself get too upset by such a childish, topsy-turvy society?

That attitude helped my father's generation endure. But that didn't mean they wanted their children to have to stay in laundries all their lives. So when they could, they moved to a white community, enduring the protests of neighbors. This is when I made my entrance. In my first 5 years, I was Chinese, the world was Chinese, and Chinese was good. But when I left the doors of my home, suddenly the world was white, and Chinese was not so good. The safety patrol boy wouldn't let me and my sister cross the street. Kids pointed fingers at me, and made funny noises. When my mother came to my school, I saw kids stare at her, and heard through their ears that she talked wrong. I got the message that "white is right." They were the rich, the popular, the smart ones, the class presidents. So I tried harder and harder to pretend I was white. Unlike my father, I was vulnerable, without Chinese armor.

The American system of racism divides people into Black and white. I remember hearing kids taunt a light-skinned Black child— “You’re not Black, you’re not white, you’re NOTHING!” I felt that my family was deformed and deficient, because we looked different and had a different language. Blacks at that time were straightening their hair—and we were curling ours! And as our parents watched with pride as we took baby steps out of Chinatown laundries and garment factories, they found out the high price: we stopped remembering Chinese pride, we forgot our language and customs, and so we weren’t really their children any more.

But luckily, times keep changing. The Civil Rights movement of Black Americans in the 1960’s struck a responsive chord in us. If Black is beautiful, so is yellow! One of my teachers saw Chinese imagery in a piece of my writing, and something clicked. I realized that by being Chinese, I was not deficient, but had an added dimension to draw from. And so we stopped being ashamed of our parents’ accents, stopped wishing our eyes were round, and started studying our language and our history. We almost lost half of ourselves, but then we found it again, and it feels good to be whole.



Meizhu and her family, 1948

Chinese-Americans are coming together, and fighting for complete equality. Chinese women are challenging their oppression both as Chinese and as women. In 1982, when Chinese male factory owners tried to pay their workers less than the union wage, women garment workers of all colors marched with their Chinese sisters for equal pay. That surprised the pants off the Chinese businessmen, who put out anti-union propaganda saying that the union was white and therefore unworthy of Chinese attention. We're learning when to be national, and when to be multi-national.



Now in the 1980's, wearing our identity in our hair and on our skin is excellent. While it means that whites won't let us forget, we also don't WANT to forget who we are and where we came from. We refuse to pay the price of cultural "melt-down" to become American. We want to celebrate our parents' courage, their resourcefulness, their suffering, their endurance, their human values.

As I look out at all you women of color, it's a wonderful feeling—like my father's feeling when he too found his long-lost sister. And we know we're strong, united in sisterhood, and determined to become a powerful force—as guardians of our past, the shakers and movers of our present, and as the creators of our peoples' and all peoples' futures.

—Meizhu Lui

1:30 AM: Thinking of Women in Nicaragua

Women
Are not made of stone
In Nicaragua.
They fall and bruise and hurt
just like I do.
But they pick up their pain
And keep on moving.

Women
Are not made of steel
In Nicaragua.
They wonder and weep and grow tired
Just like I do.
But they hold their sorrow close
And keep on moving.

Women
Are not made of diamond
In Nicaragua.
Not hard, sharp-pointed and unbreakable.
They break and scatter into pieces
Just like I do.
But together they build a whole. . .

My pain flutters inside me tonight.
Like a moth trapped in the light.
Thinking of you, Nicaraguita
New woman of Nicaragua,
I release it. . .
I don't want to follow in your footsteps,
But to work and fight beside you.

—Elena Gensler

[The author, a nurse in New York, recently travelled to Nicaragua.]

Pigeons For My Son

I gave the boy
a pair of pigeons
born and bred in my harsh prison.
They had taped wings,
and the instructions were
specifically
to keep them on for weeks
until they'd gotten used
to their new cages.
He never liked
the thought of me
in prison, his own mother,
and would not
stay for long
on visits.
So perhaps I thought
of souvenirs.

But the tape from his pigeons
he removed one day,
and set them free.
You'd think
that would have angered me,
or made me sad at least
but I guess we're of one mind.
Why cage pigeons
who prefer free flight
in the vaster, bluer skies?

—Mila D. Aguilar

Understanding Prison

One can always
not understand.
The croaking of
a hundred toads
can muffle
even the silence,
and the hum
of steady,
unending rain
can silence
even my croak.
One chooses
what to hear
and then again
what one hears
one can silence
because one has chosen.

—Mila D. Aguilar

Prison is
a double wall
one of adobe
the other
so many layers
of barbed wire
both formidable.
The outer wall
is guarded
from watchtowers.
The other
is the prison
within,
where they will hammer you
into the image
of their own likeness,
whoever they are.

*[Mila Aguilar, the Filipina poet and journalist, was arrested almost a year ago and has been detained without charge since then. Her case is attracting wide attention: during International Women's Week in the Phillipines last March, six hundred people risked attending a book party for a poetry collection Ms. Aguilar wrote while imprisoned. Back issues of **Forward Motion** have covered this case, and we urge interested readers to contact the U.S. **Committee to Free Mila Aguilar**, P. O. Box 1726, Cambridge, MA 02238.]*

A Look At The Pornography Debate

The debate over pornography, although an extremely lively one within the women's movement, goes largely unrecognized and is poorly understood by progressives working in other areas. This article is an attempt to layout the parameters of the pornography debate and to raise some questions for "the uninitiated" to think about and discuss, though it provides no solutions or "quick fixes" to the problem.

The women's movement in the United States has recently been split by an impassioned debate over the subject of pornography. The debate involves many different issues—violence against women; First Amendment rights; gay rights; the right to non-traditional sexual expression; censorship; even the dangers of feminist/right-wing alliances. Because this debate is not a theoretical one, because it involves the passage of new laws that will affect the quality of our daily lives, it is important that progressives have a clear understanding of the issues that are involved.

"Pornography Is The Theory; Rape Is The Practice"

Much of the controversy around pornography has been stimulated by the actions of organizations such as Women Against Pornography (WAP) and Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW). These groups' philosophy is often summarized as "pornography is the theory; rape is the practice." They have engaged in a variety of activities designed to demonstrate opposition to pornography and to educate the public about its harmful effects. To these organizations, pornography is a root cause of women's oppression. Pornography is viewed as anti-woman propaganda; as literature which encourages men to see women as sexually submissive beings who derive pleasure from being dominated and whose sexuality exists for the purpose of pleasing men.

Pornography is more than merely libelous, however. It is also seen as a cause of violence against women. WAP claims that porn encourages violence against women by creating a social context in which women are shown as enjoying rape, enjoying battering, enjoying any number of practices that the women's movement has organized against for over a decade. By creating a context in which women are seen enjoying violence against themselves, rape and other forms of sexual violence come to appear normal, even natural. Pornography therefore not only portrays violence against and domination of women, it also creates them. It causes the enjoyment of that violence and domination to become an integral part of the masculine experience of sex.

... It [pornography] makes orgasm a response to bigotry. It is a major way that dominance and submission, fused with the social definition of male and female ... is enjoyed, practiced, reinforced, and experienced. Pornography is a social force in making sexism sexy.¹

Anti-porn advocates Catherine McKinnon and Andrea Dworkin point to studies done by psychologists Edward Donnerstein and Neal Malamuth in which a disturbing connection between viewing violent pornography and desensitization to violence against women was revealed. For instance, in one of the studies they conducted, 51 percent of the college men involved said that they would participate in a rape if they thought they would get away with it.²



McKinnon and Dworkin also argue that pornography is not just a collection of images. They believe that pornography, inasmuch as it involves real women in its production, consists of actions, not just speech and is not therefore protected by the First Amendment. Pornography is not seen as an expression of free speech. On the contrary, it is considered to be a force that greatly limits the free speech of women.

These people [pornographers/First Amendment advocates] have . . . decided that there will continue an entire class of women who will be treated in these ways so they can have access to what they call freedom of speech: *freedom*, meaning their free access to women; *speech*, meaning women's bodies saying what they want them to say.³

The Dangers of Anti-Pornography Legislation

Although it has received less publicity, opposition to feminist anti-porn activities arose almost as soon as the anti-pornography movement itself. Although this opposition grew initially out of heterosexual concerns over prudery and sexual repression, it has since broadened to include issues of state censorship and control of sexual representation. Unlike the feminist anti-porn movement which is composed almost

entirely of women, the "pro-sex/anti censorship" movement is composed of a wide range of mixed-gender factions such as book store owners and publishing groups; feminists concerned with government censorship; sexual libertarians; gay rights advocates; the ACLU; and predictably, the porn industry itself. Within this mixed coalition there are several distinct disagreements with the position held by most anti-porn feminists.

On a basic level, there is considerable question as to whether pornography has the harmful effects ascribed to it by Women Against Pornography. For many "pro-sex" advocates, pornography is viewed as educational, pleasurable, and cathartic. As sexual libertarians, this section of the "anti-anti-porn movement" considers all measures designed to regulate sexual conduct as repressive and damaging to healthy sexual development. Many members of this grouping view feminists who oppose pornography as anti-sexual prudes. Pornography, they assert, is something that can be used by couples and individuals to enrich their sex lives. Sex is not something that should be kept in a closet.

Gay men and lesbians also have concerns around these issues. Gay pornography is fundamentally different from heterosexual pornography. (There is so little lesbian porn that what we speak of is really gay male porn.) In a country where heterosexual porn holds an almost undisputed hegemony, gay porn can be seen as oppositional literature, as a form of expression that creates a space for a sexual practice that is not heterosexual. Indeed, such sexually explicit material can be an important part of resistance to heterosexual social dominance on a cultural and political level. For these reasons, there is considerable concern in the gay community that any censorship of sexually explicit material will be turned against gay literature and bookstores rather than against the heterosexual pornography that is far more damaging to women.

Censorship is another point of departure on the pornography issue. Groups such as the ACLU and the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce (FACT) argue against any censorship of sexually explicit materials, not on the grounds that pornography does not harm women, but on the grounds that suppression of porn is a violation of the First Amendment. They contend that censorship of pornography would lead to censorship in other areas and to the eventual erosion of free speech rights. They point out that no one has ever been censored for woman-hating but that it was not long ago that materials on contraception and sex education were considered obscene and banned. In a time of increasing right-wing activity, they argue, it is extremely unwise to allow the government to determine what sexual images are political expression and what are not.

The underlying principle of the First Amendment is that the power of the government to regulate speech and political dissent that would derive from a system of prior restraints would be more dangerous than any given instance of unprotected speech.⁴

The issue of government censorship is not an abstract one. Recent attempts to create anti-porn legislation in the city of Minneapolis has brought the issue to a boil. Andrea Dworkin and Katherine McKinnon were invited by the Minneapolis city council to

draft a civil rights-based anti-porn ordinance and to organize public hearings to review the ordinance once created. The ordinance that they came up with differed from traditional anti-pornography legislation in several important ways. The Minneapolis ordinance deals with pornography as a form of sex discrimination rather than as obscenity. It defines pornography as "the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words"⁵ and then lists several criteria by which sexually explicit materials can be judged to subordinate women. When these conditions are met, any individual aggrieved by violations of the ordinance may enforce it by means of a civil suit—an attempt to keep control of the suit in the hands of the one bringing it rather than in the hands of the state. Although the ordinance was vetoed as too vague by the mayor of Minneapolis, similar ordinances have been introduced in Indianapolis and Suffolk County, New York.

There are, however, vital differences between the Minneapolis effort and these later legislative attempts. In Indianapolis, for instance, the legislation was introduced not by feminists, but by right-wing women active in Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum. Dworkin and McKinnon explicitly opposed both the Indianapolis and Suffolk County legislation, although the earlier feminist anti-porn efforts may well have inspired those of the right wing. Unlike the Minneapolis legislation, the Indianapolis and Suffolk County ordinances focussed primarily on violent pornography and viewed its harmful effects from a fundamentalist Christian perspective. So while the wording of the legislation has some similarity in all three cases, the potential difference in terms of censorship is critical. The Minneapolis legislators clearly had a feminist perspective, but legislators in Indianapolis and Suffolk County had another agenda. They saw pornography not as a threat to women, but as a threat to traditional family values, and it was on this basis that they supported the ordinance.

If pornography is O.K., I fought WWII for nothing. . . . It's bad enough when you read Edgar Allen Poe's books. I don't want to tell anybody what to do as long as they live by the Ten Commandments. (*Michael D'Andre, Suffolk County legislator*)⁶

Such a conservative commandeering of feminist legislation is precisely what is feared by those who oppose anti-porn legislation. With men such as Michael D'Andre in the forefront, is it realistic to expect that anti-porn legislation will be used *for* women rather than *against* gay men and lesbians? Moreover, since women must bring a civil suit in order to enforce this type of legislation, it is still ultimately up to the courts to decide whether or not a piece of sexually explicit material has had the effect it is claimed to have had by the woman bringing the suit.

I think that when we embark upon giving the state the rare power to regulate our sexual imagery, then we are making a serious mistake. How and why can we legislate into these kinds of box-like categories . . . how and why do we trust that interpretation of that meaning, that imagery to the court? (*Nan Hunter, FACT*)⁷

Our Response

With the right-wing's agenda clearly before us, how should we respond? What should our agenda be in regards to pornography? As feminists, there is little about por-

nography that we find appealing. It is not pleasurable and we find the "education" it provides to be misleading rather than clarifying. It is distressing to approach a newsstand for a paper and be confronted not only with "Thundertits" but also with the man who turns to look at you after reading the magazines. What is he thinking? How will he act on what he thinks?

It is important to realize that the impact of pornography goes beyond the images of individual women. When a porn aficionado enjoys a picture of a woman on her knees, he is savoring the flavor of a society that has kept women economically and politically on their knees for centuries. When a black woman is portrayed in pornography, the man who buys it is sold an entire cultural package, one which exploits the history of racial oppression in the United States.

I want you to understand that when a person of color is used in pornography, it's not the physical appearance of that person which makes it racist. Rather it's how that pornography capitalizes on the underlying history and myths surrounding and oppressing people of color in this country which makes it racist.⁸

As progressives, is that what we want attached to our sexual imagery? Does this kind of sexual imagery have anything to do with sexual liberation? Whose freedom of speech are we protecting? When we defend heterosexual pornography as it now exists, we defend the right to sell, not speak. What we defend when we defend pornography is the right of large corporate interests to promote an image and an industry that is sexist, racist, homophobic and exploitative of women, including the women who work for the porn industry.



Yet the question still remains—what is to be done? Within the confines of our present political circumstances, how can we resist pornography's libelous images and oppressive working conditions and at the same time create our own sexual space? What tactics can we use to defend ourselves that will not later be turned against us?

The danger of government censorship is real. As we write, Ronald Reagan is assembling a commission to review the social impact of pornography and we can be sure that its conclusions will be neither feminist nor progressive. Moreover, there are definite problems with even the Minneapolis legislation—the criteria for subordination are too vague and only enforceable by a justice system that is increasingly right-wing. Given that non-traditional imagery such as that of gay men and lesbians will be the first material attacked, we risk alienating the gay and feminist movements if we push for legislation as the only route forward. What other paths remain?

Education is obviously necessary. The time is past when progressive men can “bond” with their co-workers on the basis of a mutual exploitation of women. When we see pornography displayed in our workplaces, it is incumbent upon progressives—especially men—to confront the ones who posted it.

Feminists must attempt to come to some compromise on the pornography issue that will allow us to unite and move forward. When one group of women claims that another group of women are not feminists because they hold a different position on the issue, we have a serious problem. We need to maintain a dialogue and work together to resolve the pornography debate.

—Liz Hill and Cindy Lehmbeck

Footnotes:

1) McKinnon, Catherine and Nan Hunter, “Coming Apart: Feminists and the Conflict Over Pornography,” *Off Our Backs*, Volume XV, Number 6, June 1985, p. 6.

2) Diana E.H. Russell, “Pornography and Violence: What Does the New Research Say?” *Take Back the Night: Women On Pornography*, ed. Laura Lederer, Bantam Books, 1980, pp. 221-222.

3) McKinnon, Catherine and Nan Hunter, “Coming Apart: Feminists and the Conflict Over Pornography,” p. 8.

4) Wendy Kamines, “Pornography and the First Amendment: Prior Restraints and Prior Action,” *Take Back the Night: Women On Pornography*, p. 245.

5) Jeanne Barkey, “Minneapolis Porn Ordinance,” *Off Our Backs*, Volume XIV, Number 2, February, 1984, p. 1.

6) Mary Kay Blakely, “Is One Woman’s Sexuality Another Woman’s Pornography?” *Ms.*, April 1985, p. 44.

7) McKinnon, Catherine and Nan Hunter, “Coming Apart: Feminists and the Conflict Over Pornography,” pp. 7-8.

8) Tracey A. Gardner, “Racism in Pornography and the Women’s Movement,” *Take Back the Night: Women On Pornography*, pp. 94-95.

Editors’ note: Our apologies. Catherine McKinnon should read MacKinnon.

An Excerpt

Save Our Children From The Right Wing

The following article is an excerpt from the pamphlet Lesbian and Gay Exclusion: The Policy That Dares Not Speak Its Name, published by United Labor Press in 1982. We think it provides a good vantage point from which to consider recent changes in Massachusetts' foster care policies highlighted in this month's FM editorial.

Family life is a deeply felt issue. Families provide a place to go home to, people to care for you, a place to rest. They provide sustenance and support against the ravages of capitalism. In a society that preaches injustice and practices inhumanity, the family can provide a place to teach our children the values and attitudes we want them to learn. But despite some people's desperate hopes and the illusions foisted on them by TV shows and magazines, families cannot provide a haven of total escape. Some social conflicts and injustices attack the family from the outside, some erode it from within.

The deepening economic crisis places enormous burdens on families. For most it is increasingly difficult to make ends meet even if both parents can find work. For those who cannot find jobs in a shrinking labor market, unemployment benefits and welfare do not cover family expenses. Food on the table, heat in the winter, a roof over your head—these necessities cannot be taken for granted. Cutbacks in public services will close public hospitals and clinics in many communities, making decent health care a luxury most people can't afford. The public education system no longer teaches children to read and even those who can read often find the libraries closed. Day care centers will be closed. Services for the elderly including social security benefits they worked all their lives for will be cut. For the very young and the very old, the dream of a secure, healthy existence is a reality only for the rich.

But the family is not just under outside attack, it has also changed from within. Some of these changes are positive—the result of women's struggles for equality and liberation. These include women's access to greater opportunities in employment and education, their gains in the struggle to receive equal pay for equal work, their greater access to birth control information and abortion, their growing determination to fight for equality with men in all spheres of marriage and other relationships, and their increased capacity and willingness to be independent if need be. But capitalist society cannot allow women equality. Male abuse and neglect of women and children contin-

ues under capitalism and is intensified by the economic crisis. Under these pressures, it is difficult for families to stay healthy and survive. Statistics on the battery of women, child abuse, and divorce are frightening. People are in trouble and they know it.

In this complex political and social situation, the New Right has done some aggressive and effective organizing. They have claimed the mantle of a "Pro-Life" movement, set themselves up as crusaders who will "Save Our Children" and announced their intention to "protect" the American family. How will they do these things? Their policies reveal that they want to save and protect only a particular kind of family: a white, male-headed, middle-class family in which the wife is subservient to the male breadwinner, and the children are subservient to their parents. The New Right's social program explicitly attacks the rights of women. They work to defeat the ERA. They want to end affirmative action programs that have allowed women greater economic independence. They want to stop sex education in the schools and close birth control clinics. They want books like *Our Bodies, Ourselves* off the shelves of libraries. If teen-



New Right leaders depicted on the cover of Richard Viguerie's magazine *Conservative Digest* are, left to right, Phyllis Schlafly, Jerry Falwell, Howard Phillips, Viguerie, Sen. Jesse Helms, John T. Dolan, Morton Blackwell, and Paul Weyrich.

agers have sex, they want them to "pay" with pregnancy and forced early marriages. They seek a constitutional amendment limiting the right of a woman to choose to terminate an unwanted pregnancy even if her pregnancy originated from rape, incest or will risk her life. *

That the New Right has effectively blocked the drive to pass the ERA and now mounts a credible threat to abortion rights testifies to more than the strength of male supremacy or the profound challenge to the existing order raised by the women's movement. It also testifies to the disorganization of the Left and of progressive politics generally. The Left has elements of a program for women and the family, and that program has a potentially mass appeal. Every poll shows that a majority of the country supports the ERA and a women's right to choose whether or not to terminate a pregnancy. The New Right campaign against sex education and premarital sex meets indifference and derision among the young. But in the area of gay and lesbian rights, the New Right has played on the deeply imbedded fears and prejudices that many heterosexuals must grapple with. There the New Right has combined the organizational and financial advantages it has elsewhere with a simple and easily understood stand on the issue: "perverts" have no rights.

New Right organizations such as the Conservative Caucus (TCC), the Committee for Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC), the National Conservative Political Action Committee and Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority have made gay rights a focal point of their program of domestic social issues. In the last five years, the campaign of the New Right to smash the gay and lesbian rights movement has grown in visibility and organizing clout. New Right groups have launched well-funded campaigns to repeal gay rights initiatives in Eugene, Oregon; St. Paul, Minnesota; Wichita, Kansas; Dallas, Texas and most notably, Dade County, Florida. In the 1980 senatorial and congressional elections, they viciously attacked liberal candidates like George McGovern in South Dakota and John Culver of Iowa, featuring their real and alleged stands on gay rights as well as other issues. They have developed a hit-list of TV shows and entertainers which they argue portray homosexuals too positively and they are organizing to pressure producers to take these programs off the air.

While supporting New Right legal initiatives to repeal gay rights ordinances and its pressure tactics to prevent any discussion of homosexuality, extreme right and fascist groups use them to advocate more extreme remedies. Blaming the fall in the white birth rate and the erosion of white male supremacy on the spread of homosexuality among whites, the Imperial Wizard of the KKK labelled homosexuality part of the "vast conspiracy of communism." The Texas KKK issued a statement that "the KKK is not

*Introduced by Senator Paul Laxalt (R-Nevada), the Family Protection Act is the best legislative expression of New Right policy on the family to date. Among its thirty-five provisions are proposals that would refuse federal aid to programs for battered women and abused children, prohibit IRS challenges to the tax exempt status of schools that discriminate, and restrict Legal Services Corporations attorneys from providing clients with advice in desegregation litigation. The act specifically denies homosexuals protection of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and would prohibit federal funds to any group or individual that considers homosexuality an "acceptable lifestyle."

Because of their status in US society, lesbians and gay men have nothing to lose and everything to gain from fighting the New Right offensive. In the US today the basic democratic rights of gay men and lesbians are protected neither by state or federal law nor by custom. Men and women can still lose their jobs because they are homosexuals. They can be denied an apartment or evicted from one because of their sexual preference. They can be refused a mortgage, credit or insurance. They can be thrown out of a motel or restaurant simply because the owner doesn't like homosexuals. In 36 states, they are legally subject to arrest for having sexual relations in the privacy of their own homes. They can be denied custody of their children on the grounds that lesbians and gay men are unfit parents. They are subject to physical attacks merely because they inflame a sexist sense of sexual propriety. In recent years such attacks on Richard Hill-boro, Harvey Milk, and others have ended in the victims' death. Significantly the murder-ers of homosexuals (like the murderers of Blacks and other oppressed nationalities) often escape prosecution, and if brought to trial receive light sentences.* Despite these injustices (and in accordance with capitalist tradition) homosexuals, like Blacks, other oppressed nationalities, and women, are often blamed for both the ill treatment meted

*Dan White's murder of gay activist Harvey Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone caused a furor in gay communities nationwide. White's conviction on the reduced charge of voluntary manslaughter and his light sentence of three years touched off a major gay riot in San Francisco and protest demonstrations in many other cities.

out to them and other problems in our society. Right-wing politicians rant about "com-mies and faggots." Right-wing fundamentalist preachers and TV personalities rail against the sinfulness of gays, and a segment of the psychiatric profession pronounces them sick. For a diversity of reasons, many people in the US have strong prejudices against men and women who are homosexual. Gay men and lesbians face severe discrimination and persecution in US capitalist society.

Stonewall Means Fight Back

. . . While the gay rights movement has obviously not achieved an end to discrimination on the basis of homosexuality, it has been successful in curtailing particular forms of discrimination. Since 1971 ordinances prohibiting discrimination in housing and employment on the basis of sexual preference have passed in 40-50 cities including San Francisco; Washington, DC; East Lansing, Ann Arbor and Detroit, Michigan; Seattle; Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; Portland, Oregon and Toronto. Through the efforts of gay rights activists and their supporters numerous political, professional, and labor organizations have adopted resolutions calling for an end to discrimination against homosexuals including NOW, the American Psychiatric Association, the National Association of Social Workers, the New York City Bar Association, the American Library Association, the YWCA, the California Federation of Teachers, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME-AFL-CIO). Legal cases have set precedents on the rights of gays to serve in the armed forces (the Sgt. Leonard Matlovich victory), the right of gay parents to raise and care for their children, the right of gay students to form associations on campus, the right of gay teenagers to attend dances with the partners of their choice. As the legal and social climate has improved, the level of public discussion about homosexuality has risen and programs considering gay rights as an issue with two sides have aired on television and radio.

In the course of the struggle, lesbians and gay men have become increasingly politicized. Gay Pride demonstrations to commemorate the Stonewall Riots are held in major US cities every year the week of June 28th. Gays have participated in anti-Klan coalitions, in coalitions for women's safety and have fought in cities like Los Angeles for civilian review boards for police. Lesbians have been active participants in all areas of the women's movement as well as in the gay liberation struggle. Gay communities in larger cities like San Francisco, New York and Boston have organized to participate in electoral politics, helping to elect politicians who will vote favorably on gay rights as well as other progressive issues. Sixty-seven openly gay delegates attended the 1980 Democratic Party Convention and helped to vote in the first gay and lesbian rights plank ever in a US bourgeois party's platform. The gay and lesbian rights movement has grown to include over 2,000 organizations and a wide variety of popular efforts: gay and lesbian newspapers, radio stations, media groups, bookstores, health centers, caucuses, professional and church groups, parents' groups and groups of gay and lesbian adolescents. ■

Update

Students On The Move Against Apartheid

[This article summarizes discussion at a recent meeting of the Student Commission of the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters, called in June to assess last spring's wave of student protest and organizing. The authors are members.]

Few people have a real sense of how widespread and militant campus protest was this past spring. At Cornell alone, over 1,000 were arrested; Madison students seized the state capitol and held it for over a week to push Wisconsin legislators to divest (their university had already done so). In all, activities and actions took place at over 100 campuses, involving as many as 100,000 students, resulting in dozens of seizures and blockades and several thousand busts. While there was something of a media blackout—or more properly brownout—nationally, local actions sometimes had an impressive impact. The occupation of Steven Biko Hall in Iowa City received front page coverage across the state for days—and even some editorials in support.

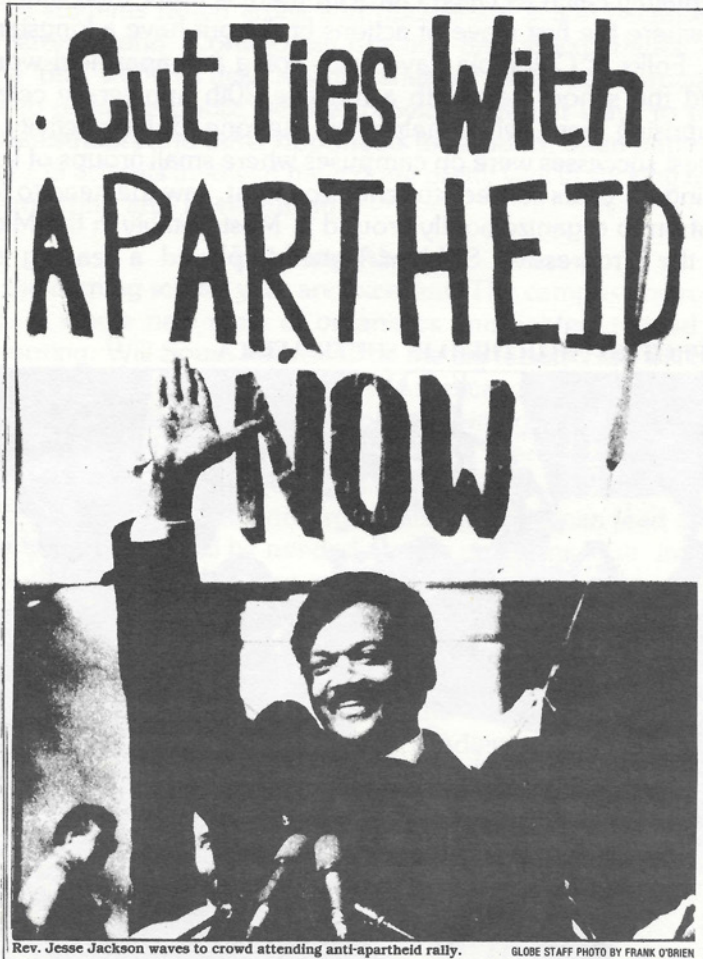
Student Discontent Focuses on South Africa

The events of the spring can be best understood as a student upsurge centered on South Africa, rather than as just an expression of the anti-apartheid movement on the campuses. Many students are dissatisfied with the direction of things in this country, resent being characterized as right-wing Yuppies-in-training and were looking to strike a counterblow against Reagan. There was a lot of anti-intervention activity this year, in particular the "CIA Off Campus" struggles, which fed into the outbreak of activity in the spring.

There are several reasons for the focus on South Africa. First and foremost, the Azanian people have dramatically stepped up the level of their war against the white settler regime, which has resorted to murderous repression in an unsuccessful effort to beat back the advance. Second, the resulting exposure of apartheid, along with related events like Bishop Tutu's Nobel Prize and the demonstrations and arrests at South African government targets in Washington, DC, New York and other cities have made South Africa a major social question in this country. Third, the issue is crystal clear. No one on campus dares defend apartheid. Progressives were able to unite with a big chunk of the center forces, showing that students will still support struggles they see as just. It helps that the ruling class can't paint the South African situation as a battle by

proxy between the US and the USSR, a view which has been an obstacle in organizing against US intervention in Central America. Fourth, direct university complicity with the apartheid regime through investments angers students and simultaneously offers them a target and the possibility of winning a victory.

The upsurge was fueled by the increased activity and strength of the Black Liberation Movement. The Jesse Jackson campaign energized a big group of progressive-minded students and raised the issue of US support for South Africa in a sharp way.



Rev. Jesse Jackson waves to crowd attending anti-apartheid rally.

GLOBE STAFF PHOTO BY FRANK O'BRIEN

The Black-led embassy and consulate actions became the first post-election rallying point for a range of anti-Reagan forces. Trade union officials and Jewish leaders were surprisingly active, in large part because they were trying to rebuild bridges to the Black community. There were Black students in the leadership of multi-national actions and

coalitions on a number of campuses, especially where minority students have a strong tradition of struggle. Too often, though, the movement was predominantly white, and white chauvinist attitudes stood in the way of full participation by minority students or unity with minority organizations. And more work needs to be done to draw the links between US support for the apartheid system and the oppression of the Black Nation here.

The upsurge was spontaneous, to be sure. No one planned it and contact between campuses was mainly catch as catch can. But there is more than meets the eye. The key campuses where the first wave of actions broke out have a longstanding tradition of left activism. Folks at Columbia have been doing anti-apartheid work since 1977. Berkeley started the school year with a massive 20th anniversary celebration of the 1965 student uprising there, which helped set the tone for later activity. In the second wave, the greatest successes were on campuses where small groups of left activists who had been working for years sensed student discontent, saw the need to focus on South Africa and went on to organize boldly around it. Most notably in the Mid-west, groups affiliated with the Progressive Student Network played a leading role on many campuses.

BU STUDENTS PROTEST APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA



The movement has won major victories already. School administrators, stunned by its suddenness and intensity, are looking for ways to divest or offer other concessions to cool things out. More, the spring campaign helped to torpedo the Reagan administration's "constructive engagement" policy and to accelerate the tendency of US banks and corporations to bail out of South Africa. Even now the full impact of recent events in South Africa and here at home have not been felt. Community and workplace activists should be on the look-out for new developments.

The student movement proved itself to be militant and tactically sophisticated. A significant section of students risked arrest and disciplinary action because they saw the need to take a strong stand. Consciously drawing on the experience of the student movement of the '60s, students used a wide variety of methods of struggle—from petitions to sit-ins—to promote public debate, provide different ways to participate and force school administrators and other opponents to respond, often putting them on the defensive. So far the activists involved have done pretty well in sticking to the mass line and avoiding wimpering and adventurism.

Looking Ahead

Prospects for the coming school year are excellent. The campus environment will be more politicized. A whole new crew of organizers and fighters trained in the spring battles will be returning. Will South Africa still be the big focus? That will be determined mainly by developments—there, in Central America or perhaps elsewhere. The student movement is not a single issue movement. Coming battles may not be as broad as those of the spring, but the momentum will still be there.

Revolutionary socialists on campus have a lot of work ahead. Their main priority will be to continue to build the struggle and organizations which can lead and embody it. Their experience and outlook will be needed as new problems arise: internal ones like white chauvinism, localism and the "intervention" of parasitic sects re-emerging from the woodwork; external ones like the inevitable counterattacks by right-wing students, administrators, various political and media mouthpieces and the state. As more and more new activists become open to or interested in Marxism and revolution, students in revolutionary groups will have a duty—both to the new folks coming forward and to the future of the struggle—to provide education, leadership and training for what will become the newest generation of revolutionary socialist fighters.

M.K. and Don

Pop Culture and The Lessons of 'Nam

*In 1972 a crack commando unit was sent to prison by a military court, for a crime they did not commit. These men promptly escaped from a maximum security stockade to the Los Angeles underground. Today, still wanted by the government, they survive as soldiers of fortune: if you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find them, maybe you can hire **The A-Team**.*

This voice-over, in "news radio"-style staccato covering footage of Rangers rappelling down off Hueys, is the pre-titles lead to the popular mercenary sit-com, **The A-Team**. What is interesting to note here is how this intro has changed since the show was first introduced, two seasons back. At that time, the boys *had* done what landed them in Leavenworth: "... a crack commando unit was sent to prison by a military court for robbing the 'Bank of Hanoi'. . . ." Producer Stephen J. Cannell, trying to cash in with a show that would appeal to the "Next Time, Let Us Win" crowd, found out pretty quick that it didn't wash. While initially each episode pit the team against either gangsters, unthinking government bureaucrats, or corrupt union hacks, now they fight for the right of migrant farm workers to organize, for ecology, and animal rights. No big challenge to the hey-day of Hollywood liberalism (as represented by **M*A*S*H's** Alans Alda and Arbus), but the alteration of the original theme of **The A-Team** suggests that there is more going on here than meets the eye.

In the midst of a general reassessment of the whole Vietnam era, popular culture has jumped in with both feet, attempting to sell whatever new version spins. The quick-footed dance that **The A-Team's** writers did with the pre-titles lead points to the lack of a clear direction in Hollywood's rewrite of Vietnam. Even though television creates public opinion, it has also got to reflect it. It is sort of an Aberdeen Proving Ground of ideas. Network execs have to search for the rewrite of 'Nam that will sell advertising time, and be bought by the general public. For ourselves (the generation that fought—and fought against—the war) there were definite lessons of Vietnam. But our children, our younger brothers and sisters, and even our parents, never had the experience that taught these lessons.

A History Up For Grabs

As the chances of U.S. military intervention in Central America increase, forces in the anti-war/anti-intervention movement have argued the application of a Vietnam scenario to the situation. (See the December-January '85 *FM*, for example.) George Schultz has entered the fray with his own version of how Soviet interference in South East Asia compares to its role in Central America. But our key concern should be *none* of the particulars raised in this debate. The biggest gap in our understanding is not that

in our isolation from the masses we have misread the lessons, but rather that we believe that there *were* lessons of Vietnam. In reality, the whole history of that period (and what it meant) is up for grabs, and right now a serious attempt at rewriting that history is underway.

Most of the detective shows on the tube today (**Magnum, PI**, **Riptide**, Mickey Spillaine's **Mike Hammer**, **Cover-Up**, **Matt Houston**, and a few others) are historically grounded in these hitters and hard guys being vets of 'Nam. What, if anything, do these TV shows reflect of the popular conception about that war?

Let's consider a recent airing of **Riptide** (one of the more entertaining of these detective shows). The members of the "Riptide Detective Agency" are two beach-boys and a computer nerd, Dr. Murray Bozinski. While Nick and Cody (the two more "normal" detectives) fit the neat stereotype of PI's as veterans, "Boz" is hard to place in their company. In the '68-'76 period, he would have probably been in an ivory tower someplace—MIT, Columbia or Berkeley. But in any of those places in that period, chances are pretty good he would have been at least loosely active in the anti-war movement. After all, where did today's computer hackers learn their healthy disrespect for the law? Breaking it (while protesting the war) in lots of cases. But recently, when a particular episode had to explain how Murray met Nick and Cody, we found out that the "Boz" was doing computer simulations for the Pentagon in those eventful days. His only act of rebellion in the army was to bust a general's nose, apparently because the officer planned to use one of Murray's inventions to kill!

And what has the modern Mike Hammer been up to (besides getting busted for possession of nose candy)? Between wowing women, plugging pugs, and waxing rhapsodic about Manhattan, Mike makes New York safe for democracy by busting two-bit felons who are really red agents, and reminiscing with his police buddy, Detective Captain Pat Chambers, about the good times in 'Nam.

On **Magnum, PI** we can watch Tom Magnum fly around Hawaii in a chopper with his old Huey pilot buddy, T.C. Between solving cases, messing with the obligatory Soviet agents and their Vietnamese cohorts (who, delayed-stress type flashbacks tell us, were all prison guards that abused Magnum and his buddies), and driving fast cars, Magnum gets teary-eyed and philosophic about fun stuff like Agent Orange.

While these TV shows promote a kind of yuppie-ideology with reference to Vietnam and the sixties (that 'Nam was a growing experience for the men and women who served there; that folks came through the fire as more complete individuals), they still have more in common with the old-fashioned liberalism of the **M*A*S*H** variety than, say, the new crop of novels available at the supermarket checkout counters, newsstands and drug stores across the country.

Most of us are probably more or less familiar with *Dispatches*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Meditations in Green*, and other award-winning literature. But to understand the way the Vietnam experience is being stood on its head, we'd be better off examining the likes of *Chickenhawk*, Sergeant Barry Sadler's (of "The Ballad of the Green Berets" fame) *Phu Nham*, and *MIA Hunter*. No Pulitzer Prizes for these books, the

Putzler Prize maybe. These books not only attempt to build patriotic fervor among the next generation of draftees, they also play on the pride the Viet Vet feels for having come through that meat-grinder alive, and transforms that *righteous* sentiment into racist chauvinism in support of future military adventures.

And those pop-histories can't even hold a close second to the garbage being purveyed by the lunatic right. A recent "shop-by-mail" catalog from a *Soldier of Fortune*-type outfit in Kentucky features a lot of right-idealist trash like a t-shirt with the slogan, "Next Time Let Us Win," emblazoned over a map of Vietnam, "Grenada Expeditionary Campaign" victory patches, and the tongue-in-cheek "East Caribbean War Games—GRENADA: 1st PLACE" patch.

Sounds Patriotic to Me. . .

Another forum of pop-culture pinning its future on a rewrite of recent history and hoping to put a choke hold of racist ideology on the youth of America is "professional" wrestling. It may be easy to sneer at these scripted and choreographed bouts as you



Wrestling champion Hulk Hogan carries the day for truth, justice and the American way.

read this, but remember that to many people (including some who recognize them as fakes) the matches and what they represent are deadly serious. To quote from the April issue of *Rock and Roll Confidential*:

A roar goes up from the crowd as a chubby man in his early 30s, wearing a fatigue costume and a drill instructor's hat, runs from the dressing room to the ring. It's Sergeant Slaughter. . . . Slaughter comes in on cue, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in a throaty growl. The military message is nothing peripheral to professional wrestling. As

the matches unfold, with their pre-ordained outcomes and good guy/bad guy scenarios, various overweight ex-football players play the roles of Arabs, Africans, and Russians. All are presented as subhuman cartoons, fitting targets of US military might.

But perhaps the example which best illustrates the lack of a single, popular memory of the war and that era is to be found in the songs (and the public reactions to the songs) of Bruce Springsteen. In my plant, Bruce (who Robert Muller, president of Vietnam Veterans of America, described as the single-handed financial base of that organization) is viewed as "waving the flag" in his recent album *Born in the USA*. This past summer, at an election rally in southern Jersey, Reagan tried to stand on Springsteen's shoulders (and pimp off his popularity amongst youth) when he referred to New Jersey's favorite son who "speaks out for the hopes and dreams" of all Americans. But, as Bruce said, after wondering which of his songs was the President's favorite, "I think there's a large group of people in this country whose dreams don't mean that much to him, that just get indiscriminately swept aside. . ."

The fact that thousands of young people fell victim to a local DJ's sick promo gimmick and arrived at the Meadowlands Arena decked out in red-white-and-blue, and that when the E-Street Band broke into *Born in the USA* (the paean of the Vietnam Veterans of America organization) the audience broke out American flags, is nothing compared with the otherwise worldly and progressive 25 year old factory worker who refused to believe that *Born in the USA* was not a "flag-waver":

Got in a little hometown jam so they put a rifle in my hand
Sent me off to a foreign land to go and kill the yellow man.

"Yeah, right," Jimmy said after I quoted that lyric, "sounds patriotic to me," ignoring the significance of granting humanity to "the enemy." Clearly, the minute you lose the irony in the song, it does become racist flag waving, with Bruce saluting "old glory" in the photo on the album cover (though he don't leave much to the imagination as to what he is saluting it with).

One reviewer, reflecting on the controversy surrounding *Born in the USA*, suggested that with a minor change in lyrics it could become the new army recruitment jingle. If the possibility of turning Springsteen's angst-filled anthem to the Viet-vet on its head isn't obvious, let's examine a similar case: on a recent episode of CBS's *Scarecrow & Mrs. King* (one of TV's only detective genre shows that does not have a Vietnam rites of passage undertheme) the young suburban widow spy, Amanda King, hitches a ride on a semi after her station wagon gets totalled by marauding Soviet agents. She asks the trucker if he can raise the FBI or CIA on his CB. "Are those jokers who wrecked your car commies?" he asks as he pops a cartridge into the eight-track. Downshifting into the chase, he grins, "I love the smell of diesel in the morning," sniffing the exhaust fumes as *The Ride of the Valkyrie* blasts from the speakers. Is this Saturday morning cartoon treatment the way Coppola's haunting imagery *Apocalypse Now* is to be remembered by our children?

First Task

If we are to build a broad anti-war movement (whether it is based on the "Vietnam scenario" or not) our first task is to go toe-to-toe, combatting the various wrong views

of that war. The Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) is making one good step in that direction by taking their stories, their military experience to the kids in high schools around the New York area. These are the kids who are lapping up the newly sterilized image of the Vietnam war. And they are the ones who will be sent to fight and die for imperialism next.

This approach to building public awareness is important in contrast to the "Used Once—Then Thrown Away" slogan that VVAW raised some years back. We have all just seen the righteous anger of vets at being abandoned once they finished fighting—Black vets had fought (and often died) for "democracy," but couldn't find much back home—turned into its opposite by cynical PR men for the Pentagon. On April 7th, when General Westmoreland hugged former grunts and mugged for news cameras, the most contemptuous (and cynical) abuse of 'Nam vets was being perpetrated on us. "The Next Time, Let Us Win" crowd may have no grasp of the history which led to the United States' military defeat, but if there's any truth to their paranoid idealist fantasy of organized sabotage of the war effort, the finger has to be pointed at Westmoreland. His libel suit against CBS served no purpose, if not to hide his conscious, and maybe criminal, misrepresentation of Army Intelligence studies on opposition strength.

While historians rewrite, military strategists study, Pentagon poobahs scheme, and leftists consider the long range implications and legacy of the Vietnam War, most of us—in our idealism—ignore the key element: what is the popular conception of that war? The jury isn't in yet. Vietnam is still an open question in most folks' minds. Although the immediate post-Vietnam period saw the likes of **M*A*S*H** reflect America's skepticism of foreign adventures, now television producers experiment with a number of interpretations to see which will sell soapflakes. For us television has become a good indicator of the mind of youth and the hearts of the American people, showing how much has to be done to define the truth.

—R.J. Camshaft

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Party Up, Part V: Tendentially Speaking

The last installment of this series discussed a formative contradiction of any party that tries to follow Lenin in the broad organizational conclusions he drew. But even if Lenin had never lived, even if he had never reached any conclusions about the organizational nature of Marxist parties, this contradiction would still dog Marxist parties.

Put schematically, the contradiction runs this way: only a strongly organized party can organize the people with the working class at its core, lead a sustained struggle against capitalism in the face of all the resistance capitalism has shown itself capable of, and guide the people in the decisive test that will determine whether a transition to socialism gets started. (This fact does not preclude the existence of several socialist parties). But in helping the people organize and leading them in the political struggle against the bourgeois state, in becoming strongly organized, a revolutionary party acquires some characteristics of the leadership of the class enemy it opposes.

A Marxist party is the instrument of the people's will, but it is not just the expression of that will: it also helps create, articulate and enforce the people's will. As an instrument, it has a material reality; it is an apparatus and, in the metaphor Marxists usually apply to the bourgeois state, a machine. Once state power is achieved (to the extent that state power is ever "achieved" by the working class), that party machine is immediately pulled towards becoming the new, "perfected" state, because it already has a number of characteristics of such a state. These characteristics are accentuated in the times of ferocious class struggle called revolutionary periods and, as Nicaragua reminds us, in the bitter struggle against counter-revolution that follows victorious revolutions.

This contradiction is an objective one. The Marxist parties that have successfully avoided the dangers of bureaucracy are also those that have successfully avoided power. The parties that in no way have ever resembled state machines are also those that have never resembled threats to bourgeois class rule. There is no way of evading this contradiction, except by never founding Marxist parties. The real challenge lies in recognizing the contradiction, naming it as such, not fearing it. Nor is it a contradiction that only arises after the seizure of power: each Marxist group or party, no matter how small, is already handling it, more or less well.

A number of Marxists have tried to side-step the contradictions inherent in strongly organized parties. One of the purported solutions has been the creation of organizational guarantees against the growth of too powerful an executive. They seek these guarantees through the institutionalization of organized factions within Marxist parties. Since "factions" has a destructive connotation among Marxists (and among other people), this solution is most often known as the "right to tendencies." Amid the

shapeless body of activists left by the collapse of most of the last decade's revolutionary Left, any solution has some appeal. Debates about the legitimacy of organized groups have also taken place in a number of European communist parties, in the context of severely polarized leaderships and memberships.

The creation and nourishment of an internal democratic life within Marxist parties is no simple task and there is no recipe in Lenin or anywhere else about how to do it. Because sustaining internal democracy is so urgent, there are no simple solutions to the issue of tendencies either. But rethinking often leads to little more than dusting off this or that interpretation of a famous 1921 decision of the Bolshevik party to ban factions. In practice, this ban became a weapon against real and alleged factions on behalf of one faction, the faction that Stalin eventually commanded. While a review of those events has some interest, if for no other reason than because Soviet history has dominated twentieth century socialism, interpretations of Soviet decisions in 1921 won't settle many questions in 1985. The arguments about the value of organized groups within a party have to be faced on their own grounds.

Four Arguments for Organized Tendencies

Argument 1: *The right to tendencies means the right to form groups within a Marxist party or organization.* As Marxist economist and theorist of the "right to tendencies" Ernest Mandel has put it, "What distinguishes democratic from bureaucratic centralism is the right, in theory and in practice, to form tendencies."¹ In the first place, tendencies are not a right—in a certain sense, they are a fact. Every organization has tendencies within it, in the sense of inclinations, of fairly consistent emphases or positions. Based on the type of work they have done, the experiences that helped lead them to Marxism, the pamphlets and books they have found most compelling, and often the people that they have personally looked to as models of what socialists should be, individuals often have a pronounced tendency in one direction or another.

Strictly speaking, this is all that tendency means: a propensity to see things a certain way, a bent in one direction. There are people you know who almost always lean to the Left or to the Right or lean to reconciling everybody else's views. Just as there are individuals who may have tendencies in one or another direction, so there are sometimes people who do the same type of political work who consistently approach most problems from the particular point of view of that work.

If we accept this view of tendencies, there is no way of banning them and it would be a terrible idea if it could be done. The existence of different inclinations and positions doesn't just give life to Marxist organizations: it is the life of Marxist organizations. But it is a completely different thing to form organized entities within organizations on the basis of differing political platforms: those should not be confused with tendencies. Once a collection of people combine together with a view towards furthering a particular viewpoint within a Marxist or other organization, they constitute a group, not a tendency. An organized tendency is no longer an inclination and in that sense no longer a tendency.

Argument 2: *Organized groupings give a Marxist party more representativeness, and representativeness will make a party a more effective spokesperson for the oppressed.* It is in no way obvious that organized groupings or what some call “recognized tendencies” give a party or organization more representativeness. In fact, organized groupings may tend to blunt the representation of opinion, by inevitably giving rise to a sense of “tendency” or group cohesion as against the other groups or “tendencies.” With a sense of group difference goes group loyalty, and group resentment. Internal debate becomes less free-wheeling and more the parading of the established group differences and group loyalties. The most damaging result is the organization’s loss of its ability to centralize its experience and discussion—that experience is now channeled through the groupings, and since by their very existence they compete with each other, group interest inevitably begins to bend the lessons each group draws from experience.

Referring to like objections, Mandel has said that “there is a great deal of truth in [the] critique of permanent and ossified tendencies. But it speaks not to the right to form tendencies but to its abuse.”² True enough, though the same charity ought to be extended to democratic centralism without organized sub-groupings.

But even if we granted for a moment that organized groupings might in some cases allow for greater representativeness, that does not translate into greater effectiveness for a party as the representative of the oppressed. The contradiction between effectiveness and representation has to be faced honestly. As a Marxist who is certainly no champion of communist parties, Ralph Miliband, has observed,

The demands of representativeness on the one hand, and of effectiveness on the other, are not altogether irreconcilable, in that a more representative party may be more effective than one which lives by imposed and spurious “unity.” But it is an illusion to think that the contradiction is not a genuine one.³

The primary purpose of a Marxist party is not to represent opinion, whether of its members or of the people as a whole. The primary purpose is to serve the people’s struggle, to help them win. Representativeness cannot be an end in itself without a party sooner or later dissolving itself into the people.

Argument 3: *Organized groups take power from the leadership and give more power back to the membership.* In fact, organized groups tend to augment the power of leaderships, though there are then more leaderships. Speaking of situations in which several socialist parties exist, Miliband notes that “it is likely that the more-than-one-party situation enhances the politics of leadership, in so far as it requires an often complex set of negotiations between allies or potential allies, and such negotiations emphatically form part of the politics of leadership.”⁴ The effectiveness of a coalition of socialist-oriented parties is in some conflict with the representativeness of such a coalition. Chile during the Popular Unity government (1970-1973) is a good example. Conflict or not, the existence of several socialist-oriented parties in one country is an historical reality, with each party having its distinct historical lineage. Because each has that distinct history, they represent not simply opinion, but different sectors of the people.

The situation is both similar and different with organized groupings within a single party. Similar in that factional situations greatly augment the power of the leaderships of the factions. They must compete, polemicize, negotiate, unite or not unite with each other, and those are functions of leadership. The longer a factional situation goes on, the more the faction leaderships tend to monopolize the life of a party: party activity is reduced to competing, polemicizing, negotiating. The leaders do that work and other people drop away. The Trotskyist movement, which has made the right to organized tendencies a founding slogan of its existence, seems one of the most leadership-oriented parts of the Left. The sect-ridden Marxist-Leninist movement of the 1970's likewise heightened the importance of leadership.

But factional situations differ from multi-party ones in that the increase in representativeness has never made up for the loss of effectiveness. "Organized tendencies" represent opinion, not usually sectors of the people, and so their representativeness is limited. They rarely have particularly distinct lineages, except where a party or organization has incompletely formed from several separate groups. When organized tendencies do also represent different sectors of the people or of the working class, the internal life of a party is likely to become even more polarized and charged.

Argument 4: *Officially sanctioned groupings do not produce organized factions.* In practice, multiplying organized groupings tend to resemble multi-party situations only in that organized tendencies inevitably acquire the properties of parties themselves. Many of the same principles invoked on behalf of organizing a separate Marxist party and maintaining loyalty to that party can be and are invoked to secure loyalty to a particular organized sub-grouping. If you believe there exists a Marxist direction that represents the future of socialism, while another social-democratic direction will tend to go no further than managing capitalism, then you will struggle against that direction in favor of your own.

The only way to reconcile "organized tendencies" with a unified party would be to demonstrate that the loyalty to party would override the loyalty to faction. But Marxists are ill-equipped to demonstrate that: their loyalty generally and rightly goes to the organized expression of a given strategic direction. They are not convinced by the argument that something is better because it is larger. In a not so strange way, then, internal organized tendencies come to resemble multi-party situations: they produce splits. From Marxist parties as negotiated confederations of mini-parties to new, independent mini-parties is a small and almost inevitable step.

Tactics Against Factionalism

The preceding has discussed four common arguments made in favor of organized groups within Marxist organizations. But there is one argument made by those who oppose any hint of "organized tendencies" that also deserves mention, namely Stalin's claim that, "The source of factionalism in the Party is its opportunist elements." (*Foundations of Leninism*) Stalin's position rationalized a state of permanent purge in the Soviet party and parties it dominated. He asserted that the strength of communist

parties was acquired in general through purges: "proletarian parties develop and become strong by purging themselves of opportunists and reformists, social-imperialists and social-chauvinists, social-patriots and social-pacifists."

In any organization there are some people who are on their way out, and there also exists opportunism of however mild a variety. Organizations cannot be geared towards them, and if people on their way out insist on taking an organization with them then a parting of the ways is necessary. But tendencies arise not from bad people but from the inevitable contradictions of socialist practice. They also arise from the various divisions among the people and among the working class, which are objective and material.

The right to form "organized tendencies" has a legitimate appeal. In the face of the tyrannical internal regimes that have wrapped themselves in many parties' democratic centralisms, the right to form groupings introduces an apparent system of checks and balances against an accumulation of executive power. But it represents a legalistic solution to a political problem. In the guise of addressing the contradiction of the Leninist party, this solution multiplies it, resulting in several competing executive powers. The challenge is not to counter one type of bourgeois democracy (the unaccountable executive) with another (the vociferous but ineffective parliaments of capitalist democracy); the challenge is to find a political practice more effectively democratic than bourgeois politics.

It is true that many of the Marxist parties that have banned organized tendencies have degenerated into despotisms. But nothing has prevented all the many people who historically have argued for the right to form organized tendencies from forming a big party that had many organized groupings. They haven't. Many have tried—most notably, the Trotskyist parties—but they have never built powerful organizations.

In many cases, the champions of organized sub-groupings have not really wanted to build their own organizations anyway. They have instead wanted to introduce factions into already existing parties. It is a bit like the sectarian who comes to a big meeting mainly in order to rise during the question period and, in the place of a question, deliver a long speech on every conceivable issue. Sooner or later someone shouts, "Rent your own hall!" If the right to form organized tendencies is going to work so well, someone should prove it in their own hall.

—Charles Sarkis

Notes

- 1) Ernest Mandel, "Party and Class," *Against the Current*, Spring, 1982.
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) Ralph Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, p. 127.
- 4) Ibid, p. 130.

Review

The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions

*'Tis not in the high stars alone
Nor in the cups of budding flowers
Nor in the redbreast's mellow tune,
Nor in the bow that smiles in showers,
But in the mud and scum of things
There always, always something sings.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson*

How many times have you picked up a union's national newspaper, only to find pages filled with photos of smiling union members who have just won large arbitration awards, glowing accounts of organizing successes, and praise for years of dynamic leadership of retiring union officials? Union victories are certainly precious these days and ought to be publicized, but it does the labor movement a disservice not to acknowledge the problems and defeats that are painfully obvious to the most casual observer. So it might be high hopes that you pick up a copy of "The Changing Situation of Workers and their Unions" by the AFL-CIO's Committee on the Evolution of Work, and read that, indeed, "despite their accomplishments, unions find themselves behind the pace of change."

The Report is not a comprehensive analysis of the labor movement, but it looks at changes in work and the workforce in the U.S., the legal climate for labor under Reagan, and the attitudes of union and non-union workers toward unions. It goes on to give recommendations for building a more effective labor movement.

The Report offers some of the grim statistics. Less than 19% of the U.S. workforce is unionized. Jobs in the service sector will account for three-fourths of the labor force by 1990, but less than a tenth of the service sector is organized. Growth in the workforce is concentrated in relatively unorganized geographical areas such as the Sunbelt. Non-union workers by and large do not believe that unions represent the needs and desires of their members.

All this is bad enough, but there is worse that the Report neglects to mention—such as, the erosion of current collective bargaining agreements through concessions or the demonstration of organized labor's political impotence through its basically ineffectual support for Walter Mondale. Maybe it is wrong to belabor these points. Maybe we should be confident, like the AFL-CIO's committee, in the labor movement's "capacity

to continue the never-ending process of renewal and regeneration." So we turn to the Committee's proposals for improving the unfavorable situation we find ourselves in.



The Committee proposes a number of ways to bring labor out of its malaise. Some sound mildly promising: establishing "experimental organizing committees," providing "opportunities for members to participate in union affairs quite different from traditional attendance at union meetings," experimenting with "new organizing techniques," and addressing "new issues of concern to workers." But the bulk of the recommendations concern organizational changes and improving relations with "the public," such as "establishing new categories of membership for workers not employed in an organized bargaining unit," "better publicizing labor's accomplishments," and "encouraging mergers."

How far will reorganization and p.r. campaigns take us? What can they do against the Reagan administration's frontal assault on affirmative action? How will they guarantee the rights of immigrants working in the high tech sweatshops of the 1980s? The AFL-CIO Report doesn't say anything about organizing among Black, Latin or Asian workers. And what about recognizing the changes demanded by the increased number of women workers, now 40% of the labor force? (The Report mentions in passing that "pay equity has become a proper concern of women workers." Aside from belatedly giving its blessing to this dynamic issue, nothing.) And what will the two-tier wage structures currently in vogue in collective bargaining agreements mean for labor unity? Can unions continue to fight cuts in health care benefits in a piecemeal fashion, or might the labor movement work for a nationalized health care system? A labor movement that doesn't turn its attention to questions like these will find itself sliding further down the slippery slope of "special interest group" politics.

Recalling the CIO

At one point the Report optimistically invokes the heyday of CIO organizing in the 1930s, recalling that "trade unionists of that era developed approaches attuned to their situation which caught the allegiance of a generation of workers, and organized labor experienced a period of remarkable growth."

The CIO experience of the 1930s is certainly well worth examining by unionists today. In 1933 union membership was at rock bottom—around three million, or one tenth of the non-agricultural labor force. The craft-oriented American Federation of Labor was stagnant, unwilling or unable to organize the new mass production industries characterized by huge firms, new technology based on mechanization and division of labor, multi-plant operations, and a mainly unskilled and semi-skilled labor force. Yet only ten years later, most of these industries were thoroughly organized.

This turning point in this stunning chapter of U.S. labor history was the split in organized labor and the creation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the CIO. This was not a simple split based on a structural difference between craft unions and industrial unions. The AFL itself, recognizing that "a new condition exists requiring organization on a different basis to be most effective," took steps to change its structure to make room for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. First it allowed federal labor unions and amalgamation of unions and later, under pressure of the CIO, it accepted broader jurisdiction among the Machinists, the IBEW, the Carpenters and other member unions.

Yet it was the CIO that rose to the political challenge of organizing the mass production industries. Free from the constraints of the AFL bureaucracy, the new CIO unions drew life from the lively militancy of the mass production workers of the time. What accounts for the CIO's phenomenal success? For one thing, the CIO could not have conducted the most massive organizing campaign in U.S. labor history if it had not thrown off the Jim Crow policies of the AFL. It abandoned the constitutional restrictions on Black membership, eliminated the practice of segregated locals for Black workers, and hired Black organizers for its main campaigns. CIO unions worked closely with the National Negro Congress to organize Black workers. John L. Lewis, whose United Mine Workers included most of the Black members of the entire AFL, accepted Communists as CIO staffers in part because of their demonstrated success in building unity of Black and white workers, a condition essential to the CIO's success.

The CIO's commitment to working class unity had limits: it did little to challenge racist hiring and promotion practices of the time. Yet wage differentials explicitly based on color were struck down in most industries, and despite vicious white-supremacist attacks, the early CIO organized thousands of workers in the South. Black trade union membership grew from 100,000 to 500,000 by 1940.

The CIO broke with the past in other ways—in its willingness to organize women workers and immigrants and in its interest in the broad social and economic issues of the 1930s. The CIO's strength was not unlimited: a stalemate in collective bargaining for the new unions lasted from 1937 to 1940 and was broken only by the start of World

War II. War brought defense-based prosperity to industry and the federal government into labor-management relations, strengthening labor's position. But the forming of the CIO brought what was needed to revitalize the labor movement of the time through organizing which addressed some of the fundamental contradictions of U.S. society.

Today's AFL-CIO shows little of this spirit, despite the new themes sounded by this new report. For example, the report devotes a section to "The Failures of the Law," noting that corporations today carry on anti-union activities without fear of legal reprisals. Amazingly, the Report says nothing about building the kind of alliances that might create a political climate in which labor laws would be enforced. In the 1930s, the labor movement secured its legal rights not only through its own efforts, but through alliances against injustice with other sectors of society—farmers, Black organizations, pro-labor intellectuals and clergy, and so on.

Modern-day alliances have poked through the ground here and there in recent years, but they have yet to really flower. Community-labor alliances have sprung up in some places in opposition to the local plant closing, but unemployment remains mainly the problem of the unemployed. Some unions have accepted the help of women's organizations on sexual harassment, day care or comparable worth, but the Committee selected to advise the AFL-CIO on the Evolution of Work could only manage to include one woman out of twenty-six members. The Report mentions occupational safety and health as a concern of workers. Yet, even though the environmental movement has done at least as much as the unions to bring the problem of toxics to the attention of workers in this country, the Report offers no new encouragement to coalitions between labor and environmentalists.

The AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work met for some two and a half years to assess the impact of changes in the work environment for unions. Its proposals fall short of what is needed to create a resurgent labor movement, but if the Report sparks frank self-appraisal and debate on future direction at all levels of the union movement, it will have served an important function. After all, it is not every day that the AFL-CIO Executive Council invites criticism. So, if you have been bogged down in grievances and negotiations lately, secretly wondering what is it all leading to, you might take the opportunity to distribute this Report in your local, organize a discussion, write an opinion for you union newspaper. It couldn't hurt.

—J. Helmick, June 1985

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