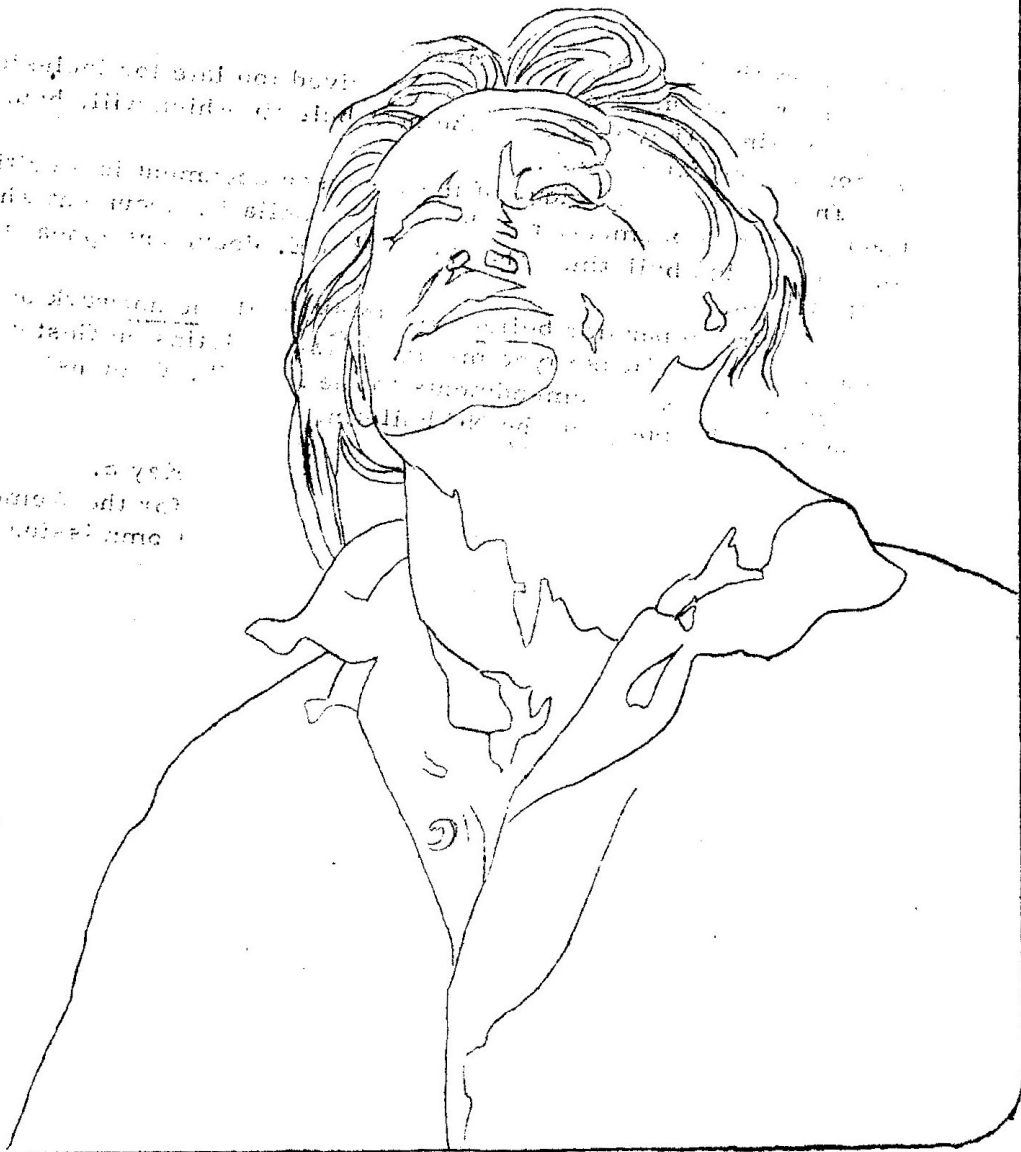


WOMEN'S COMMISSION
BULLETIN



MAY
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NO.1

Women and the Revolutionary Organization	Barbara Z.
Womens' Liberation (Revised)	Celia E.
Womens' Liberation	Lynn J.
Critique of Emerson on Womens' Liberation	Shelly L.
Footnote to History	Dave F.
Bibliography: Black Women	Celia E.
Bibliography: Working Women	Celia E.

Note from the Womens' Commission:

Several documents and leaflets arrived too late for inclusion in this bulletin. They will be in the next bulletin which will, hopefully, be coming out fairly soon.

The Shelly L. critique of the Emerson document is a critique of the first celia E. document, not the revised Celia E. document which appears in this bulletin. The first Celia E. document appears in Bulletin #34.

Contrary to papular belief AB Lick stencils do not work on our office Gestetner 366. Please type materials for Bulletins on Gestetner stencils

The Margaret B. amendments to the Ilene W. Womens' Perspectives document will appear in the NC bulletin.

Kay S.
for the Womens'
Commission

Discussion Article:

SOME COMMENTS on WOMEN & the REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION
by Barbara Zeluck, N. Y. I. S.

THESIS

"It is not the consciousness of men ((or women)) that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness." (Karl Marx, Preface to The Critique of Political Economy)

The thesis of Marxists is that the oppression of women arose with class society and will exist until class society is overthrown.

The development of class society, by separating women from a central role in social production, condemned her to economic, social and political dependence. While different forms of class society have brought different forms of woman's oppression, her dependent position still results in a generalized lack of self-confidence, in political backwardness and economic conservatism.

But, "fortunately" for women, class society is also the enemy of the entire working class. And, as Lenin wrote in 1920, "The proletariat cannot achieve complete liberty until it has won complete liberty for women."

For those who understand that only a proletarian revolution can put an end to the oppression engendered by class society, the intelligence and activity of women is a tremendous, for the most part untapped, resource. The Revolutionary Party must pay attention to the special needs of working class women, to their recruitment into the party, and to the political development of women members -- with the aim that women play a full political, not just a limited specialized, role in the party.

The I. S. is faced with the question: how is this to be done?

We are not the first Marxist organization to be faced with this question. Though the record is meager, let's take a quick look.

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The Second International never even tried to create a special body to direct the struggle for women's liberation. Outside it, however, women workers took the initiative in establishing the International Union of Women Socialists, a body that never really functioned.

The leading section of the Second International, the German Socialist Party (SPD), after the political defeat of its staunchly anti-women's liberation Lassallean wing in 1891, turned its attention to the fight for women's rights. In 1896 the SPD moved beyond its concentration on organizing working women into trade unions to develop "societies for the self-education of women workers" -- socialist organizations addressing themselves to the questions of political equality, political education for women, education and security for children, protective legislation, etc.

In most of Germany it was illegal for women to join political organizations of

any kind, but the revolutionary leaders of the women's movement based their argument for the separate organization of women on the need to draw women out of the isolation of the family and to provide a protected environment for them to develop their speaking and leadership abilities. These revolutionary leaders were, of course, concerned with working class women.

Every 2 years, after 1900, congresses of socialist women were held. These congresses prepared the discussions of women's questions for the SPD congresses.

After 1908 women in Germany gained the right to join political groups. Members of the "societies" joined the SPD which, by 1913, had 150,000 women members. In the SPD women received proportional representation on all standing committees, the women comrades meeting to choose their own representatives.

What role these representatives played we do not know, Clara Zetkin's and Rosa Luxemburg's fame being based on their both having played leading roles in the left wing of the SPD in addition to Zetkin's having sparked the SPD's efforts to organize women and Luxemburg's having played the theoretical and political role of an "eagle".

Did "separate organization" within the SPD enable women, as a rule rather than as exceptions, to play a significant political role? Did "separate organization" have any effect on the political direction of the Party? Is it possible that, on the contrary, "separate organization" tended to keep women out of the mainstream of political controversy?

For the moment this must remain conjecture.

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

The Bolsheviks were much more conscious of the political centrality of women. At its first Congress, in 1919, the Communist International (C.I. or Comintern) formulated its position on the question of women's participation in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was on the C.I.'s initiative that the first conference of women Communists was called in 1920 and the International Secretariat for Propaganda among Women, with permanent representation on the Executive Committee of the C.I., founded.

In September 1920, Lenin said to Clara Zetkin, "We derive our organizational ideas from our ideological conceptions."

He preceded that statement, "The theses ((that Zetkin was preparing for the Third Congress of the C.I.)) must emphasize strongly that true emancipation of women is not possible except through communism. You must lay stress on the unbreakable connection between woman's human and social position and the private ownership of the means of production. ..."

Lenin continued, "We want no separate organizations of communist women! She who is a Communist belongs as a member of the Party, just as he who is a Communist. They have the same rights and duties. There can be no difference of opinion on that score.

"However, we must not shut our eyes to the facts. The Party must have organs... with the specific purpose of rousing the broad masses of women, bringing them into

contact with the Party, and keeping them under its influence. This naturally requires that we carry on systematic work among the women. We must teach the awakened women, win them over for the proletarian class struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party, and equip them for it." (The Emancipation of Women, p. 110, my emphasis).

Winning women workers to the inextricably linked struggles for their own emancipation and for socialism was also a primary concern for Alexandra Kollontai. A member of the Bolshevik Central Committee at the time of the October Revolution, she had long been an advocate of the separate organization of women outside the party. But she also saw the absorption of the separate women's groups into the party as an advance, since the party represents the highest expression of the experience of all the oppressed.

Kollontai based her argument for special women's organizations outside the party on (a) the fact that women as mothers have special needs, e. g. for child care, for protective legislation, for reforms in housekeeping, etc., and (b) that, unlike men, the woman worker's development of class consciousness is impeded by the dependency inculcated in her by social conditioning. Special efforts are therefore necessary to overcome this dependency and to raise the consciousness of women to that of "all" party members. Because of these special problems of women workers, Kollontai thought that party women would be the most effective agitators among them.

In 1907, when she was a member of the Menshevik organization, Kollontai also postulated the formation of women's collectives within the party in order to impress on men comrades the need for the party as a whole to fight for women's rights, for the party to assume responsibility for the work among working women (i. e. to perform the functions to be served by the projected I. S. Women's Commission, which we all support).

Immediately following the October Revolution, Kollontai, Inessa Armand (central figure in the Party's Commission on Women's Work, as well as president of the Moscow province Economic Council and member of the province Party Central Committee) and others took the initiative in persuading the Party to establish party Sections for Work Among Women. Their purpose was to help working women understand what their new rights were and how to use them, and to attract women directly to the revolutionary struggle.

The party's Sections for Work Among Women organized Delegate Assemblies, i. e. organizations of non-party women -- not only in the large cities, but throughout the countryside. Each workshop, each factory counting 50 or more women workers chose delegates to serve for terms of 3 months. Each week the delegates, non-party working women, attended a local Assembly where they analyzed events, commented on government decisions, gave their opinions on how to improve their existence. That is, the assemblies served as schools for the political development of working women.

In addition, the party Sections involved the women in efforts to put an end to prostitution, to furnish protection for mothers and infants, to increase the number of nurseries and kindergartens, to fight against anti-semitism, nationalism, illiteracy, feudal and religious traditions.

By July 1920, Armand was able to report to the C.I.'s Second Congress that, under the conditions of extreme backwardness then prevailing, 400,000 non-party working women had already been organized.

Based on this example, the 3rd Congress of the Comintern, in 1921, adopted

THESES FOR PROPAGANDA AMONG WOMEN

General Principles

I. ((next to last paragraph)) "...the 3rd Congress of the C.I. declares that the conquest of power by the proletariat, as well as the realization of communism in the countries where bourgeois oppression has already been overthrown, cannot be achieved without the active support of women proletarians and semi-proletarians.

((last paragraph)) "...the Congress once more calls the attention of women to the fact that without the support of the Communist parties, initiatives having as their aim woman's liberation, the recognition of her complete personal equality and her real emancipation are impossible of achievement..."

IV. ((paragraph 3)) "...The real, not just formal, equality of women is possible only under a regime where working class women will control the means of production and distribution, taking part in the management of industry and assuming the obligation to work under the same conditions as all members of the workers' society; in other words, this equality can be realized only after the overthrow of the capitalist system and its replacement by communist economic forms.

((paragraph 4)) "...But Communism is at the same time the final aim of the whole proletariat. Consequently, the struggle of working women and working men for this common aim must, in the interests of both, be organized in common and inseparably." 1

V. ((paragraph 1)) "The 3rd Congress of the C.I. confirms the fundamental principles of revolutionary Marxism, according to which there is no 'special woman question'; 2. every relationship of working women with bourgeois feminism, as well as

1-2-3-4-5-6: This is not to say that the Theses of the 3rd Congress of the C.I. opposed the separate organization of women outside the party. Quite the contrary. In this connection, it is to be noted here that the position of the C.I. is not to be confused with that of the Spartacist League. The latter, in its publication of the C.I. Theses in its Women and Revolution #2 and #3, has deliberately distorted said Theses.

In checking the Women and Revolution texts against the French originals (as republished in facsimile in 1972 by Francois Maspero), I discovered omissions, distortions, and absolute inventions. Let me make a few available for comparison with the quotations above and below:

1. In the Spartacists' rendering of this sentence, they substitute "under a united leadership and control" for "in common and inseparably".

2. "The 3rd Congress of the Comintern confirms the basic proposition of revolutionary Marxism, i. e. that there is no 'specific woman question' and no specific woman's movement'..." ((absolute invention!))

any support given by women workers to the tactic of half measures and open treason of the social-coalitionists and opportunists only weaken the forces of the proletariat, and, in delaying the social revolution, at the same time delay the realization of Communism, that is to say the emancipation of women.

((paragraph 2)) "Communism will be achieved not by the union of women's forces of the two opposing classes, but only by the union of all the exploited in struggle..."

Methods of Action Among Women

"Flowing from the above-mentioned principles, the 3rd Congress of the C.I. holds that the work among proletarian women should be carried on by the Communist parties of all countries on the following basis:

"1. To enlist women as members of the Party and of all working class organizations, on the basis of equal rights and duties."

"3. ((paragraph 2)) While declaring ourselves earnestly opposed to any kind of separate organization of women within (emphasis added) the party, the unions, or other workers' organizations, the 3rd Congress of the C.I. recognizes that it is necessary for the Communist Party to employ special methods of work among women, and considers it useful to establish special bodies responsible for this work in every Communist Party."

"3. c. ((paragraph 2)) The organs for this work among women should be Sections or Commissions, functioning in close association with all party committees starting with the Central Committee and extending to the neighborhood or district committees. This decision is obligatory for all parties adhering to the C.I.

"3. c. ((paragraph 3)) The 3rd Congress of the C.I. points out as tasks of the Communist Parties to be carried out through the Sections for work among women (1) To educate the great masses of women in the spirit of Communism, and to draw them into the ranks of the Party; (2) to fight against the prejudices of male proletarians towards women, strengthening in the working men and women the consciousness of mutual interests of the proletarians of both sexes; (3) to increase the will power of working women by" drawing them into all kinds and forms of political struggle.

"3. c. (5) ((paragraph 2)) The entire work of the women's Sections should be carried on under the immediate leadership and responsibility of the Party Committees." 3 & 4

((paragraph 3)) "Among the members of the commission or of the leadership of the Sections should also figure, to the extent possible, men communist comrades." 5

3. "The entire work of the Sections or Committees should be carried on under the direct control and responsibility of the Party Committees." ((While "control" is a possible translation of the French word "direction", the latter is almost invariably translated as "leadership".))

4. "A member of the local party committee should be at the head of such section or committee." ((A complete invention)).

5. "Communists should be members of these committees or collegiums wherever it is possible." ((The French text reads "camarades communistes hommes"; the only possible translation for "hommes" is "men". If the Sparts mean the same thing, they appear to be saying that women cannot be real "communist comrades"!))

((paragraph 4)) "All the measures and all the tasks imposed on the Commissions and on the Sections of working women should be handled by the women, in an independent fashion. . ." 6

((paragraph 7)) "Work among women must be conducted in the following spirit: Unity in political line and in the party structure, free initiative by the Commissions and Sections in everything tending toward winning for women complete liberation and equality which can only be won by the Party in its entirety. It is not a matter of creating parallel bodies but of completing the Party's efforts with the creative activity and initiative of the women."

Methods of Agitation and Propaganda

((last 2 paragraphs)) "The sections must make sure that women communists make most active use of all the Party's institutions of and means of instruction. In order to deepen the consciousness and steel the will of still backward communists and of working women awakening to activity, the Sections must invite them to Party courses and discussions. Separate courses, evenings of reading and discussion for women only, can be organized only in exceptional cases.

"In order to develop a spirit of comradeship between working women and working men, it is desirable not to create special courses and schools for women communists; in each Party school, a course on methods of work among women must be obligatory. The sections have the right to delegate a certain number of women as their representatives to the general Party courses."

Comintern "Differences" with the I. S.

The Comintern expressed itself in words apparently different from those of the I. S., whose constitution states, "There shall be no restriction on the formation of caucuses within the organization", and whose Program in Brief states,

"We work to build the movement for women's liberation, both in society at large and within the radical movement. We support the formation of independent women's organizations, in which women will work out the organizational and programmatic forms of their struggles. Within these organizations we push for an orientation towards organizing working class women."

The difference is more apparent than real since (a) the reference to caucuses makes no specific reference to a woman's caucus, and obviously refers to caucuses based on political rather than organizational differences, and (b) the organizations

6. "All measures and problems of the Sections. . . must not be handled by them independently. . .". ((Again, the Sparts insert a word, non-existent in the original, "not", to completely reverse the Congress' meaning.))

The overall import of the Sparts' distortions is the intention of their leadership to force working women and women comrades, as well as working men and men comrades, to submit to bureaucratic control. The net result, were they to be successful in their intention, would of course be the impossibility of "creative activity and initiative" on the part of women, and, as a necessary consequence, the impossibility of a victorious proletarian revolution.

referred to in the Program in Brief clearly do not include the I.S. which is already convinced of the necessity of orienting towards organizing working class women.

Our difference seems to be that we do call for the self-organization of oppressed groups, e.g. blacks and women, within the unions or in special class organizations. To me, however, this seems the equivalent of the "special methods of work" called for by the C.I., because, like the C.I., the I.S. views this as a tactic within the overall strategy of the class struggle for power.

Furthermore, it is clear that Lenin, Kollontai, Armand, etc. wanted -- and worked for -- the independent organization of women outside the party; but independent organization led by the revolutionary vanguard on the basis of its overall strategy. (Alas, we are not yet in a strong enough position to form such organizations ourselves.)

The Bolsheviks Were Consistent

From all the above it is clear that the Bolsheviks were consistent. Not only did they "derive their organizational ideas from their ideological conceptions", but they were deadly serious about putting them into practice. They emphasized that special steps must be taken to draw women into the struggle -- but that the struggle must be a united struggle. Male chauvinist prejudices must be fought -- in order to strengthen "the consciousness of mutual interests of the proletarians of both sexes". Special efforts must be made to enlist women in Party political courses, but special courses for women would tend to divide, to decrease the solidarity between working women and working men.

The ideological conceptions underpinning the C.I.'s Theses are very explicitly stated. Real freedom for women is dependent on the victory of the united proletariat. Under the leadership of the Revolutionary Party, the united proletariat can win and women can gain their freedom. The united proletariat must include the masses of working women, and it is the responsibility of the entire Party to take the lead in the organization of working women, to develop special means to gain their allegiance as well as to stimulate their self-confidence, their "creative activity and initiative".

The Bolsheviks recognized that women still suffered historic disabilities even after the proletarian revolution. In order to overcome those disabilities, they took concrete steps to draw working women into political life. These steps included the Delegate Assemblies mentioned above, but they did not stop there.

"Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating woman," wrote Lenin in July 1919, "she continues to be a domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her... The real emancipation of women, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the state power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins.

"... Public catering establishments, nurseries, kindergartens.. which can really emancipate women, really lessen and abolish their inequality with men as regards their role in social production and public life. These means are not new, they (like all the material prerequisites for socialism) were created by large-scale capitalism. But under capitalism they remained, first, a rarity, and secondly -- which is particu-

larly important -- either profit-making enterprises, with all the worst features of speculation, profiteering, cheating and fraud.. which the best workers rightly hated and despised..." (The Emancipation of Women, pp. 63-64)

Kollontai, too, bases her perspective on the realities of "social existence":

"There are homes for very small babies, day nurseries, kindergartens, children's colonies and homes, infirmaries, and health resorts for sick children, restaurants, free lunches at school, free distribution of text books, of warm clothing, of shoes... The Workers' State charges itself with the duty of assuring a livelihood to every mother" through communal restaurants, laundries, etc.

"The communist society will take upon itself all the duties involved in the education of the child, but the paternal joys, the maternal satisfaction... will not be taken away..."

"No more domestic 'servitude' for women. No more inequality within the family! No more fear on the part of the woman to remain without support or aid with little ones in her arms if her husband should desert her. The woman in the communist city no longer depends on her husband but on her work..."

All this, Kollontai believed, would give rise to a new form of relationship between men and women, a free union of affection and comradeship. "In place of the individual and egotistic family, there will arise a great universal family of workers, in which all the workers, men and women, will be, above all, brothers, comrades." (Communism and the Family, pp. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19)

THE I.S.

At this point we must turn to the I.S. today, and how we propose to deal with "the woman question". Do our "organizational ideas" flow from "social existence", flow from our "ideological conceptions"?

The most recent official formulation of I.S. policy is Ilene W.'s Women's Liberation Perspectives, which was adopted by the November 1972 NC (see I.S. Bulletin #33 and I.S. National Report #17). A general summary of "Perspectives for I.S. Work" concerning women's liberation is given on page 19. The first paragraph reads:

"The I.S. has defined its central task in the coming period to be the reintroduction of socialist ideas into the working class. We seek to win the advanced strata of workers to our program -- that is, to our solution to the social crisis -- and with them to begin the work of rebuilding socialist leadership for the class struggle. Our women's liberation perspectives flow from and are integral to this conception."

This, a summary of the I.S. ideological conception -- if seen in conjunction with the Tasks & Perspectives document adopted at the 1972 I.S. convention -- is a restatement of revolutionary socialist analysis and cannot be faulted. The second

paragraph, the first 2 sentences of the third, and sentences 1, 2, and 4 of the fourth paragraph -- expressing the agreement in the I. S. reached through previous analysis and discussion -- flow logically from paragraph one:

"One of the key aspects of the socialist politics we seek to bring to the working class is a revolutionary perspective for women's liberation. By this we mean many things. We seek to win the working class--women and men--to an understanding of women's oppression and the need to struggle against it. We call for the self-organization of women to fight their oppression, for we recognize that the independent organization of oppressed groups is, and has been in the past, key to their ability to wage a successful struggle. But we do not stop here: we work to win the support of male workers to women's struggles, and we seek to win both women and men to a unified struggle, based on mutual respect and a program that represents the interests of the entire class.

"We put forward a revolutionary perspective in opposition to the reformist strategies now being advanced by the trade-union bureaucracy and the bourgeois women's movement. We believe that it is impossible to win equal rights for women under capitalism and we seek to win women who are struggling around these questions to the understanding that socialist revolution is the only possible strategy for winning women's liberation. ((...))

"And last, we seek to build a revolutionary party that can provide leadership to the entire working-class struggle, including the movement for women's liberation. Women's liberation can only be won by a socialist revolution--by the elimination of scarcity and the democratic reorganization of society that will only be possible under a workers' state. ((...)) We see, therefore, that the struggle for women's liberation is inseparable from the socialist revolution; so while we call for and support an independent working-class women's movement, we also seek to build a unified class-wide struggle under the leadership of the revolutionary party. ((...))"

I am in full agreement with the statements quoted here.

The Destruction of the Family

Of particular interest in connection with the practice of the Bolsheviks outlined above, however, is the third sentence in the fourth paragraph ((omitted above)): "But conversely, a classless society cannot be built without destroying the private family and the oppression of women."

No I.Ser will disagree with this statement -- particularly in the context in which it is found, nor with its repetition in the first paragraph on page 28 under the heading of I. S. perspectives regarding the Middle Class Women's Movement. It must, however, be seen in conjunction with the third sentence in the third paragraph ((also omitted above)):

"We also recognize the importance of educating the working class to our conception of women's liberation, by which we mean not only equal rights for women but the destruction of the nuclear family, which underlies women's oppression."

How do we "educate the working class to our conception" on the necessity for

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"the destruction of the nuclear family"? Ilene W. gives no concrete answer to that question, leaving the impression that we will simply point out educationally that the "bourgeois family" restricts the freedom of working class women.

In their documents, Margaret B. (pp. 3-4) and Celia E. (p. 5) are more specific. They both point out that what Engels called for was "that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished."

Celia E. points out that Trotsky said, "You cannot abolish the family, you have to replace it".

This, we have seen, was the conception and practice of the Bolsheviks, who embarked on real, not literary, destruction of the family.

Celia E. continues, the destruction of the nuclear family is not always progressive since -- if there be no replacement -- the bourgeoisie can use the resulting chaos against the working class.

Since the family is the economic unity of society on which they do depend, women, and especially working class women, cannot be won away from it without an alternative being available.

In the face of this reality, Ilene W.'s inclusion in her document of the statement "We also recognize the importance of educating..." as an equal and integral piece of the statement of immediately actionable I. S. perspectives cannot but raise the question: does she expect the perspectives as a whole to be actionable?

Revolutionary Optimism?

I am further troubled by discrepancies between I. S. -- at least New York I. S. -- reality and the perspectives the NC adopted.

To make this point concrete, I must now introduce the "Dear Sisters" (not "I. S. Women, Dear Comrades") letter written by some members of the New York branch, including Ilene W. The second edition of the letter appears in I. S. Bulletin #36.

Far from breathing a spirit of revolutionary optimism, the letter almost completely ignores all the truly important perspectives stated on page 19 of Ilene W.'s document. It gives very little weight to the importance of winning the women workers the I. S. must recruit if it is to become a serious revolutionary organization -- and concerning whom we have done next to nothing.

The letter concentrates almost exclusively on developing the final sentence of paragraph 4 of page 19: "Within revolutionary organizations, of course, we are committed to ending the subordination of women, and we encourage and support their self-organization."

Following the Ilene W. document's -- as well as Zetkin's Armand's, Kollontai's,

and Lenin's -- emphasis on the centrality of the class struggle and the work to be done among working class women, all I.S. members are, of course, "committed to ending the subordination of women within the revolutionary organization".

Without an end to such subordination, the revolutionary organization will not be able to tackle or solve the tasks before it.

The Self-Organization of I. S. Women: Raising Consciousness

Specifically, how does the "Dear Sisters" letter pose the problem?

"Our position was, and is, that it is advisable (their emphasis) for women to be self-organized in the I.S. It is essential for the raising of consciousness, as well as to guarantee that women's questions are an integral part of the IS program. We feel that only women themselves can see that this is done..."

Aside from not specifying what kind of consciousness (political? organizational? socialist? feminist as distinct from working class? working class women's?) the self-organization of women within the I.S. will raise, the feeling the letter expresses "that only women themselves can see that this ('guarantee that women's questions are an integral part of the IS program') is done" gives the impression that these comrades have no confidence in the seriousness of the I.S. as a revolutionary organization, that they believe the NC in adopting the Ilene W. document was being hypocritical, that the I.S. Program in Brief is just a mess of pottage. They come dangerously close to the Radical Feminist view that men -- in this case I.S. men -- are the enemy.

Even were we to grant that the separate self-organization of women within the I.S. were necessary to end the "subordination of women within the revolutionary organization" -- which I do not -- it would be fair and necessary to ask: is the self-organization of women into a caucus*, as promulgated in the second edition of the "Dear Sisters" letter, the means to that end?

* a caucus/fraction as promulgated in the letter's first edition and the N. Y. discussion.

It should be noted that the first edition of the "Dear Sisters" letter in all cases amalgamated "caucus/fraction" where the second letter uses the term "caucus" alone. In the first edition, the writers recognize(d) that it ((a caucus/fraction)) may not be feasible now". For that statement they have now substituted the fact that "There was no controversy over the advisability of maintaining a women's liberation fraction." They fail to deal with the problems raised by their own earlier amalgam, i. e.:

The caucus being concerned with the position of women in the I.S. and its membership being limited to women comrades; the fraction being concerned with the representation of the I.S. world view to radical and working women and the recruitment of women to that view and to the organization, the continued amalgam of caucus/fraction could only mean -- as it has in the past -- the exclusion of men from this important area of I.S. work.

Self-organization of Oppressed Groups in Society,
an Issue in the I. S. ?

First, this strategy for the self-organization of I. S. women, the letter makes clear, is seen as an integral part of the necessary independent organization of oppressed groups in society at large.

In fact, the writers "sense" that comrades who opposed the continuation of the old caucus/fraction oppose the self-organization of oppressed groups outside, as well as within, the I. S.

The writers of the "Dear Sisters" letter present no evidence for either charge -- which thus appear to be included for the sole purpose of clouding the discussion.

The I. S. calls unconditionally for the self-organization of oppressed groups, but, as Marxists, not in a static, timeless way, disconnected from the process of the class struggle and from the program of the revolutionary organization. Not being Utopians, we have an analysis of class society as being at the root of oppression. Flowing from that analysis we formulate program with which to intervene in organizations outside the I. S. Further, we judge organizational proposals within the I. S. on the basis of the program from which they flow.

The I. S. constitution states, "There shall be no restriction on the formation of caucuses within the I. S." We therefore support the right of the "Dear Sisters" to organize the Bread & Roses Caucus.

But we have the right to, and we ask, What is the program on which they organize? Is it a political program?

Political (?) Program of the Caucus

"We are forming a caucus of women, who are in political agreement on the need for the self-organization of women in the I. S., in the N. Y. branch. Proposals to the branch," they continue immediately, "for improved methods of providing child care for IS members and contacts will be one of our first concerns."

"Pressure the organization to consider special problems such as child care" also appears as point 3(b) among the "functions of a woman's caucus".

Child care, then, is the operative part of the caucus program. And what, as a matter of fact, is that program?

At this point it is germane to remind comrades of two things.

First, that in the N. Y. branch child care is a concern affecting more male, than female, comrades. The male comrade most affected by the need for child care has pointed out that it would be utopian to believe that the I. S. can solve the babysitting problems of society single-handedly.

Secondly, that on October 16, 1972 Comrade Gay, at that moment one of those involved in the process of writing the first edition of the "Dear Sisters" letter, took the initiative of introducing to the N. Y. exec a motion, "that we have a special babysitting fund to be financed when necessary by collections at branch meetings". The motion passed unanimously, thus establishing organizational -- rather than individual mother and/or father -- responsibility. Everyone assumed that the motion's purpose was to facilitate parent-comrade attendance at branch meetings and functions. There is no record of ANY opposition.

But suddenly, an explosion! Why?

On January 26, 1973, on behalf of the newly formed Bread & Roses Caucus, Comrades Gay and Ilene introduced a new motion to the exec. The key provisions of that new motion read:

"Because the IS recognizes that childcare for children of members and contacts is a responsibility of the organization and not of the individual parents, in order that both parents and especially women (as it is they who are usually the most burdened by childcare) can fully participate in the life of the branch, the branch undertakes to do the following:

"(a) We will provide childcare for membership meetings and other meetings (fractions, etc.) for members and close contacts in their homes. For now, this responsibility will rotate alphabetically among all members of the branch. Parents will have the right to skip over any comrades on the list. This babysitting is considered a responsibility of membership in the branch, and comrades who do not babysit will be put on the clean-up list twice.

"(c) We will investigate babysitting services, centers, and other ways to provide childcare to members and contacts without members missing meetings, but until this can be done, the membership must take on the responsibility..." (my emphasis)

What are the implications of this proposal?

Clearly that comrades' babysitting takes precedence over their attendance at branch meetings.

Even Comrades Gay and Ilene's later amendment to their own motion, "It is understood that if a comrade is intimately connected to the political question under discussion they may skip their assigned turn and arrange with the coordinator to set a later date" -- while perhaps allowing scheduled discussions to proceed -- would vitiate a key function of membership meetings: the political development of the men and women rank and file comrades!

Without the political development of all present -- and many future -- ISers, we are bound to miss coming opportunities to intervene in the class struggle. (A few of us cannot be everywhere at once).

The need for childcare, important as we all agree it is, is not identical with the "woman question". It now affects few comrades and few contacts. It will be a serious problem when we begin to develop working class women contacts. But I.S. provision of childcare by itself, with no connection to intervention by the I.S. on the basis of our

political program in the struggles of the class, is incapable of attracting working class women to the organization. Were the first priority of the Bread & Roses Caucus the development of an I. S. periphery of working class women, then INDUSTRIALIZATION -- not childcare -- would have been its first concern. But more of that below.

And why the punitive provision "comrades who do not babysit will be put on the clean up list twice"? Though this was later deleted by the makers of the motion, its momentary appearance nonetheless reveals, not a political program, but rather the antagonistic intent of the motion.

The compulsory assignment of even a few comrades to miss branch meetings -- not for arena intervention, but for babysitting -- once again gives rise to the question: How serious are we?

Central to Ilene W.'s Women's Liberation Perspectives are the following statements (page 19):

"The I. S. has defined its central task in the coming period to be the reintroduction of socialist ideas into the working class. We seek to win the advanced strata of workers to our program -- that is, to our solution to the social crisis -- and with them to begin the work of rebuilding socialist leadership for the class struggle. Our women's liberation perspectives flow from and are integral to this conception.

"... socialist revolution is the only possible strategy for winning women's liberation... we seek to build a revolutionary party that can provide leadership to the entire working-class struggle, including the movement for women's liberation. Women's liberation can only be won by a socialist revolution -- by the elimination of scarcity and the democratic reorganization of society... We see, therefore, that the struggle for women's liberation is inseparable from the socialist revolution..."

Without a revolutionary party, there can be no socialist revolution. Without a socialist revolution, there can be no true women's liberation. Without the formation of revolutionary cadre through consistent political discussion, the real equality of women becomes a utopian dream.

So much for the operative political program of the Bread & Roses Caucus.

The "dual" nature of "subjectivism"

The writers of the "Dear Sisters" letter state that "Women are in retreat in the organization. We are playing an increasingly minor role in the internal life of the IS, and the question of women workers, and women's liberation, is by and large ignored programmatically. We see this, of course, as a reflection in part of the waning of the women's movement."

On page 7 of her document -- passed by the November '72 NC, the reader will recall -- Ilene W. points out that the political radicals in the women's liberation movement lost their moorings with the decline of the New Left since "much of the impetus behind this section of the movement, after all, was the struggle over women's

place in the revolution."

"the revolution", but not the workers' revolution! Are we now seeing this "impetus" refracted in the I.S.?

Alluding to the decline of the non-working class women's movement as the cause of a crisis in I.S. work directed toward women is to deny the subjective-leadership role of the revolutionary organization. (For a fuller exposition of this point, see Ron T.'s new document, On the Transitional Program).

Our politics -- and the politics of the Bolsheviks -- are to fight against the hegemony of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois organizations, and to seek to build self-confidence, "creative activity and initiative" among working class women. This is not to deny that the middle class women's movement has promoted wide consciousness of women's liberation ideas in society, including among women workers. Neither the consciousness nor the goals, unlike the day to day tactics, of revolutionaries can be conditioned by the level of motion of the working class at any given moment -- and certainly not by that of the middle class. If the contrary were true, we would not set ourselves the goal of building a revolutionary party.

Writing of I.S. women's work being conditioned by the middle class women's movement is an organizational idea at loggerheads with the ideological conception that class society is the principal enemy of women as well as of the working class as a whole. If there is a crisis around the question in the I.S. today, it stems not from the decay of the middle class feminist movement, but from our failure to do anything or even develop a more than verbal program for working-class women's work. (Development of such a program is outside the purview of this article).

To be fair, it must be noted that the writers of the letter do find "especially grave the fact that women are industrializing at a slower pace than male comrades, which will of course increasingly affect the leadership composition of the IS and the place which women workers have in the IS program." In addition, point 4 of the functions outlined for a women's caucus is "Pressure the organization to integrate women into the industrialization process, and to do discussion and back up work for industrialized women comrades."

But what do they mean here by "the organization"? Do they mean "lack of guidance from the national leadership" (Ilene W., page 18)?

One of the chauvinist ideas that we combat is that women are empty receptacles into which males are supposed to pour knowledge.. or whatever. Unfortunately, unknowingly, the writers of the "Dear Sisters" letter seem to have fallen into the trap of identifying that particular insult with the solution to the "oppression of IS women".

Industrialization

On page 8 of her document, Ilene W. explains the material basis of the failure

of the New Left women:

"Much of this lack of focus flows from the fact that women, as a group, are not organized in the way that workers, or even students, are. Noncampus women's groups, in particular, tended to be composed of women working at different jobs or isolated in their individual homes, brought together by common ideas or similar experiences, rather than by common struggles or the need to fight an immediate common enemy."

Isn't this true, too, in large part of I.S. women, at least in New York?

Can the I.S. integrate women into the industrialization process when women are not willing to be integrated? The now-demised New York caucus/fraction paid almost no attention to the industrialization of I.S. women. I remember only one meeting devoted to the subject. The first proposal the Bread & Roses Caucus made to the branch, as we have seen, was -- not implementation of our industrialization program for women comrades -- but internal child care.

(In the short period since the demise of the caucus/fraction two "anti-caucus" women and another woman comrade who did not sign the letter or join the Bread & Roses Caucus have industrialized, and are taking responsibility for convincing other women that they must follow suit.)

Could this (unwillingness to be integrated into the industrialization process) be the reason that even the second version of the Women's Liberation document written in New York in 1972 is far less concrete -- and thus potentially much less useful as a guide for work among working class women than is the Jones document written in Detroit where I.S. women are industrialized?

(I would be in favor of the integration of the Jones document into the Ilene W. document. They are not counterposed. I would have favored the Detroit women comrades practicing the Jones perspective of bringing the struggle for legal abortion to working women -- an opportunity missed during the fall 1972 electoral campaign.)

I.S. Women as an "Oppressed Group"

The "Dear Sisters" letter avoids dealing with questions raised during the course of the New York discussion which it selectively reports. The questions were -- and are:

Are women oppressed within the I.S.?

Are better or equally qualified women passed over for positions, or assignments, in favor of men in the I.S.?

Are we discouraged, actively or passively, from political responsibility and development?

Please be specific: How?

Who is responsible when women do not attend classes on Marxist politics

and/or economics and/or philosophy organized by the branch, and particularly when organized by the Women's Caucus/Fraction?

Doesn't the existence of a caucus or caucus/fraction tend to isolate women into a political backwater?

Not only do the writers of the "Dear Sisters" letter fail to mention that these questions (and others) were raised during the discussion, they are disturbed that a discussion "including opponents of a women's caucus sanctioned (my emphasis) by the organization, and women who had not been participating in the caucus/fraction for one reason or another" was held:

"What has happened in NY is this: after the virtual non-functioning of the women's caucus/fraction for over a year, the question 'Should there be a caucus/fraction' was finally pushed to a discussion among the women in the branch this fall. This question arose mainly because of the weakness of the caucus/fraction, which had been further undermined by constant questioning of its very existence. This is something unheard of for any other group in the organization. When a committee, fraction or group functions poorly, its performance is examined, its reason for existing is not debated. But the caucus/fraction had been subjected to constant over-scrutiny and questioning and had consequently suffered a continuous identity crisis, which hastened its recent dissolution." (my emphasis)

Without regard to the accuracy of whether the existence of "any other group" in the I.S. has ever been debated, such statements are indeed alarming. I do not believe that all the signers of the letter understand the full import of the implications they have raised.

Are those who accept things the way they are just because they've always been that way revolutionaries? What could be the meaning of "over-scrutiny"?

Once the I.S. has "sanctioned" a group in the organization, or a policy, does that mean we should not recognize its non-functioning or even its non-functionality? (In the first edition of their letter, the "Dear Sisters" themselves recognized that the caucus/fraction "may not be feasible now".)

Does the fact that the organization once "sanctioned" a body which no longer represents the majority of N. Y. I.S. women mean that all N. Y. I.S. women should continue to permit this "sanctioned" body to speak for them on all questions concerning women? that proposals to the contrary are "factional" against the caucus/fraction?

Channelling all women's issues to the caucus/fraction had two results (and here I quote from Comrades Carol K. and Ellen R.'s response to the first edition of the "Dear Sisters" letter):

- "(1) the organization as a whole was not forced to deal with them.
- "(2) those women in political disagreement with the caucus found themselves trapped, told to take all issues involving women to the caucus even if not appropriate."

There is, of course, a model for banning discussion once a convention of the organization has made a decision -- a model no one in the I.S. would accept. That model is the SWP.

Cadre Development

No comrade questions that the I.S. should give serious attention to the questions of developing women cadre and recruiting working class women. Serious attention means that we not be bound by any organizational formulae. Organizational forms must fit not only our "ideological conceptions", but the goals we have set ourselves. An organizational form that is actually functioning will not suffer an "identity crisis" if questioned. To assert that the dysfunctionality of the caucus/fraction followed the questioning is to employ, once again, not a Marxist-materialist, but an idealist, method.

Such a method is also evident in the statement "We feel that the problems of women in society in general, and in the IS in particular, are not being dealt with by the organization. Problems are either ignored or pushed aside." Without an analysis of the basis for such a state of affairs, if such a state there be, the blame seems to be placed on "bad ideas" floating around, perhaps among the comrades on the NAC. In contrast, a materialist might hazard the guess that the editor of Workers Power, a comrade well known as an active partisan of women's liberation, might be more anxious to print articles on women if the articles were accounts of our active participation in live struggles.

Those of us who question the efficacy of an I.S. women's caucus that is bereft of a political program (see argument, that the Bread & Roses Caucus in fact is bereft of a political program, above) do not deny that women in society are oppressed, that females are brought up to be dependent rather than self-reliant.

For that reason, when the National Office or the branch neglects education, fails to give sufficient attention to cadre development, women suffer the most. But to believe that the I.S. single-handedly could wipe out women's historic disabilities here and now would be to believe in magic.

Conclusion

How would a caucus solve the problems of I.S. women? end the "oppression" of I.S. women? guarantee that our political consciousness be raised? develop us as political cadre?

Did the old caucus/fraction train I.S. women for political leadership? for participation in political discussions on the branch floor? In my 2' year experience in the I.S., no and no.

On the contrary, the caucus/fraction seemed to be a force for the maintenance of the status quo, a barrier: the same few women did most of the talking -- within the caucus/fraction, on the branch floor, and in arenas. It was, in fact, this monopoly

set-up, and the non-political atmosphere it created, that gave rise to the first disillusionment with the caucus/fraction -- by women comrades determined to earn their spurs on the basis of their rounded political development and participation.

Is there any reason to believe that due to inertia the caucus/fraction would have succeeded in the future where it failed in the past? or that the new caucus formed on the basis of "political agreement on the need for the self-organization of women in the IS" (actually the under-pinning of the old caucus/fraction), by codifying its "functions", will be more successful?

If we take our political analysis and program seriously, if we do indeed "believe that the leadership of a working-class women's movement will have to come from women in the labor force", if we do agree "on the central importance of industrialization in carrying out our perspectives", "that working class unity cannot be achieved by subordinating the interests of oppressed groups but can only be won in the course of struggle, on the basis of mutual respect..." (Ilene W., pp. 20-22), if we do indeed believe in the self-activity of women in the I. S., then -- if the Labor Tasks & Perspectives, the MacKenzie Labor, the Ilene W. Women's Liberation documents do not present sufficient guidance for women's industrialization, if branch execs or labor fractions do not furnish sufficient guidance (which is not true in N. Y.) -- serious women will bring their demands for political guidance onto the branch floor.

When I. S. women are in contact with working women, it will necessarily follow that the problems of working women will be reflected in the organization.

When I. S. women are involved in industrial work, when political perspectives for such work, as well as for the organization as a whole, are our daily concern, all comrades will be forced to confront these problems. Women will be stimulated to participate in discussions and to undertake theoretical work. Recruitment of working class women will be a live possibility.

This will require initiative and daring and hard work on the part of I. S. women, as well as of the organization as a whole. But -- after all --

"It is not the consciousness of men ((or women)) that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence ((that)) determines their consciousness".

Report from the National Women's Commission 5/15/73

The National Women's Commission, established by the Nov. N.C., began its work in Detroit in February. It was composed of Wendy T. for the Transformation Caucus, and Dave F. and Shelley L. (Women's Coordinator) representing the NAC majority at that time. Upon moving to Detroit I sent a mailing to the branches which asked for information concerning the political activities of women in the branches, where women were industrialized, what suggestions the branches had for the Commission, etc. Unfortunately most of the major branches failed to respond to this mailing which made it difficult for the Commission to act in an informed manner. Only in the last couple of weeks have branches and individuals begun to respond to mailings and letters. Without more regular communication the Commission will be unable to carry out the functions assigned to it.

What follows is an account of what the Women's Commission was working on prior to the April N.C.

- 1) The Commission is in the process of outlining and soliciting pamphlets on women's liberation. One will be an introductory pamphlet addressed to working-class women. The other projected pamphlet would be a more specialized discussion of the oppression/exploitation of black women.
- 2) I have sent letters to certain branches concerning the status of working women's groups today such as UNION WAGE in California, the Vancouver Working Women's Association, etc. So far we have received one document from Chicago concerning our activities in one such local group. We have not received other responses.
- 3) In early April mailings were sent to the branches informing them of Working Mothers Day --- a day of national protests over child-care cutbacks. A motion was also made to the NAC concerning these cutbacks and what our program and strategy should be in regard to them.
- 4) The San Francisco branch sent the Commission a leaflet which it distributed to a Peace and Freedom Party women's conference. That leaflet and various responses to it should appear in the next women's bulletin.
- 4) The debate in the I.S. over the women's question has produced a number of new documents. This bulletin is mainly composed of documents which were presented at the N.C. for vote or discussion. The next bulletin should include documents we have received in regard to the women's caucus debate, additional bibliographies, and replies to N.C. documents.

The change in leadership at the April N.C. has resulted in a change in the composition of the Women's Commission. Kay S. of the Transformation Caucus is now Women's Coordinator. She and Dave will represent the new majority and I will represent the Revolutionary Tendency.

Shelley Landau
for the Women's Commission

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

by Celia Emerson

"It is quite true that there are no limits to masculine egotism in ordinary life. In order to change the conditions of life we must learn to see them through the eyes of women."

Trotsky, Problems of Life

The liberation of women is central to Marxism not just because women represent more than 50% of the human race, but also because the oppression of women is inextricably tied up with the oppression of the working class under capitalism. The liberation of women calls for a revolutionary transformation of all existing institutions as well as all social relationships. Trotsky stated: "To alter the position of women at the root is possible only if all the conditions of social, family and domestic existence are altered. "Women and the Family, p.45) Without the emancipation of women, any working class transformation of society would only be partial and consequently would be distorted. The liberation of women, then, out of necessity, calls for the liberation of men.

For the past forty years, Marxist theory has neglected feminism. This has been not only due to the collapse and defeat of the revolutionary feminist movement (of the 1910's and 20's) but also to the smashing of the revolutionary working class movement of the 1930's. Today, therefore, revolutionary socialists face the task of integrating feminism and Marxism.

What follows from this analysis is that the struggle for women's liberation flows into the struggle against exploitation. We pose things that way because it is correct. We do not dangle women's liberation in front of women as a bait to get them involved in the "real" struggle---the class struggle. Rather, we argue that the most consistent struggle for the liberation of women requires waging the class struggle as well as the women's liberation struggle.

It is a logical conclusion of our revolutionary third camp politics that the International Socialists should be the most consistent fighters for women's liberation. We maintain that no society can claim the title "socialist" as long as any group in that society continues to be oppressed. Thus, to us, achieving women's liberation is a vital and necessary part of the process of building a new socialist society out of the ruins of capitalist society. The continued oppression of women in a society that has experienced working class revolution can only lay the basis for reaction. A workers state cannot be transformed into a socialist society which guarantees the full development of every individual as long as women's oppression remains. And there is no automatic development of the one from the other. As Lenin stated: "It is impossible to abolish national (or any other political) oppression under capitalism, since this requires the abolition of classes, i.e. the introduction of socialism. But while being based on economics, socialism cannot be reduced to economics alone. A foundation---socialist production---is essential for the abolition of national oppression, but this foundation must also carry a democratically organized state, a democratic army, etc. By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the possibility of abolishing national

oppression; the possibility becomes reality "only" ---"only"! with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres... (Lenin, The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up, Works, Vol. 22, p.325)

We do not believe, nor did the revolutionary socialist movement ever believe, and our view has been proven in the past, that working class revolution necessarily achieves women's emancipation. Instead, we say that women will have to struggle for their own liberation. We believe that women must build their own organizations and their own movement to wage that struggle because such a movement is essential to insuring that the demands of women's liberation will be a conscious part of any socialist revolution.

No society, however "good" can "give" women liberation, for part of that definition of women's liberation is the realization on the part of women that they can and must wage the struggle necessary to obliterate that oppression. Women's liberation means that women themselves redefine what it means to be a woman. It means that women have consciously rejected a definition of themselves made by a society dominated by a male chauvinist ideology. And it is the process of struggle against sexual in addition to class oppression which transforms women into whole human beings.

Furthermore, we understand that the ideology of male superiority is so thoroughly pervasive in capitalist society that it will require a conscious struggle to even begin to destroy that ideology. And the battle of ideas cannot go on in the absence of organization. This society has at its disposal the enormous array of capitalist institutions, the schools, the media, etc. to preserve the hegemony of its ideology---the ideology of male superiority. There must be organizations and institutions to battle that ideology.

Women cannot be liberated under capitalism because equality would simply mean equality of exploitation. Moreover, the society rests on the maintenance of the family and with it the ideology of male superiority. As socialists, we support the struggle of women for liberation because of the legitimacy of the demand here and now. But the full liberation of women requires a socialist transformation of society. We always attempt to win women to an understanding of the role capitalism plays in their oppression and we attempt to win them to revolutionary socialism. We continually stress the importance of building a women's liberation movement that is independent of the capitalist political parties, a movement that rejects reformism as the solution to women's oppression.

Our conception of women's liberation is the end to all forms of exploitation and oppression. The logic of the struggle for women's liberation leads to socialism. For the oppression of women from her role as an exploited worker and as Lenin called an 'oppressed sex' can only be achieved in a democratic socialist society. The struggle for women's liberation must be part of the revolutionary working class struggle for socialism.

The Special Oppression of Women

The origins of the oppression of women are to be found in the first division of labor within the family. That first division of labor was according to Engels "originally nothing but the division of labor in the sexual act", a division of labor between men and women for the purpose of propagation of children. Because of her childbearing role, woman was limited to certain forms of labor, such as food gathering, agricultural activities, handicrafts, for example. Men were primarily hunters, and controlled weapons and other instruments necessary for that role. This division of labor while not necessarily oppressing women, nonetheless, laid the basis for women's later oppression and exploitation.

The development of the means of production, the division of labor in society allowed for the creation of a surplus which made possible exchange and the creation of new forms of wealth. This division of labor and commodity production enabled new wealth in the form of slaves and herd to be accumulated by single individuals. An inequality of ownership developed, and a new phenomenon, private property, emerged. "The domestic labor of the woman no longer counted beside the acquisition of the necessities of life by the men," said Engels in Origins of the Family. "The latter was everything, the former an unimportant extra."

These new economic and social relations gave men reasons to tighten up family arrangements, so that they could command the labor of their wives and children. Monogomy also afforded the means to which property could be individually inherited. Once monogomy was enforced women were forced out of production. "The overthrow of the mother-right was the world historic defeat of the femalesex." said Engels, "the man took command in the home also, the mother was degraded and reduced to servitude... this degraded position of woman... has gradually been palliated and glossed over, and sometimes clothed in milder form; in no sense has it been abolished."

The point of this short summary of Engels is not to indulge in academic anthropological excercises. Rather it is to show that the origins of women's subordinate position in society is not caused by God, men's evil minds, or women's innate weakness, but based upon material conditions. Second, Engels analysis provides us not only with an understanding of the complicated historical process involved in the 'world historical defeat of woman,' but with a guide to women's liberation:

We can already see from this that to emancipate women and make her the equal of the man is and remains an impossibility so long as the woman is shut out from social productive labor and restricted to private domestic labor. The emancipation of women will only be possible when women can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant part of her time. And only now has that become possible through modern large-scale industry, which does not merely permit of the employment of female labor over a wide range, but positively demands it, while it also tends towards ending private domestic labor by changing it more and more into a public industry.

Origins of the Family

In the same vein Engels states:

Then it will be plain that the first precondition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry and that in turn demands the abolition of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society.

Origins of the Family

The reintroduction of women into social production, the demand for full legal equality for women, the demand that the care and education of children become a public affair by Engels were not counterposed to the class struggle, but were seen as an integral part of that struggle.

Feminist Consciousness

Because of their special oppression, women tend to develop a special consciousness of themselves as an 'oppressed sex.' This consciousness changes with the nature of class relations in any given time, such as changes in the family and in women's relationship to the means of production. The changes brought about by the development of capitalism especially the evolution of the family and the entrances of millions of women into industry have conditioned women's consciousness. But they have not changed the fundamental fact of their being oppressed as women. One historian, William O'Neill, described women's consciousness this way:

Feminism is then, best perhaps understood as one reaction to the great pressures that accompanied the emergence of the nuclear family. It was not a rebellion born of ancient slavery but part of a collective response to the sexual awareness deliberately inspired by Victorian society in an attempt to foster... an oppressive domesticity. The Victorians taught women to think of themselves as a special class. Having become conscious of their unique sexual identity, however---a consciousness heightened by their experiences forced upon them by the cult of purity---they could no longer accept uncritically those role definitions drawn up for them by the alien male.

(Everyone Was Brave)

This description applies most closely to women of the middle class. The Victorian norms were meant to. The bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie were attempting to limit the size of their families in order to facilitate their accumulation and maintenance in the family of wealth. In a time when contraception except in the crudest forms was unavailable, the most effective means was abstinence. Of course, it was only necessary to apply abstinence to women. Men were free to relieve themselves with other women. The result was the Victorian ideology, which was oppressive to all women. It was oppressive to middle-class women because of the terribly constricting roles it forced upon them. Working class women did not have the material means either to facilitate or to make possible their living up to the Victorian norms. But that fact did not permit them to escape from the oppressiveness of the ideology which perceived

them as degraded because of their sexual activities. Black women, who had still less control over their material circumstances, were even more degraded.

This should come as no surprise to us, since the ideology of the ruling class is always the ideology of the society as a whole and the norms of the ruling class become the norms up to which everyone in the society is expected to live up to. For working class women in general and in particular for black women their oppression is intensified by the fact that society continually holds up a norm, based on the position of ruling class women, which it is impossible for them to live up to.

The entrance of women into industry, on a massive scale, changed the consciousness of working women. Their exploitation on the job, their attempts to change it made them confront their oppression as women as well as their exploitation as workers, and provided them with an agency, their collective action, with which to change it. Therefore it was no accident that Charlotte Woodward, a glove maker, attended the 1848 Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, to fight for property rights and the right to vote. It led women from the Lowell Female Reform Association, who struck for higher wages and an end to the speedup to "make flaming Mary Wolstoncraft speeches about the rights of women and the inequities of the monied aristocracy." This factor helps explain why in the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century, millions of working women in the United States, Europe, China and Latin America formed their own working class women's organizations that fought both against their oppression as women and their exploitation as workers.

The Independent Organization of Women

Historically, the development of women's self-consciousness has gone along with the development of women's organizations. Not all the women's organizations, of course, are feminist. Only those groups which wish to end the subordination of women in society can be called feminist.

The feminist organizations have, in the 19th and 20th centuries, generally played progressive roles. Not only was the struggle for women's rights progressive (as is the fight of any oppressed group for liberation), but it widened the horizons for greater struggle. Lenin, in A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism, described the process whereby the struggle for national self-determination is progressive. In one section he makes the analogy between the struggles for national self-determination and the struggles of women for legal rights, in this case, divorce:

"The condition that makes it impossible for the oppressed classes to 'exercise' their democratic rights are not the exception under capitalism; they are typical of the system. In most cases, the right of divorce will remain unrealizable under capitalism for the oppressed sex is subjugated economically. No matter how much 'democracy' there is under capitalism the woman remains a 'domestic

slave', a slave locked up in the bedroom, nursery, and kitchen... only those who cannot think straight or have no knowledge of Marxism will conclude: So there is no point in having a republic, no point in freedom of divorce, no point in democracy, no point in self-determination of nations! But Marxists know that democracy does not abolish class oppression. It only makes the class struggle more direct, wider, more open and pronounced, and that is what we need. The fuller the freedom of divorce, the clearer women will see that their source of 'domestic slavery' is capitalism, not lack of rights. The more democratic the system of government, the clearer will the workers see that the root evil is capitalism, not lack of rights."

The struggles of feminists have in fact improved women's status in society and won basic economic and political rights. Their self-organization and activity have raised women's consciousness and galvanized other women into political motion. Finally, the activities of women fighting for emancipation led many to the struggle for socialism.

Marxists, of course, support and welcome the independent organization of women just as socialists welcome the organization of all oppressed groups fighting to end their subordination. This does not mean that we commit ourselves to support one particular group or another. Our support for one group or another depends on the nature of that particular group. In the same way, socialists should not view the women's liberation movement as counterposed to the struggle for socialism, but rather as enriching and adding to the working class movement. In fact, as it has been stated many times, while women's liberation cannot be realized without socialism, the reverse is also true. The independent organization and activity of women must begin and continue through the revolutionary period if women are to be emancipated.

The crucial necessity of the independent organization of women in terms of women's liberation is a part of our working class history. In 1871, the working women of Paris created the first workers state--the Paris Commune. The first workers state would not allow women to vote or serve on the political committees of the commune. It was only through the organizations such as the Union des Femmes (Women's Union) for example, that women won the concessions they did.

The Russian revolution destroyed capitalist economic relations and state power, and laid the social and political basis for women's liberation. Here too, women were not emancipated and the major women's organization, the Ghénodetl, had to continually fight for greater women's participation in the revolution.

The special oppression of women in society is reflected in the revolutionary organizations as well. Even after the Russian revolution, Lenin had to admit that on the woman question, "Scratch a Communist and a Philistine appears.* In order

to combat problems of male chauvinism, in order to bring more women into the revolutionary process, Lenin said, "The Party must have organs---working groups, commissions, committees, sections or whatever else they may be called---with the specific purpose of rousing the broad masses of women, bringing them into contact with the party and keeping them under its influence." (Reminiscences of Lenin, Clara Zetkin) Almost all revolutionary organizations have had women's sections, committees, etc., to deal with the work on the woman question within the organization and in society at large.

The Family Today

A perspective on women's liberation must begin with an examination of the family structure today and how it is affected by the present crisis in capitalism. The ruling class imposes a parasitical existence upon its wives, but wives of the working class are essential to the preservation of the capitalist system. The woman delivers and nurtures children, the future labor power of society. Her labor in the home helps reproduce the labor power of her husband. The wife assures his domestic needs in the cheapest possible manner.

The wife is also expected to discipline her family to the rhythms of capitalist society. She is to make sure her husband goes to work on time, works hard, and doesn't cause trouble. Similarly her role is also to demand that her children obey authority in school and elsewhere. It is not surprising that employers use housewives to curb the militancy of their husbands, and teachers to turn parent against child. All this makes the family a constant source of conservatism for the working class.

The major ideological and psychological bulwark of the family is sexual repression of women which distorts or restricts the personality of all concerned and creates a character structure based upon repression---at once rebellious and angry, and also conservative and fearful.

The only way in which women can play a truly equal role in society will be through the destruction of the present family institution. Only then can men and women be freed from the rigid sex and class roles imposed upon them.

Housewives do not have the same power as do women workers at the point of production, but even as such they are not entirely powerless. During periods of crisis they have been galvanized into action and become a powerful group. A crucial role that women workers will probably play will be in the destruction of capitalist forms of production and in transforming the capitalist nuclear family and other social relationships as well.

The family as the basic institution of society is collapsing as a direct result of the crisis in capitalism. The institution of marriage, for example, is failing. Almost one out of every three marriages end in divorce; for Blacks it is one out of every two. The family is in crisis because of economic instability particularly in working class families to have two full time wage earners, the increased secularization and breakdown in traditional morality (the "sexual revolution"), the increased objectification of women in the culture, the rising educational level of women, the decline in the importance of women's work, to name a few reasons.

The breakup of the family means an additional burden on women. In the major urban areas, one out of every eight households is headed by a woman. This means greater poverty since women are denied access to better jobs and do not receive adequate pay in the jobs they now hold. Many of the women suffer poverty from the welfare system. Those families below the 'poverty line' established by the U.S. Department of Labor find most of them headed by a woman. Women cannot find jobs, or they cannot take jobs because there is no adequate childcare.

The break up of the nuclear family is not always progressive. Trotsky commented that "you cannot abolish the family, you have to replace it." The social chaos which emerged from the present collapse of the family can be used by the ruling class as a pretext for the further regimentation of the working class. The dynamics of capitalism might themselves destroy the family as we have know it--- but the problem of the maintenance of the working class still remains. In fact, debate in the ruling class has been joined since the dysfunctional aspects of the family is already being felt in the work force---absenteeism, alcoholism, drugs, wildcat activity, etc.

Today the ruling class is debating how best to discipline the future work force. The conservative wing, exemplified by Nixon, believes that the nuclear family is still the best way for the future working class to be disciplined and socialized. That is one of the reasons why he vetoed the childcare bill.

On the other hand, liberal capitalists do not believe that the present family institution can best be used to discipline the work force. Especially in the textile plants in the South, "enlightened" employers provide childcare in order to get cheap labor and high productivity. If the the employers promise childcare, it's easier to attract women workers who will work for less. Also in this way, the woman becomes tied to the plant where she works, because childcare, which she so desperately needs, is provided.

Others are impressed with the Japanese setup. There, in many instances, men and women workers live in segregated barracks near their factories. The Japanese woman, due to economic and social pressures, marries late, then leaves work and has children.

Another aspect of the breakup of the family being discussed by the ruling class deals with Black people. Because of the legacy of the slave system, the Black family has been, for the most part, very different than the white. In particular, women have played a more dominant role in the family structure. This leads liberal sociologists such as Daniel Moynihan, to argue that the matriarchy is the cause of Black poverty and oppression. This theory can be used mainly to attack the militancy of women.

The collapse of the family and the special problems that have arisen with the decay of capitalism has led women to take the initiative in forming various kinds of community organizations. Because of their traditions of independence in the family, Black women have played a leading role in their formation. In the major urban areas, these community groups, welfare, tenants, are around issues such as the schools or around childcare, these organizations have already been involved in militant struggles.

It is incumbent upon Marxists to take up the issues involved with the breakup of the family and the disintegration of the social services. First of all we must begin to explain why it is the family is collapsing, why young people are so alienated from their parents, why so many marriages fail. More importantly, we must also provide a vision of the future---socialism.

In the immediate future, it is unlikely that we can have much influence or impact on the unemployed, welfare, etc. groups. Nonetheless, this should not blind us to their ultimate importance. The movements of the oppressed, of the community groups, will become massive with an upsurge in the labor movement. This is what happened in the thirties, and this is what is happening in Britain right now. The actions of tenants, of community organizations, develop along with the class struggle as a whole.

Exploitation and Oppression

Women are oppressed in being considered inferior to men, adjuncts to them, having their status determined by them, being shoved into passive roles, being denied opportunities to do meaningful work, etc. Women's position in life has been determined primarily by her biological function as a childbearer. As the size of families has declined and women have attained greater freedom through contraception they have not attained liberation, but have been increasingly degraded as sex objects.

This description is applicable to all women. But, not all women experience sexual oppression in the same way. Just as class society creates the basis for oppressing women, it also determines that women in different classes will be affected differently. Women in the upper class live off the labor of workers, including working women. They are exploiters, and their interests are with the exploiting class, against the interests of their "sisters." Thus, in a conflict they will tend to side with their class interests. However, because of the oppression which all women share, the tendency is not always fulfilled. As Daniel de Leon put it:

"There is no woman regardless of her station, but in one way or another is a sufferer, a victim in modern society. While upon the woman of the working class the cross of capitalist society weighs heaviest in all ways, not one of her sisters in the upper ranks but bears some share of the burden, or to be plainer of the smudge---and what is more to the point, they are aware of it. Accordingly, the invocation of the "Rights of Woman" not only rouses the spirit of the heaviest sufferers under capitalist society, and thereby adds swing to the blows of the male militants in their efforts to overthrow the existing order, it also lames the adversary by raising sympathizers in his own camp and inciting sedition among his own retinue."
(Introduction to August Bebel, Women Under Socialism)

Of course, the more significant the conflict and the clearer the class line is drawn the greater will be the tendency to side with their class.

Working class women are both exploited and oppressed. Part of their oppression as workers is that they are exploited. And part of the special oppression of women workers is that they are kept in a position whereby they can be super-exploited. When women work they are shoved into low-paying, low-status jobs, many of which are defined as women's work ---usually meaning work that is an extension of woman's role in the family: nurse, Housekeeper, teacher, secretary, etc. When they get better jobs, they are usually paid less than are men, have less status than men and asked to do things that men would never be asked to do in the same job. Women are usually forced to take less pay for their work (it's supposed to be just an addition to the husband's salary). Even where equal pay is supposed to be prescribed that requirement is usually avoided by lowering the classification of the work. Thus, one woman auto worker described her conditions:

"The 'specialness' of our department lay in the fact that the work we did had been recently reclassified by management from heavy work to light work; this is the way management distinguished 'men's work' from 'women's work.' It was apparent that the designation had nothing whatever to do with heaviness or lightness, but only with rate of pay. The only reason the company had reclassified the work was to see whether women could handle it--- at, of course, a lower wage rate than men had handled it in other shops, and as a matter of fact, were handling it at the same time in other shops. (Olga Domanski, "Pages from a Shop Diary" in the Liberation Now!, New York; 1971)

In other words, women's oppression is amplified by the fact that as workers they are super-exploited. They are not merely workers, but women workers, a special category in terms of experiences. The oppression and exploitation join together in working women, each intensifying the other. The struggle against women's oppression tends to lead them to the struggle against their exploitation, and indeed tends to make them leaders of that struggle. Furthermore, engagement in struggles against their exploitation tends to lead them to awareness of and opposition to their special oppression as women. Their position as workers, with the strength and collective consciousness that flow from it make them able to be leaders of the women's liberation movement. They are able to be the most consistent fighters of women's oppression precisely because their class interests lead them to opposition to the very class society which lies at the root of their oppression.

Women Workers

This does not intend to be a full treatment of women in industry. I concur with the Winkler document that passed at the Thanksgiving NC, 1973 and the Lyn Jones document of women workers.

The question of a Marxist approach to women workers is central in our strategy for women's liberation. Women workers can be a key in the building of a future successful women's liberation movement.

In capitalist society, women's relationship to the means of production fluctuates. In the past women were used as part of the reserve army of labor; they were brought in to fill new jobs or replace men in times of war, only to be pushed out when the boys marched home or in times of recession. Today, however, it appears that women are no longer marginal to the work force; women are a permanent part of the labor force.

38% of the work force is female; this represents almost 40 percent of the total female population. In contrast with the World War II and before period, women workers are older, married and have children. This, of course, suggests that women constitute a more stable part of the work force than ever before.

Women still remain on the lowest rung of the work force ladder. They earn roughly 60 percent of what men earn and are kept out of the higher paying and higher skilled jobs. The jobs women hold tend to be seen as extensions of women's work in the home--secretaries, nurses, domestic workers, waitresses, teachers, etc.

The consciousness of women workers has changed tremendously in the past ten years. Part of the reason is due to the changes in the work force and the impact it has had on the family structure. The crisis in capitalism, and the general attack on the working class has added greater pressures on working women. Finally the middle class women's liberation movement had an impact on working women. The ideas raised by feminists found receptive ears among women on the job. Today a common statement of working women goes, "I don't know about women's lib, but... I want equal pay" (or childcare, or whatever)

The consciousness of women is reflected in recent actions taken against sex discrimination and has led to gains for women workers. Jobs hitherto closed to women (usually higher paying) have been forced open. Even though this represents just a fraction of the female labor force (and potential labor force as well), it nonetheless represents a gain for women. Women have filed thousands of EEOC complaints, sued the government and industry for equal pay and job opportunities, sued the IRS for tax exemptions for childcare, initiated suits against offensive advertising (The National Air Lines "Fly Me" ad, for example). Whether it's expressed by wearing levis to work, or organizing informal women's groups at work, working women are beginning to organize and act against their exploitation on the job.

The organization and struggles by working women against job exploitation and discrimination cannot only win gains for themselves, but can effect the consciousness of other sections of the working class. The Ford's sewing machine strike in London in 1969 is an excellent example of that process. There the women originally went out on strike for parity, but in time the struggle broadened to one of equal pay and the extension of protective laws to men (in this case night work). The struggles of these sewing machinists initiated the struggle for equal pay. (It also had the effect of spurring on the English women's liberation movement.) Today, a working women's group in Vancouver, B.C. is leading a struggle to unionize clerical workers.

This is not meant to be a discussion of women in industry. Nevertheless, it is important to stress the necessity of women forming their own organizations of struggle at the workplace, and of women pushing for special demands such as equal pay and job opportunities, maternity leave, and childcare. Unless women are so organized and have the will to fight for demands they will be ignored by both the bureaucracy and male workers.

It is at the workplace that women workers can call upon the labor movement to fight for the needs of unorganized and unemployed women, and take up the questions of women's role in the family.

The Women's Liberation Movement

The women's movement was reborn in the mid-sixties as a direct result of the changes taking place in capitalist society. Middle class women, trained and educated at the finest schools, were rebelling against their parasitical and non-productive lives. It was their inability to break the sexist barriers to the professions, their frustrations with their marriages and family situations that led them to form the first feminist organization in 30 year, NOW.

The daughters of these middle-class women, who were attending these elite schools, began to realize that they too were being educated only for a life of alienation like their mothers. Many participated in the civil rights, student and anti-war movements. Their experiences with male chauvinism with those "liberation" movements, led them directly to feminism. These were the women who formed the thousands of women's liberation organizations in the late sixties.

Since 1967, when the first women's groups were formed, great changes have taken place. Many of the ideas raised by the women's movement have been taken up by other women and the more "controversial" issues are being openly discussed in the bourgeois press. The women's movement has had its galvanizing effect on other oppressed peoples. In many ways, the rebirth of feminism led to the birth of the gay liberation movement.

The feminist movement in America also helped spark women's consciousness in other parts of the world. In many countries, especially in Western Europe, feminists have borrowed American tactics and approaches to the woman question.

Since 1970, the radical wing of the women's movement has rapidly declined. The reasons for its collapse are quite similar to the collapse of the "new left" ---isolation from the working class, lack of a coherent ideology and leadership, and of course, in the most recent period, the entrance of leading feminists into the Democratic Party. For fuller treatment of the various tendencies in the women's liberation movement, see the Ilene Winkler document on women's liberation.

The only women's organizations that continue to grow are the bourgeois feminist ones, especially NOW and the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC).

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Both call themselves the women's liberation movement; Gloria Steinem can start off her speeches by saying she is a revolutionary and get wild applause. While NOW and the NWPC are middle class feminist organizations catering mainly to the needs of middle class women, some working class and Black women are attracted to them because of the legal gains they have won for women.

Today in American society the dominant theories concerning women's liberation are reformist, and to a lesser extent, separatist feminism. While this document can in no way detail the outlines of the two theories, it can be said that both divorce women's oppression and exploitation from class society in general.

Feminism is best defined as the understanding and awareness of the special exploitation and oppression that all women as a sex face and a willingness to do something about it.

Given this broad definition, it is clear that men can be (and have been) feminists as well. Given this definition it is clear that there can be competing feminist ideologies---reform, and separatists and revolutionary feminism. (revolutionary feminism has been discussed in the Celia Emerson pamphlet as amended by the NAC)

Revolutionary feminists link emancipation of women with some kind of working-class and socialist revolution.

Reform feminism, as expressed by the National Organization for Women, or the National Women's Political Caucus see the secondary status of women as some sort of aberration in capitalist society. Once there is equal education, and equal jobs for all--from bank presidents to janitors, then will women be free.

Separatist feminism argues that the basic division in society is sexual and that all other forms of exploitation, oppression and brutality---capitalism, imperialism, and racism---flow from this basic sexual division of society. Once women can have control over their means of reproduction, then they can be free. Lesbian separatist feminism is purely idealistic; all women should become lesbians in order to end their oppression in hetero-sexist male society.

Not only do these theories separate women's liberation from the social system and the class struggle. For them, the woman question exists independently from the rest of society. By using such methodology, these approaches are at best reformist.

Revolutionary Marxism, on the other hand, is the only theory for understanding and action for the emancipation of women. It is the only approach that correctly understands and analyzes women's position in society, and provides a strategy for women's liberation.

The collapse of the radical wing of the women's movement has serious implications. Without the presence of a strong movement, many of the gains women have made can be taken away---in the recent election the ERA was defeated in a number of states. While we were opposed to its passage, other opponents voted against

it not because of protective laws, but because they had been warned of the evil effects of integrated toilets, co-ed wrestling, the draft and the legalization of homosexual marriages. In other states liberal abortion bills went down to defeat. In Detroit, for example, the major group propagandizing for the abortion bill was ZFG. More abortion laws will come under attack in the 1974 elections. We can also expect a continued attack on the working class, which affects women hardest, and a greater attack on those on welfare.

The NOW AND THE NWPC will continue their strategy of trying to elect more women into political offices. This year NOW is focusing on sexist media and children's books as well. The other feminist groups that do exist are either into health or other self-help collectives or out on farms. Very few women's organizations wish to take up the political struggle for women's liberation.

This does not mean that we cannot work on a united front (of sorts) basis with other feminist organizations in struggles concerning women's rights, such as abortion, extension of protective laws, childcare, etc. Such struggles are important, not only for themselves, but also because they can advance women's position in society, and in the fight, women can be moved to fight for socialism.

We continue to give unconditional but no uncritical support to the women's liberation movement. Without support, we do not ask women workers and the women's liberation movement to subordinate their struggle and demands to the more politically conservative sections of the working class.

However, it should be our perspective that the only way right now to rebuild a strong independent women's movement can only come through the organization of working women, first at the workplace and then linking their struggles with women in the community. The IS should see as its first priority working out perspectives for women's industrialization and a perspective for women's work in industry. Once we get roots in the working class, and are part of building and strengthening working women's organizations, only then will we be better equipped to build the women's movement on the outside.

ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION -- By Lynn Jones

(Including a Critique of the Margaret B. Amendments)

Hopefully, the entire organization agrees that the liberation of women requires socialist revolution and that no working class seizure of state power can successfully transform the society into a socialist one without securing women's liberation. But agreement on these fundamentals is not enough. An absolutely clear understanding of the woman question is a necessity for any revolutionary organization because the oppression of women in capitalist society is inalterably bound up with the oppression of the entire working class. To misunderstand the nature of women's oppression is to misunderstand the nature of all oppression under capitalism. To misunderstand the relationship between the struggle for women's liberation and the struggle for socialism is to misunderstand the nature of working class revolution.

Women's Special Oppression

Women are oppressed as a sex. Because of their special oppression as a sex, all women, regardless of their class position, are afflicted by social prejudice. All women are deemed inferior, "second class" citizens because of woman's role as the bearer of children, because of biology. Revolutionaries attempt to instill within women a consciousness of their special oppression. We understand that only revolutionary socialism can end women's oppression, and that, therefore, winning women to the struggle against their own oppression is one step toward winning women to the struggle for socialism.

As civilization arose women were limited to certain types of labor in society because of their role in reproduction. It was not possible, for example, for women to participate in long hunting trips. Children are nursed in primitive societies for a lengthy period. During nursing it is equally impossible for a woman to separate herself from her child or for her child to endure the rigors of a hunting party. Thus, a division of labor between women and men arose with the very beginnings of civilization. Women became responsible for the care of children and the communal household and for gathering certain types of food. Men were responsible for hunting and other such activities. Although this division of labor between women and men did lay the basis for the oppression of women, it was not necessarily in and of itself for women. Even though it was true that women were limited to certain types of labor, there was no reason for the labor of women to be regarded as inferior to that of men. The labor of both women and men was equally necessary to the maintenance of society.

As civilization developed a surplus of goods above that required to simply maintain society was accumulated, and the first surplus was domesticated animals. Men, because they were the hunters, controlled the surplus in society. Men, through their role as hunters attained a monopoly over the means of violence and their control of weaponry guaranteed their control of society.

Private ownership of property arose, based on the creation of surplus goods, and it was men who owned the private property because it was men who controlled the surplus. Now the question of inheritance became important. It

became important that the private property belonging to a man be passed on to offspring that were actually his and not those of some other male. The mating habits of women had to be controlled -- women must not be allowed to mate freely with different males as they saw fit. And children must come to be regarded as the offspring of men, not women. The ancient right of women, the mother-right, the idea that children are related by blood to their mother and not to their father, must be destroyed. Women, whose labor as gatherers has already become subordinate in the society, must now be forced into a subordinate position within the family as well. The labor of women as mothers and housewives must be denigrated. Men must establish their hegemony over women in every way -- women must become oppressed as a sex.

To justify the oppression of women an ideology is created, the ideology of male superiority. This ideology, sexism, maintains that women are innately inferior to men because of their role in reproduction. It maintains that women are not only less strong than men, but that they are less intelligent as well. It maintains that the subordination of women is natural because men are aggressive and dominating by nature, whereas women are passive and submissive by nature. Women naturally crave their "protected" -- that, is, subordinate -- position in society. And on and on; women are inferior to men by nature in every respect.

Women Under Capitalism

When capitalism arises, women are excluded from public, social production and confined to private, domestic labor because women are already oppressed as a sex. Woman's life remains one of servitude to the individual family. The nuclear family is the primary economic unit of capitalism. In it women bear the new generation of wage laborers and maintain the current generation, aid in the discipline of male workers, and socialize children -- to name only a few of women's functions. But the labor of women continues to be deemed less important than that of men. Under the new system of wage labor, the public, social labor of men is paid; while the private, domestic labor of women as mothers and housewives is unpaid. Economic independence is denied to women in a society where the possession of money is everything.

Further, women's oppression as a sex does not cease when some women do enter into social production. That some women secure jobs and even professional careers does not alter the position of women as a whole in society for the great mass of women remain private, domestic laborers.

Even those women who do enter into social production cannot escape their special oppression, of course, for the jobs that are open to women are still primarily defined in terms of woman's role as mother and housewife. Nursing, teaching, sewing, waitressing -- these are the jobs deemed suitable for women. And because women's work is defined as inferior work, women's jobs are more poorly paid than men's. Even when women do the same work as men, they

are paid less for their work is defined as having less value than that of men. Thus, women's special oppression as a sex allows women to be super-exploited as workers.

Moreover, the working woman finds herself forced to maintain two full-time jobs, one paid and one unpaid, for by and large the society offers no alternative to the nuclear family. After 8, 10, or 12 hours of public, social production, the working woman comes home to another day's labor as mother and housewife.

And finally, women's oppression as a sex is institutionalized under capitalism. All of society's institutions are geared to the maintenance of women's subordination. From birth women are taught to accept their oppressed position in society as the natural position of women.

The special oppression of women as a sex existed prior to the rise of capitalism. Women were already regarded as the inferior sex, were already subject to social prejudice. Women's work was already regarded as inferior work. But the rise of capitalism changes the nature of women's special oppression. Now the economic basis for women's oppression becomes the exclusion of women from public, social labor. The nuclear family becomes the economic unit of capitalism. Within the nuclear family, the oppression of women becomes institutionalized, for woman's private, domestic labor is unpaid. The special oppression of women now gives rise to the super-exploitation of women as workers. Women's special oppression is institutionalized and the pre-capitalist ideology of sexism is reinterpreted to fit the needs of the new society.

Women's Liberation and Socialism

The economic basis, the material basis, for women's special oppression under capitalism is the exclusion of women from social production. Therefore, women must secure the right to enter into social production fully and freely in order to gain their liberation. The right to enter fully and freely into social production has become a necessary prerequisite for women's liberation. Working class revolution can, of course, establish that necessary prerequisite. It can destroy the economic basis for women's special oppression.

Does this mean that working class revolution alone guarantees the liberation of women? No, it does not. To argue that it does is to argue the worst kind of economic reductionism. To argue so is to argue that the political and social liberation of women flows automatically from the economic transformation of society. To secure liberation women must win a host of other gains as well.

To begin with, the nuclear family must be abolished as the economic unit in society and housework and childcare must be socialized. So long as the individual, nuclear family remains the primary economic unit of society, so long as the responsibility for housework and childcare continues to be deemed the responsibility of individuals in society, it is ludicrous to speak of women's liberation. The best that could possibly be won without securing these latter demands is a situation in which men and women are equally oppressed; that is, a situation in which the individuals of both sexes are equally re-

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tionary struggle for democracy," ("The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Theses)," Ibid., p. 99).

Lenin also points out, absolutely correctly, that every other struggle must be subordinated to the struggle for state power when the seizure of state power is the task immediately before the working class. But prior to that time the struggle for democracy is a question of supreme importance to the working class, for it is necessary for the working class to wage that struggle with the greatest consistency precisely in order to prepare itself to rule society.

It is impossible to achieve the liberation of women under capitalism. Women's liberation must mean, if it is to mean anything at all, that every aspect of women's oppression is abolished. But the great majority of women in capitalist society are doubly oppressed. The great majority of women are oppressed not only as members of the female sex, but also as members of the working class. It is this, the double oppression of women workers, combined with their super-exploitation, that points in the direction of revolutionary socialism, for revolutionary socialism is the only possible solution to both their oppression as women and their oppression and exploitation as workers. Thus the liberation of women requires a socialist transformation of society. The end of women's oppression requires an end to all oppression.

By the same token, the liberation of women is necessary to the achievement of socialism. Socialism means, by definition, that every individual in society is guaranteed his or her fullest possible development as a human being. Thus, a society that hinders the development of women in any way, that does not insure the fullest possible development of each and every woman as a human being, cannot be a socialist society. The struggle for socialism includes of necessity the struggle for women's liberation.

The Necessity for Independent Organizations

But, as we have already pointed out, the economic transformation of society to socialist relations of production does not automatically guarantee the liberation of women. The struggle must go beyond the establishment of socialist production both to insure the liberation of women and to create a socialist society. The program for socialist revolution must therefore, as we have shown, include the call for the abolition of the nuclear family as the economic unit of society, the demand for the socialization of childcare and housework -- the demand for full democracy for women. The question is how to insure that that actually happens. Women have been the victims of the ideology of male superiority, sexism, for century upon century. That ideology pervades every aspect of capitalist society, every institution of capitalist society. And, of course, it pervades the consciousness of the working class itself and even that of women. How is the working class rid of its sexist consciousness? How is the working class won to the struggle for women's liberation?

Do we rely on good sentiments, good intentions, on the part of the working class? Obviously not. Do we believe that the working class will simply take the word of the revolutionary party that women's liberation is necessary to the creation of socialism? Again, obviously not. Do we believe that the

working class will arrive at the intellectual conclusion that a socialist society cannot exclude 50% of its population from state power? Yet again, obviously not. (And even if we did accept this last proposition, what would that say about the position of blacks, gays, and other oppressed groups under the new workers' state?)

A mass movement of women struggling around demands of special importance to women and demanding that the entire working class support those struggles, a movement forcefully raising the question of women's liberation to the entire class, is the key to raising working class consciousness on the woman question. By both demanding working class support for its own struggles and offering its support to the working class as a whole in the struggle against capital, such a movement will prove in practice the relationship between the struggle for women's liberation and the struggle for working class power. The working class must win every conceivable ally to its cause. A mass women's movement, by presenting itself as one such ally, can win the working class to support the struggle for women's liberation. Such a movement also wins new allies for the working class because it also proves the relationship between the struggle for women's liberation and the struggle of the working class against its oppression and exploitation to both working class women and women outside the class. Thus, such a women's movement continually recruits to the struggle for socialism as well as to the struggle for women's liberation.

A women's movement, to be successful, must be part of a movement of the working class as a whole, must be based inside the working class. But a women's movement must also be independent. This statement obviously does not mean independent of class. It means, rather, independent organizationally -- a movement that makes its own decisions and creates its own organizations. The independence of the women's movement is necessary to ensure that the struggle for women's liberation is pressed forward, even when the entire class is not yet ready to support that struggle.

An independent women's movement is necessary to ensure that women's demands and needs are taken seriously by the working class as a whole in the struggle under capitalism. But the role of an independent women's movement does not end with working class revolution. The independent organization of women must be continued and spread following revolution to ensure that the struggle for women's liberation continues to be a part of the struggle to create a new, socialist society. Only on the basis of the most persistent struggle, pressed on by women themselves, even in the face of the most obstinate resistance, can the working class rid itself and all of society of the all-pervasive sexist ideology and ensure that every aspect of women's oppression is ended.

An independent women's movement has a role to play with regard to the revolutionary party (and to revolutionary organizations in general) as well. It spurs the party on. By always pressing the woman question before the party, by always insisting on its importance, an independent women's movement maintains an unflagging interest in the woman question inside the party as well as inside the working class as a whole. (For example, few would deny that most revolutionary groups in the US were very poor on the woman question prior to the birth of the radical women's movement of the 1960's. It was the women's movement, always pushing the woman question to the fore, that forced

revolutionary organizations to re-discuss the woman question and develop new, more sophisticated theories about women's oppression, its relationship to capitalism, its relationship to the struggle for socialism, that had been the case with revolutionary organizations previously.) By the same token, the independent organization of women within the revolutionary party is necessary to ensure that the party devotes the fullest possible attention to the woman question -- to the development of theory, to the pursuit of work in women's organizations, to the development of women comrades, and so on.

CRITIQUE OF THE MARGARET B. AMENDMENTS

Women's Oppression

The Margaret B. Amendments completely confuse the nature of women's special oppression as a sex under capitalism. Her explanation of women's oppression is insufficient because for her women's oppression is determined by capitalism's "uneven and contradictory development." She makes this argument in a number of places in her document.

For example, on page 2 she says: "Never able to expand the productive forces sufficiently so as to be able to draw all sectors into its realm, equally and stably, (emphasis hers) the bourgeoisie retains and reinterprets pre-capitalist institutions such as traditional marriage and family and pre-capitalist ideologies such as sexism, to perpetuate and justify its rule . . . Even in advanced capitalist countries the majority of women remain excluded from full and equal participation in production and saddled with the daily drudgery of housework and childcare, dependent upon men, and personally degraded in one fashion or another. Thus the uneven and contradictory development of capitalism has left an entire sex oppressed . . ." (Emphasis mine.)

On the same page she goes on to say: "The denial to women of democratic rights . . . is only a reflection of this, i.e., of her oppressed social position, demanding by the peculiarities of the development of capitalism, of the domination of wage labor by capital (emphasis mine). And on page 3 in a discussion of the family she states: "Thus the mode of production, 'the uneven and combined development' of capitalism as the historical determinant in the oppression of women is obscured (emphasis mine)."

In other words, Margaret is arguing that it is capitalism's inability to draw the masses of women into social production, capitalism's inability to provide jobs for all, that causes women's oppression. It is true, of course, that the exclusion of women from social production is the economic basis of women's oppression under capitalism. And, as we have pointed out, expanding the productive forces so that all women can enter into social production is a necessary prerequisite for women's liberation. But to argue that the sole cause of women's oppression under capitalism is the "uneven and combined development of capitalism" is insufficient in explaining women's special oppression as a sex and leads to disastrous conclusions (as we will see). The question that must be asked and answered is: How does Margaret explain the various aspects of women's special oppression?

Margaret's Amendments contain absolutely no discussion of women's subordinate position within the family. While she severely criticizes the middle class women's movement of the 1960's for its analysis of the role of the family in women's oppression, she has no analysis of this aspect of women's oppression. She makes two points about the family on page 3:

"It has already been noted that the family structure and the position of women in it changes in accord with the demands of capital, in different countries and different historical periods. The POCM for the most part has been unable to come to grips with this because it has seen the bourgeoisie as simply ideologically committed to sexism and consequently to the family. Thus the mode of production, 'the uneven and combined development' of capitalism as the historical determinant in the oppression of women is obscured.

"Secondly, families stand in different relationship to the means of production. There is the bourgeois, middle-class, and working-class family. The worker is paid more or less his exchange value, i.e. what is necessary to maintain and reproduce himself which is a remuneration to the family as a unit. Working class women and children subsist on the wages paid to the class. Bourgeois women and children subsist on the surplus value of the class . . . So through this the class nature of the oppression of women is obscured."

What exactly is Margaret saying about the family? The main point that she makes in her second paragraph is that the bourgeoisie lives off the surplus value created by the working class. Undoubtedly true -- the working class is exploited and oppressed under capitalism, and working class women are oppressed as members of their class. But all this tells us very little about women's oppression within the family.

Margaret's real point is made in the first paragraph. She states that "the position of women in the family changes in accord with the demands of capital." That is, women's subordinate position within the family is a result of the "uneven and combined development of capitalism." This is the historical determinant in women's oppression. Not true -- for women's oppression within the family arose long before capitalism. As Engels says in The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State: "The overthrow of the mother-right was the world historic defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also, the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude . . . This degraded position of women . . . has gradually been palliated and glossed over, and sometimes clothed in milder form; in no sense has it been abolished."

Margaret never makes the point that all women, regardless of class, are oppressed within the family. Nor does she ever make the point that women's labor as mothers and housewives is deemed inferior to the labor of men, deemed unworthy of payment. Women's labor within the family is unpaid labor.

Margaret's discussion of sexism is equally inadequate. She makes two points on page 2: that the bourgeoisie uses sexism to perpetuate its rule and that capitalism, by drawing women into social production, brings the ideology into question. Both points are valid. But Margaret fails to point out that sexism, while it has a material basis, takes on a life of its own and pervades every aspect of the society. She fails to point out that a struggle against sexism must be waged. The existence of sexism is part of

women's special oppression. The struggle for women's liberation must include a conscious struggle on the part of women to reject capitalism's definition of womanhood, a male chauvinist definition, and a conscious re-definition of what it means to be a woman must be constructed by women themselves.

The Amendments never point out that the great majority of women are doubly oppressed -- oppressed both as a member of the female sex and as a member of the working class. Nor do they show that it is women's special oppression -- in that women's labor is deemed inferior to that of men -- which allows women workers to be super-exploited. The Margaret B. Amendments continually talk about "the class nature of women's oppression." But they never raise either of these questions; class questions of the utmost importance. Apparently, Margaret has lost sight of one very basic fact that belies her explanation of women's oppression. Women who do enter into social production here and now, today, do not escape their special oppression. Far from it. As women workers they find themselves super-exploited. And, far from escaping their subordinated position within the family, the woman worker returns home to a full day of unpaid labor following her day of paid, social production.

Thus, the major questions of women's special oppression are never adequately discussed. Instead of offering any meaningful explanation of women's oppression in the family, of the role of sexism in women's oppression, of the double oppression of working class women, of the super-exploitation of women workers -- instead of any substantive discussion -- we are simply told, "Thus the uneven and contradictory development of capitalism has left an entire sex oppressed." Women's oppressed social position is "demanded by the peculiarities of the development of capitalism." That is, the "uneven and combined development of capitalism" is "the historical determinant" in women's oppression (emphasis mine).

Women's Liberation and Socialism

What are the conclusions to be drawn from this argument? Is Margaret arguing that women's oppressed position within the family will automatically disappear once the productive forces have been expanded so that women are no longer excluded from social production? Is she arguing that women's work as housewife and mother will no longer be deemed inferior, no longer deemed unworthy of payment, once a place in social production is guaranteed for all? Is she arguing that the struggle against sexism is resolved by simply abolishing the material basis of the ideology? Let's see what Margaret has to say on these questions.

On page 4 she says: "Others have seen the nuclear family as a living arrangement as intrinsically oppressive to women. Hence they have demanded its abolition as a living arrangement. Such a demand is neither democratic nor revolutionary. If it can be likened to anything, it can be likened to Stalinist forced collectivization. Engels called for the quality possessed by the individual family as being the economic unit of society to be abolished, not for the abolition of the family as such." Later on she states that: "Like the withering away of the state, the family, and socialization of distribution, it (the socialization of housework and childcare) will occur under socialism but it is not a part of the program toward that revolution." (Emphasis mine.)

A number of questions are raised by these statements. To begin with, Margaret states that the demand for the abolition of the family as a living arrangement "is neither democratic nor revolutionary." And in the second statement quoted she states that the family will wither away under socialism, but that calling for its abolition "is not a part of the program for that revolution." Margaret is correct on one point. We do not call for the abolition of the individual family as a living arrangement. We do not care what living arrangement people choose under socialism.

However, Margaret's overall argument is that we do not include the call for the abolition of the nuclear family in any sense in our program for revolution. But she is wrong. We do indeed include this call in our program for revolution. We do indeed call for the abolition of the family; that is, we call for the abolition of the family as the institution responsible for rearing children and the maintenance of the individual's personal, physical needs. That the family performs these functions, the maintenance and reproduction of the working class, is precisely the "quality possessed by the individual family as being the economic unit of society" which Engels speaks of, is precisely what Engels says must be abolished!

The program for revolution does not say that the individual family will be declared illegal the day after the revolution. It does state that the individual family as the economic unit of society is oppressive to women. It does state that the family must be abolished. But, as Trotsky says, "You cannot 'abolish' the family; you have to replace it." That is, the program for socialist revolution cannot simply say that the family must be abolished; it must also offer a replacement. And how is this done? By putting forward the very demands that Margaret says are not a part of the program for revolution -- the demands for the socialization of housework and childcare!

In case there can be any doubt that these are demands of the socialist revolution, that the fulfillment of these demands is a necessary part of the tasks of working class revolution, let us see what Trotsky has to say about the Russian Revolution in this regard. In his article, "Thermidor in the Family," he says:

"The revolution made a heroic effort to destroy the so-called family hearth -- that archaic, stuffy, and stagnant institution in which the woman of the toiling classes performs galley labor from childhood to death. The place of the family as a shut-in petty enterprise was to be occupied, according to the plans, by a finished system of social care and accommodation: maternity houses, child-care centers, kindergartens, schools, social dining rooms, social laundries, first-aid stations, hospitals, sanatoria, athletic organizations, moving-picture theaters, etc. The complete absorption of the housekeeping functions of the family by institutions of the socialist society, uniting all generations in solidarity and mutual aid, was to bring to woman, and thereby to the loving couple, a real liberation from the thousand-year-old fetters," (Women and the Family, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 49).

Furthermore, Margaret is wrong when she says that we do not call for the abolition of the state. We do. We say that the state is an institution of repression suitable only for a class society and that it must therefore be abolished. It is true that the abolition of the state and the family are not

demands since there is no institution to demand them of. But the socialization of housework and childcare are demands. We demand them of the workers' state. And all are part of the program of socialist revolution. We unceasingly propagandize for them.

Margaret also says, "If it (the demand for the abolition of the family) can be likened to anything, it can be likened to Stalinist forced collectivization." No, Margaret, not quite. Stalinist forced collectivization is just that -- forced. The democratic workers' state does not herd the proletariat into communal pens like cows. It does not grab the proletariat's dirty laundry out from under the workers' noses, ignoring cries of protest. The democratic workers' state wins the proletariat to its new system of social care and accommodation. As Trotsky says in "To Build Socialism Means to Emancipate Women," "But the transfer of material means from the family to the child-care centers and canteens will take place only if the social organization learns to satisfy the most primary demands better than the family (emphasis mine)," (Ibid., p. 48).

Margaret's argument, then, is that the socialization of housework and childcare and the abolition of the individual family are things that follow automatically from the establishment of socialist production; and that therefore the call for them is not a part of our program for revolution. Margaret's argument is the argument of economic reductionism -- the argument that the social and political liberation of women follows automatically from the establishment of socialist production, follows automatically from the expansion of the productive forces to the point where all women can enter into social production. This incorrect conclusion -- a disastrous one for the struggle for women's liberation -- flows directly from Margaret's incorrect thesis that the sole cause of women's oppression under capitalism is "the uneven and combined development of capitalism." Because she argues that the sole cause for women's oppression is capitalism's inability to draw women into social production, Margaret must, and does, draw the conclusion that the only thing that is needed to eliminate women's oppression is the expansion of the productive forces.

Her incorrect thesis on the cause of women's oppression leads her to other, equally disastrous, conclusions as well. It leads her to denigrate the importance of democratic demands in the struggle for women's liberation and to counterpose the struggle for democracy to the struggle for socialism.

On page 4, she states: "Yet, the call for social responsibility for or socialization of housework and childcare, when raised in isolation from a call for workers' revolution and an end to class society, is a utopian idea (emphasis hers)." She goes on to say: "Although it has been rarely concretized by the RMCWM, as an idea socialization of housework and childcare can head up a series of demands such as childcare centers, dining halls, laundries, etc. Yet these demands in and of themselves are partial and well within the confines of the ideology of the bourgeois democratic revolution . . . If pressed in this epoch they are a challenge to bourgeois society. Nevertheless raised in isolation in the manner of the program of the RMCWM they are utopian and misleading."

"As demands of the working class, they can be demands for a greater share of value produced, but they do not in and of themselves challenge the control over surplus value. As the working class struggles for these demands, revolu-

tionaries intervene to argue that their realization requires a struggle for nationalization of industry and the banks under workers' control, a workers' government, expropriation of the expropriators (emphasis hers)."

To begin with, Margaret's characterization of these demands as "utopian" is utter nonsense. There can only be one meaning to the word utopian -- unachievable. Surely Margaret is not arguing that socialization of housework and childcare is unachievable! What she must really be arguing is that these demands are unachievable without working class revolution -- a better argument, but still one that she ought to prove, not just state.

The point is that, for Margaret, the struggle for democratic demands is counterposed to the struggle for socialism. She expands on this argument and states it more clearly in her misquote of Lenin:

"In contrast to the petty-bourgeois democrats, Marx regarded all democratic demands without exception not as an absolute, but as an historical expression of the struggle of the masses of people, led by the bourgeoisie, against feudalism. There is not a single democratic demand which could not serve, and has not served under certain conditions, as an instrument of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers . . . (dot, dot, dot) In practice, the proletariat will be able to retain its independence only if it subordinates its struggle for all the democratic demands (not rights) . . . to its revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie."

Three little dots! What a world of enlightenment can lie in three little dots. Let's see what those three little dots of Margaret's replaced: "To single out, in this respect, one of the demands of political democracy, specifically, the self-determination of nations, and to oppose it to the rest, is fundamentally wrong in theory (emphasis mine)."

Lenin was making the argument in this particular passage that to single out one of the demands of political democracy, specifically the self-determination of nations, and to say that that demand is an instrument of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers, while the other democratic demands are not, "is fundamentally wrong in theory." In other words, Lenin was saying that any democratic demand can serve as an instrument of the bourgeoisie -- to argue that one particular demand is therefore such an instrument is incorrect.

Lenin goes on to argue in the next paragraph that, on the contrary, the demand for self-determination must be put in the foreground. He says: "On the other hand, in contrast to the Proudhonists who 'denied' the national problem 'in the name of social revolution,' Marx, mindful in the first place of the interests of the proletarian class struggle in the advanced countries, put the fundamental principle of internationalism and socialism in the foreground -- namely, that no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations (emphasis mine)." In other words, for Lenin (and for Marx) the demand for self-determination was not an instrument of the bourgeoisie for deceiving the workers, but on the contrary, was the fundamental principle of internationalism and socialism and had to be put in the foreground.

The Taborite Comrades are always stressing the need for greater clarity in political debate. But slanders like this one do not lead to clarity, but

rather lead away from it. It is to be hoped that these Comrades will not be reduced to such methods of proving their correctness in the future.

The correct methodology, the methodology that Margaret attempts to reject in her document, has already been stated. The struggle for democracy is an integral part of the struggle for socialism. In the same article that Margaret takes her misquote from Lenin says: "By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the possibility of abolishing national oppression; the possibility becomes reality "only" -- "only": -- with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres . . ." ("The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1971, pp. 117). Again, the struggle for full democracy for women is a necessary part of the socialist revolution if women are to secure their liberation.

And just in case there can still be any doubt in some Comrades' minds as to Lenin's position on this question, let us see yet one more statement of Lenin's position:

". . . Not only the right of nations to self-determination, but all the fundamental demands of political democracy are only partially 'practicable' under imperialism, and then in a distorted form and by way of exception . . . But from this it does not by any means follow that Social-Democracy should reject the immediate and most determined struggle for all these demands -- such a rejection would only play into the hands of the bourgeoisie and reaction -- but, on the contrary, it follows that these demands must be formulated and put through in a revolutionary and not a reformist manner, going beyond the bounds of bourgeois legality, breaking them down, going beyond speeches in parliament and verbal protests, and drawing the masses into decisive action, extending and intensifying the struggle for every fundamental democratic demand up to a direct proletarian onslaught on the bourgeoisie, i.e., up to the socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie. The socialist revolution may flare up not only through some big strike, street demonstration or hunger riot or a military insurrection or colonial revolt, but also as a result of a political crisis . . . or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation, etc.," (Ibid., p. 98).

Margaret's thesis is that it is the "uneven and combined development of capitalism," that is, capitalism's inability to provide jobs for all, that is the sole cause of women's oppression under capitalism. This thesis has now led her to a number of incorrect and damaging conclusions: that the call for the abolition of the individual family and the demands for socialization of housework and childcare are not part of the program for socialist revolution, and that the struggle for democratic demands is only an insignificant part of the struggle for women's liberation and socialism. There is yet one more disastrous conclusion that Margaret must and does draw: the conclusion that the struggle for women's liberation is the same as the struggle for socialism. And indeed she does draw this conclusion in a number of places. On page 6 she states:

"The struggle of women as such is not a 'transitional' one. This is the meaning of the statement that the struggle for women's liberation per se is a transitory phenomenon. Any movement which defines its sole goal as the liberation of women resolves itself either in a reformist (bourgeois democratic)

or a revolutionary proletarian direction, thus ceasing to be a struggle for women's liberation per se. As was noted, the 'struggle' for its maximal/utopian ideas such as 'abolition of the family,' finds its fullest fruition in the struggle of the working class for socialism thus negating itself as a struggle for women's liberation per se, by transcending itself. Barring this it finds its own negation as a movement which tacitly accepts the limits of bourgeois democracy, thus ceasing to be a struggle for women's liberation at all. It is a question of bourgeois democracy versus socialism . . . because these are the only programs for women's liberation (emphasis mine) . . ."

What exactly is Margaret saying? She is saying that the struggle for women's liberation is nothing more or less than the struggle for socialism, that the struggle for women's liberation is subsumed under the struggle for socialism. "It is a question of bourgeois democracy versus socialism . . ." The program for women's liberation is nothing more than the program for socialism -- the struggle for women's liberation is nothing more than the struggle to establish socialist production.

She goes on to say: "To take anything to the class but revolutionary socialism represents to one extent or another the imposition of an alien class ideology on its consciousness. While other politics may develop the consciousness of the class with respect to the particular aspects of the oppressiveness of capitalism, they do little to aid the working class in developing class consciousness, which it lacks, or in comprehending its historic tasks and fulfilling them. At worst they present obstacles to and injure the ability of the working class to do so."

She repeats this argument on page 9 when she says: "The analysis and program of Bread and Roses . . . perhaps the largest and best of the pro-working class qua socialist women's organizations, is a good example. Its working class orientation was sentiment rather than politics. This can certainly provide no leadership to the class -- that is, develop its consciousness as a class, understanding of its tasks, strategy, tactics, etc. -- for it brings to the class more or less the program of an alien class, (emphasis mine)."

Margaret is making two points here. The first is that to take the ideas of women's liberation to the working class is to impose an alien class ideology on the class. That is, since the struggle for women's liberation is really nothing more than the struggle to establish socialist production, since any program for women's liberation other than the program for socialist revolution must be the program of the bourgeoisie, to raise inside the working class the ideas of women's liberation separate from raising socialism is to introduce an alien class ideology.

The second point that she makes is that the working class does not have to come to understand the necessity for women's liberation in order to comprehend its historic tasks and fulfill them. Again, since the struggle for women's liberation is nothing more than the struggle to establish socialist production, the working class does not have to be won to the struggle for women's liberation as something apart from the struggle for socialism.

Again, Margaret could not be more wrong. Again, she is arguing the politics of economic reductionism. Is this the way Trotsky saw it? Did he main-

tain that the social and political liberation of women followed automatically from the establishment of socialist production? No, he did not. In his article, "From the Old Family to the New," he states:

"In politics and economics the working class acts as a whole and pushes on to the front rank its vanguard, the Communist Party, accomplishing through its medium the historic aims of the proletariat. In domestic life the working class is split into cells constituted by families. The change of political regime, the change even of the economic order of the state . . . all this has certainly had some influence on family conditions, but only indirectly and externally, and without touching on the forms of domestic traditions inherited from the past.

"A radical reform of the family, and more generally, of the whole order of domestic life requires a great conscious effort on the part of the whole mass of the working class . . . To institute the political equality of men and women in the Soviet state was one problem and the simplest. A much more difficult one was the next -- that of instituting the industrial equality of women and men in the factories, the mills, and the trade unions and of doing it in such a way that the men should not put the women to disadvantage. But to achieve the actual equality of man and woman within the family is an infinitely more arduous problem. All our domestic habits must be revolutionized before that can happen. And yet it is quite obvious that unless there is actual equality of husband and wife in the family, in a normal sense as well as in the conditions of life, we cannot speak seriously of their equality in social work or even in politics. As long as women is chained to her housework, the care of the family, the cooking and sewing, all her chances of participation in social and political life are cut down in the extreme (emphasis mine)," (Women and the Family, pp. 20-21).

The liberation of women is not guaranteed by "the change of the political regime, the change even of the economic order of the state." The task is "infinitely more arduous" and requires "a great conscious effort on the part of the whole mass of the working class." The struggle for women's liberation cannot be reduced to the struggle to establish socialist production -- that is the beginning, not the end, of the struggle. And winning the working class to the struggle for women's liberation as a part of its world historic tasks is indeed a necessary part of "developing the consciousness of the class." Only by developing its consciousness can the class make "the great conscious effort" necessary to secure women's liberation.

The Independent Organization of Women

What Margaret is really attempting to do, of course, is to argue against the necessity of the independent organization of women. Since the struggle for women's liberation is really nothing more, in fact, than the struggle for socialism, the struggle to establish socialist production, the struggle to expand the forces of production so that women can enter into social production; it follows that there is no particular reason for women to have their own independent organizations.

On page 5 of her Motivation she states, "Let there be no doubt (emphasis hers). We are not for backsliding. We support organizations of women. We call for organizations of women."

Yes, Margaret, but the question is: Do we support and call for, and, in fact, build independent organizations of women? Margaret's answer to this question is no. For Margaret, independent means independent of class. As we have already pointed out, this is not the meaning of independent. But let us follow Margaret's reasoning out.

The women's organizations Margaret calls for are women's organizations under the leadership of the class. The class, of course, follows the leadership of the vanguard party -- thus, a women's organization in order to follow the leadership of the class must follow the leadership of the vanguard party. Since there is no vanguard party today, but only the nucleus for a vanguard party, we can only assume that Margaret's reasoning must lead her to the conclusion that women's organizations must today follow the leadership of this nucleus -- namely, the IS. Is this what Margaret means? That any mass women's movement that grows up must follow the leadership of a sect, the IS, the nucleus of the revolutionary party? (We, of course, also disagree with the conception that the IS is the nucleus of the vanguard party.)

In the very same paragraph she also states: "Secondly, the organization has reified the 'independent organization of women.' This found a mild expression in the section of the Winkler document on the working class. From an obvious development given the segregation of the sexes and a necessity to draw the masses of women to the banner of the working class, it has become a 'Colgate Shield' against some future decay of the workers' state. We are cautioned 'women must organize independently today and after the revolution to insure that the revolution includes their demands, that it liberates them.' Revolutionaries orient toward the class's seizure of power. Mass organizations of women under the banner of the class are necessary for that. (emphasis mine)

And on page 12 of her Amendments she states: "While at a point it was correct to call on the movement to take up agitational campaigns addressed to the needs of working women, they should have been argued for in the context of a general class program and working women as the best means to reach the class. They should not have been motivated on the basis of working women as the only stable base for an independent women's movement. Such a motivation appeals not to the positive content of the consciousness of the best elements, but to the backward content. The positive content is the desire for a road to liberation and to involve poor and working women. The backward content is the desire to build a women's movement in the narrow sense, rather than a movement which will liberate women. Thus it is only when working women are understood as the means to reach the entire class -- the only class that will liberate women, that one moves beyond pro-working class radicalism," (emphasis mine).

And on page 5: "Such democratic and partial demands are part of our program. Placing special emphasis on them in presenting our program to women is particularly important in drawing the masses of women to the revolutionary banner (emphasis mine)."

The question is: Why does Margaret support the organization of women? She says that the independent organization of women is "an obvious development given the segregation of the sexes and a necessity to draw the masses of women to the banner of the working class." And that "Revolutionaries orient toward the class's seizure of power. Mass organizations of women are necessary for that." In other words, we support the ~~independent~~ organization of women as a means of securing socialist revolution, not as a means of securing women's liberation. What is important for us about the organization of women is that it provides us with a handle for winning women to socialist revolution. This is our sole concern with the question. Our concern does not extend to the role that independent women's organizations play in the liberation of women.

Why is it that we point to women workers as a key in the struggle for women's liberation? Is it because working women provide a stable base for a women's movement, a base with power to actually win the demands that that movement puts forward? No. We see working women "as the best means to reach the class." Working women are "the means to reach the entire class." We are not interested in the role that working women can play in building a women's movement. We are not interested in the real struggles of women workers that must be waged to ameliorate their condition as women workers. No, we are interested in women workers only because they are a means of reaching the entire class, a means of mobilizing the class for revolution.

And why are democratic and partial demands a part of our program? Is it because we believe that winning such demands is important in and of itself? Is it because we are interested in promoting the struggle for democracy? No. Instead, we place a special emphasis on democratic demands when we present our program to women because doing so will "draw the masses of women to the revolutionary banner." We are not interested in the struggle for such demands in and of itself. We are not interested in the special importance of these demands to women. Instead, we use these demands as a way of winning women to the struggle for revolution -- that is all they are for us.

We do see that the independent organization of women is important in winning women to socialist revolution. We do see that working women are key because they afford a means to reach the entire class and mobilize it for revolution. We do see that putting forward democratic demands is important in winning women to the struggle for socialism. None of these points can be denied. They are important. But Margaret is only interested in winning women to socialist revolution. For her this is everything -- the struggle for women's liberation is nothing. The necessity for the independent organization of women as a means of achieving women's liberation is never even raised by Margaret.

Again, let us examine Trotsky's position on this question. In "A Letter to a Moscow Women Workers' Celebration and Rally," he states:

"Inertia and blind habit, unfortunately, constitute a great force. And nowhere does blind, dumb habit hold sway with such force as in the dark and secluded inner life of the family. And who is called upon first of all to struggle against the barbaric family situation if not the woman revolutionist? By this I do not mean to say at all that conscious workers are relieved of the responsibility to labor toward the transformation of the economic forms of family

life, above all the forms of feeding, child-rearing, and education. But those who fight most energetically and persistently for the new are those who suffer most from the old. And in the present family situation the one that suffers most is the woman -- the wife and the mother..

"That is why the proletarian Communist woman -- and in her footsteps, every awakened woman -- should devote a major part of her strength and attention to the task of transforming our every day life. If our economic and cultural backwardness creates many difficulties and only permits us to move slowly along this path, still it is necessary that the collective public opinion of all women workers be applied as pressure so that everything that can be done, given our present forces and resources, will be done."

An independent women's movement is necessary precisely to ensure the liberation of women, so that "everything that can be done . . . will be done." That is why we support, and organize, independent women's organizations. Margaret's politics on this question are the politics of opportunism.

Finally, Margaret says on page 6 of her Motivation: "If the workers' state excludes 50% of itself it won't be able to govern. If this is not expressed in the consciousness, program, and organization of the vanguard then it must be corrected. But this must come from inside the vanguard; not from the pressure of women organized independently outside of it to supposedly 'keep it on its toes.' Any other approach is to call on the backward to lead (emphasis mine)."

But, again, Margaret is absolutely wrong! Yes, Margaret, one of the functions of an independent women's movement is precisely to "keep us on our toes." The work of the vanguard party (or any other revolutionary organization) must continually be checked and corrected by the actions of the masses themselves. Margaret's conception of the relationship between the party and the class is an elitist, substitutionist one. It is certainly not the Leninist conception. In her book Marxism and Freedom Raya Dunayevskaya quotes Lenin as saying: "the mass of the population will rise to independent participation, not only in voting and elections, but also in the everyday administration of affairs."

Margaret says herself in a footnote at the bottom of page 13 of her Amendments that "The analysis in this document while applying in essence to the black movement cannot be applied in quite the same way to blacks as to women due to the greater weight of the working class within the black population." Does that mean that Margaret also opposes the independent organization of blacks? Does she also deny the crying necessity for the independent organization of blacks, and argue instead that the usefulness of their independent organizations lies in its ability to win blacks to the struggle for socialist revolution? Is that what she means? Were the independent organizations that the black movement of the 1960's also independent of class because they did not follow the leadership of the entire class? Should the black movement have submitted to the leadership of the class, the vanguard of the class, the various socialist sects? Of this IS? Should blacks have waited to raise their demands? Is that what it means to follow the leadership of the class, to subordinate the struggle for black liberation to the backward consciousness of the class? It is this sort of nonsense to which Margaret is led by counterposing the class struggle to independent struggles of oppressed groups as she does, by her inability

to distinguish between a party and a sect, by her insistence on subordinating mass movements to the sect.

And how about the question of the independence of the trade unions under socialism? Is Margaret for their independence? Or must the vanguard party correct itself on trade union questions from within as well? What about the independent voice of the masses on those questions? Does Margaret's ~~WKK~~ workers' state include the right to strike? Or is that another case of the backward leading?

NOTE: The following "Footnote for History" is to be the last, and least important section of a discussion document presenting the outlines of a critique of Margaret B.'s "Amendment to Women's Liberation Perspectives". Apologies are hereby rendered for its delay. What I intend to argue is that Margaret's amendments represent the more or less consistent application of a certain pseudo-Marxist method, which may be labelled crude Marxism, which is gaining widespread currency inside the U.S. today for a variety of reasons. One of these reasons is the search for a shortcut that will enable us to overcome all the mistakes of our past, avoid all the dangers of centrism and opportunism which are being discovered behind all our past documents and positions, and do away with all ghosts and monsters generally.

In essence, crude Marxism is defined by the substitution of certain correct generalities - the existence of two fundamental classes in society (actually, of course, there are three, providing that we have a consistent internationalist approach), the fact that there are therefore two stable class bases for politics, that middle class radicalism does not have an inherent political direction of its own, etc. - for a real Marxist analysis of the social relations, structure and ideology of bourgeois society and of movements which arise within it. The pre-conditions for Marxist analysis become transformed into ideological abstractions which serve as substitutes for such an analysis.

This is the method that confronts us in Margaret's amendments. This is not to say that the document itself or the ideas in it are stupid, ignorant or anything of the sort. Nonetheless, the method of "crude Marxism" is what leads to her major theoretical errors. These include the idea that the oppression of women under capitalism results from the failure of the bourgeoisie to expand the forces of production rapidly enough; that therefore the bourgeoisie could not carry through the bourgeois democratic program which supposedly promises equality to women; that women's liberation demands are fundamentally utopian, except when they become working class demands over the share of the surplus product, at which point revolutionaries intervene to demand nationalization of basic industry and the banks under workers' control; and that therefore the role of revolutionaries in the women's liberation movement begins and ends with the struggle for the transitional program of the socialist revolution. (these are only a few of the highlights of the document).

What I would suggest is a different approach, one which has much in common with what I believe to be that of Marx, Lenin, Engels and Trotsky (I cannot vouch for the first four congresses of the Communist International, since I haven't read them, but those who base their tendency on them and have presumably studied them can enlighten us on that score). Marxists should approach women's liberation struggles from the analytical proposition that the oppression of women is a fundamental and integral part of the entire structure and mode of production of bourgeois society, and therefore of the ideology of that society. From this we draw two basic general conclusions. The first is the possibility of the emergence of organized women's liberation movements, and for socialists the possibility of winning individuals or sections of these movements away from a bourgeois standpoint, toward a working class political direction which can turn their critique of the family and other oppressive institutions into a practical political force. The second is the understanding that the develop-

A FOOTNOTE FOR HISTORY

Dave. F.

Regrettably, no discussion of Margaret B.'s "Amendment to Women's Liberation Perspectives" document is complete without a comment on her presentation of the history of the women's liberation discussion in the IS. From my point of view, it would be just as well not to revive the disputes of 1969-70 on this discussion. This is not because I believe that history and accounting for past positions is unimportant, but rather because the issues disputed at that time have either become outlived and discarded, or where they still exist are being debated at a much higher (if not brilliant) level today. Nonetheless, Margaret's dragging up of these old differences demands a reply - not because the substance of the debate is particularly enlightening, but because her history is highly misleading.

It is painful to say this, to say the least, but there is no way to avoid it. Margaret, of course, has the right to refer to past discussions and documents if she feels that this helps to clarify or strengthen her point of view. This, however, must be done in a way that explains what all the points of view were, including her own, and what they stood for with respect to each other.

When Margaret reviews the 1970 Convention debate over our approach to the women's liberation movement - the approach which we are told "is crucially important to review because it has its negative impact on our work in the class" - she quotes from the two major documents put forward, by Big Red and the Band respectively. She then proceeds to criticize both: Big Red for characterizing the women's struggle as "transitional" (in the vague sense used by that tendency at that time) and for calling for building a pro-working class women's liberation movement, and the Band for calling for the women's liberation movement to relate to the working class on the basis of explicitly socialist politics. Of the latter, we are told that "the sectarianism of the full program/full politics/explicitly socialist line could provide little real guidance and appears to have led to its opposite!"

There is no time, no space and no purpose here for analyzing the 1970 debate in detail, and how this debate was related to the other questions discussed there. Probably the most important observation to be made is the considerable degree of continuity between the 1970 Band documents and the current document by Ilene W. But comrades who would like to study the debate for themselves, in order to make such an analysis, are entitled to know (especially if they weren't there) what Margaret doesn't mention: that there was a third organized tendency at the 1970 Convention, that it had its own distinct point of view on women's liberation although it did not have a formal document to present, that it voted against both other resolutions and that Margaret was one of its major leaders, especially on this question.

Indeed, "as some may take issue with this statement, let us return for a moment to the genesis of the now-defunct" . . . Axis Tendency, and see roughly where it stood in this debate. Whatever one thinks now of having called for a socialist women's liberation movement - I still believe that it represented a crude but generally correct idea of how to bring a political

Footnote for history

Dave F.

direction to a movement which was doomed by its social composition and lack of political mooring - it is obligatory to mention that the Axis comrades' objections to it then was not that it called for "explicit socialist politics" rather than, sy, for nationalizing industry and the banks under workers' control. Nor did thy oppose it for advocating an independent women's liberation struggle rather than stating that the liberation of women is the task of the "entire working class". No, indeed. What the Axis Tendency denounced the Band resolution for was... opposing the conception that women were oppressed by men, that men were the enemy, and that the fight against male chauvinism was a fight against men. You cannot hope to understand the 1970 Convention debate unless ypu understand that this position, which Margaret abandoned soon afterward, was one of the key issues in dispute, and that some pretty vituperative language was levelled against the Band and other comrades for opposing it.

(For the sake of completeness, and in case anyone is interested, I should also mention the fact that I also wrote a "Tasks and Perspectives" document for the 1970 convention. There was almost nothing in it of any value whatsoever, except that it represented a process of breaking away from the conceptions I had shared in common with comrades who formed the Axis Tendency. In any case, Margaret wasn't the only one who was plenty confused in those days.)

It is dubious that reviewing all this clarifies anything in the present discussion. But what is it, if not an outright falsification of history, to drag up old debates without mentioning one's own point of view?

Indeed, there are quite a number of things from the 1969-70 debates that might better be left unmentioned. Better not to mention Margaret's document on the "houseworking class", or the fight she waged to keep it from being printed in the Bulletin after it had been presented as an I.S. position in an external women's liberation arena. Better not to mention her position on "feminism" in those days. And when women who defend and advocate a women's caucus in the I.S. today are labelled as petit-bourgeois anti-Leninists and God knows what else, better not to mention what many of these same women were called back in 1969 - when they opposed Margaret's position that the I.S. and the whole socialist tradition was so bankrupt on women's liberation that women should split the organization to form their own revolutionary socialist women's group that took women's struggles as its central focus.

The last thing I want to do by raising all this is to embarrass Margaret or discredit her past (what I do want to correct is her present distortion of the history of the I.S., a history which should in fact be taken seriously). In fact, both to clarify this history and because of deeply held personal loyalties, I want to make it clear that Margaret's actual role in the organization from 1969 on was not nearly so bad as a superficial or purely "documentary" reading might indicate.

Margaret's political history during 1969-70 was not a purely personal one, but rather the history of the "Chicago Tendency", a grouping which originated in the leadership of the

University of Chicago SDS during 1965-68 as a self-consciously independent revolutionary third camp socialists, and which organized as the Revolutionary Socialist Caucus when the SDS faction fight heated up in early 1969. This caucus, attracted to the ISC largely through the influence of Ron T., who organized a similar group at CCNY, joined the ISC at the time of the (never-to-be-forgotten) SDS "split convention" in June, 1969.

Now the record of the Chicago Tendency, despite its political gyrations, has certain strengths and a certain integrity that deserve to be defended. (The political record of this tendency is also my own, up until Spring 1970, when I found myself no longer able to defend the positions we had held on women's liberation and other questions, and found myself increasingly in agreement with the political orientation of the Band group, with which I was in pretty general agreement by the end of the 1970 convention). If one reads our documents carefully and studies their evolution over time, you will find that despite the arrogance (based largely on ignorance) that we brought with us from the New Left milieu and despite our lack of any clear political method or knowledge of working class politics, nevertheless we engaged in a long struggle to clarify our positions and put them on a rigorous footing. When we failed to accomplish this, we abandoned them - not all at once, not all of us at the same time or with the same clarity, but abandoned them nevertheless. At the same time, we began to look more carefully and respectfully, though not uncritically, toward the whole theory and tradition of the revolutionary movement in order to put our deeply held democratic socialist convictions on a scientific basis.

The 1969-70 period was a very difficult one for us, as for the whole organization. In particular, a tremendous quantity of hostility - some of it politically justified polemics, some of it inexcusable personal abuse - was directed toward us (we never failed to reply in kind, either). Probably more of the abuse was directed at Margaret than at anyone else, in fact. Among the milder accusations levelled was that we were plotting to destroy the organization. In fact, from certain quarters there emerged the position that the main threat to the organization was the petit-bourgeois, mindless activist and "objectively reformist" New Left element that had entered it from the corrupting external milieu, with the thinly veiled threat that this threat might have to be excised by driving it out of the organization - as the student of history can verify by reading some of the documents of the Theory-Action Caucus from Spring 1970. (Yes, comrades, when you "revive all the old crap", it certainly does turn up a lot of shit). That we survived this period and even made certain positive contributions to the I.S. indicates that our politics had their strong aspects.

And, as a matter of fact, our politics did have strong points - the points that led us to join the I.S. For one thing, we were consistent advocates of women's liberation, and of making women's liberation struggles a fundamental part of socialist politics without subordinating them. We had learned this through our experience in the movement, and because of it were able to recruit all of the best of the new members of UC/SDS when the huge faction fight broke out locally and nationally.

For another thing, by the way, we were champions of workers' democracy in that period as well. Despite the semi-anarchist and ultraleft distortions of our politics in that milieu, we believed that socialism could come about only through the conscious rule of the entire working class and the oppressed masses of people, through their own independent mass institutions. In those days, we never put forward the idea that women's organizations under socialism "are a means to draw them into the class struggle and ensure the implementation of the revolutionaries' program for women", or that if deformations exist in the workers' state "then it must be corrected. But this must come from inside the vanguard; not from the pressure of women organized independently outside of it to supposedly 'keep it on its toes'". We never put forward such ideas because we had to fight them every day, tooth and nail, in the SDS faction fight. We fought these notions in theory, when they were put forward to justify the totalitarian dictatorships of Mao and Castro; and we fought them in practice, in opposition to the bureaucratic, elitist scum who floated on top of the movement. We also developed a political and social analysis of the development of Stalinism in SDS, explaining that the idea of the working class ruling through its vanguard which was justified, of course, because you wouldn't want "to call on the more backward to lead" - might appeal to some intellectuals who saw themselves as part of the vanguard, but never to the masses of workers who conceived themselves as rank and filers.

Thus no understanding of the political record of Margaret, myself and others would be complete without noting the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the politics of the old "Chicago Tendency" - the politics which gave rise to the Axis Tendency, whose role Margaret neglects to mention. In fact, I can think of no better memorial tribute to those politics than to observe that neither Margaret nor many other excellent leading comrades of her newly founded tendency would ever have joined the I.S. - had it held then the point of view that they put forward now.

I. Introduction

The vague and abstract nature of the Emerson document blurs over what I believe to be a fundamentally incorrect approach to the question of women's liberation. This approach makes the author incapable of analyzing the material basis for the special oppression of women, that is the relationship of women to the society they live in. Emerson's distorted history of societal evolution and the origins of women's oppression is a foretaste of this failure. It is an early warning of the document's consistent inability to explain the oppressed status of women and how the struggle to change that status is tied up with society, social classes, and capitalism in particular.

In the course of examining women's condition under capitalism Emerson makes the point that women's liberation and socialism are mutually necessary to end the oppression of women. But this is the extent of the explicit inter-connection between the two in the document. The final goals are mutually necessary, but the way to achieve these goals is never discussed.

Implicitly --- sometimes explicitly --- we are presented with a discussion of the oppression of women which makes no class distinctions; anti-sexist consciousness ("feminism") is the response of all women of all classes. What we should say is this: Yes, all women under capitalism are oppressed. But that oppression has drastically different weight upon women, depending on their class position. Bourgeois women feel oppressed, but "less so" and in a different manner than working-class women. Emerson does not consider the way in which consciousness of sex and class intermesh and modify each other. The special oppression of working-class women is translated to them through their lives --- lives which are much different from those of bourgeois women.

In her discussion Emerson quotes Lenin comparing the struggle for national self determination to the struggle for women's liberation. An amplification of this parallel will show the problems with Emerson's method. What is our attitude towards oppressed nations? (1) Whole nations are oppressed. (2) Different classes in the nation experience this oppression differently. For the colonial bourgeoisie, special oppression deprives them of the power to enjoy the full privileges of being a bourgeoisie. For the working class, on the other hand, national oppression is inextricably tied to their oppression/exploitation by capitalism. They are exploited more brutally because of the situation of their nation. They also have fewer rights with which to fight their exploitation. Thus, both classes experience national oppression. But both fight against it with different aims in mind.--- one wishes to consolidate and improve capitalism, the other wishes to do away with all the misery of capitalism itself. If both classes subscribe to the same ideology, belong to the same organizations, and follow the same leaders this expresses only the political underdevelopment of the colonial workers. Concentration on fighting oppression (national, racial, or sexual oppression) apart from fighting capitalism is the program of the non-proletarian oppressed. Organizations which are founded on this program alone limit themselves to reforming capitalism, and are thus implicitly pro-capitalist anti-working class organizations. The leadership of such organizations must be challenged politically and their ranks won to a socialist program for their liberation. Insofar as they refuse to fight capitalism, they reinforce the oppression of women (or blacks, or Chinese (Kuomintang)). because in the era of the permanent revolution the struggle for democratic rights cannot be won within the framework of capitalism, no matter how pro-capitalist the intentions of the leadership.

This was essentially Lenin's approach to the national question and to the question of women's liberation. As Emerson demonstrates he was for the struggle

for democratic rights in order to clear the stage for socialism. He knew that women's rights could only be secured through socialist revolution and he was for making this tie explicit in propaganda and agitation:

Must I avow, or make you avow, that the struggle for women's rights must also be linked with our principal aim--the conquest of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat? At present, this is, and will continue to be our alpha and omega. That is clear, absolutely clear. (Emancipation of Women, p. 113)

It is this inextricable tie between women's liberation and socialist revolution that is the real meaning of Emerson's statement that "while women's liberation cannot be realized without socialism, the reverse is also true." It is Trotsky's theory of the Permanent Revolution applied to women. It means that socialists must lead women from their fight against special oppression to an understanding of the need to abolish capitalism. This requires the sharpest struggle within the women's movement against non-socialist ideologies and leaders. This is the keystone of the role of socialists there.

Emerson, however, proceeds in the opposite direction. Socialism requires women's liberation. Women's liberation requires socialism. Because there is no conflict between the two, an organization which fights against women's oppression (even on an "incomplete" feminist program) is objectively moving in a socialist direction. They will win their struggle, the Marxists will win the working-class struggle, and the product will be a socialist society. The slogan of the permanent revolution ("the fight for democracy requires the fight for socialism") is used against the strategy of the permanent revolution (fight the bourgeois leaders in the democratic movement, win those movements to the fight for socialism). This mistake explains the failure of the document to integrate the question of social class into the discussions of oppression, consciousness, and organization. This fusion will occur in the distant future--in the meantime our task is to build a women's liberation (a "revolutionary feminist") movement which can join with the working-class movement, the black movement, etc. in the final battle. The problem is that to guarantee that all of these movements will share political goals requires that we fight for their programmatic unity today.

This requires that we do not propose a different ideology for each oppressed group, but a revolutionary socialist program to end all oppression. To actually fuse these struggles requires the conscious intervention of socialists and the political defeat of the non-socialists. Any other approach denies the method of the permanent revolution and fails to provide revolutionary leadership to the oppressed.

II. ORIGINS OF WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

It is from this general methodological disagreement that my more specific criticisms of the Emerson document flow. First on the origins of women's oppression. I think that Emerson's analysis of this development shows a misunderstanding of the relationship of women to primitive society.

First, there was no single law governing the development of women's oppression. Any discussion of this phenomenon should be prefaced by an explanation of how varied the actual experience was. Individual societies are not destined to travel a foreordained road. Marx and Engels held to no rigid stage theory of human history. What Emerson describes as the evolution of

oppression should not be considered a universal schema. Our analysis of the roots of women's oppression must take into account both the general dynamic and its varied social expressions.

Moreover the Emerson model is internally contradictory. The first paragraph states that in the beginning of human society there was both "the matriarchate" and "social equality." A matriarchate is defined as a social system ruled by mothers or women, just as we understand the meaning of a "patriarchate" ruled by men. This system where the mothers have ultimate authority precludes "social equality" which means equal rights for all. This is true no matter how benevolent their rule (see Evelyn Reed on the inherent superiority of women). In any case "in the beginning" there existed a "primitive state of promiscuous intercourse" (Morgan and Engels) in which mothers and fathers were not yet recognized as such. Families had not yet taken form. With the development of consanguine families, in response to changing population and material conditions, a matrilineal system of descent evolved in some cases (descent being reckoned through the mother). This was a natural development since sexual relations were still polyandrous and fathers could not be identified.

However a matrilineal system does not necessarily imply a matriarchate. This depends on the way in which the matrilineal gens operates and the division of labor which exists between men and women. A matrilineal system can take a variety of forms. Whether residence is matrilocal (with mother), avunculocal (with mother's brother) or eventually patrilocal (with father), what kind of role the mother's brother performs, what the rights of the husbands are--all of these factors affect the status of women. There has been very little evidence that any of the matrilineal systems anthropologists have studied have actually been matriarchal. This does not mean that women were already subordinate or that such systems did not exist in the past. Nor does it mean that women must therefore be "naturally" inferior (which is the demon that Reed and others are trying to fight off with their matriarchal theories).

It is impossible to understand the position of women under primitive communism without examining the earliest division of labor between men and women. In this area too the Emerson document is confusing. First she locates the "first division of labor...within the family." That first division as Marx and Engels pointed out was "between man and woman for the propagation of the children." Later, however, Emerson again defines the first division of labor--this time it occurs when "wealth and exchange increased, money evolved." What Emerson really means is unclear. In any case by not expanding upon the earliest division of labor between men and women, and how it laid the basis for women's oppression, Emerson misses the very key to the discussion. If the "origins of the oppression of women are to be found in the first division of labor within the family" and "everyone's labor was equally needed, respected, and recompensed" then how is the beginning of women's oppression founded here? On the basis of Emerson's description, the transformation from matriarchal primitive communism to patriarchal class society seems like a decisive break rather than a gradual evolution.

The first division of labor between men and women laid the basis for the later institutionalization and generalization of women's oppression with the advent of class society. When Marx and Engels commented that the first division of labor was for the propagation of children, they were not making an obvious biological observation, but rather they were referring to the social division of labor which resulted from women's child bearing role. Again from the German Ideology:

This sheeplike or tribal consciousness receives its further development and extension through increased productivity, through increased

needs, and, what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population. With these there develops the division of labor in the sexual act, then that division of labor which develops spontaneously or "naturally" by virtue of natural disposition (e.g. physical strength), needs, accidents, etc., etc.

Women in the primitive commune were limited in the kinds of work they could perform by the burden of child-bearing. They performed several types of socially necessary labor--food-gathering, rudimentary crafts, agriculture, taking care of the home. By and large men were the hunters and derived certain benefits from that role which later proved decisive. As Engels explained in the Origins of the Family:

According to the division of labor within the family at that time, it was the man's part to obtain food and the instruments of labor necessary for that purpose. He therefore also owned the instruments of labor, and in the event of husbands and wife separating, he took them with him just as she retained her household goods. Therefore according to the social custom of the time the man was the owner of the new source of subsistence, the cattle, and later of the new instruments of labor, the slaves. (emphasis my own)

Modern anthropologists of various political persuasions have shown this division of labor to be common to primitive communal societies. (See Robin Fox, Emmanuel Terray, Raymond Firth, Marshall Sahlins, Claude Meillassoux, and others).

This primitive sexual division of labor did not necessarily mean immediate inequality for women. Because of social scarcity, women's work was as socially necessary as men's. But even before the development of a considerable surplus, and the consolidation of man's power over women, the position of women showed strains which foreshadowed later developments. Anthropologists have found signs of the oppression of women in the most primitive societies. It is not the kind of systemized oppression women suffer under capitalism but a form of oppression nonetheless. Among the Yanamo Indians of South America women are physically abused and raped at whim. And even among the Iroquois Indians, Morgan's prime example of the mother right system, inequalities were developing before social classes. Under the "pairing family," a stage before the monogamous patriarchal family, polygamy was already the right of men only. Also during this time the capture and purchase of women began --- as Engels said "a symptom of a much deeper change which had occurred". All this took place while women were still "held in high respect" socially.

Once a considerable surplus did develop in cattle, man's relation to that surplus gave him new powers: "... in proportion as wealth increased, it made the man's position in the family more important than the woman's and on the other hand created an impulse to exploit this strengthened position in order to overthrow, in favor of his children, the traditional order of inheritance". (Engels, Origins of the Family...)

Not only does Emerson miss the importance of the early division of labor and its relation to women's oppression, she also fails to provide a logical economic framework for the development of this oppression. According to Emerson: "As wealth and exchange increased, money evolved and the first division of labor appeared. The first surplus and therefore the first commodity was cattle and men owned the herds. An inequality of ownership developed, and a new phenomenon, private property, emerged." This sequence of events makes no sense. First of all, Emerson equates wealth with exchange. Wealth is things. It can exist in any kind of society. Exchange is something special--- barter, trade --- as opposed to distribution by some other method (i.e., direct expropriation). Wealth can arise and has arisen independent of exchange. "The first surplus" was not "therefore the first commodity". Surplus exists without trade.

Furthermore, according to Emerson's explanation, it is only after the first wealth, surplus, exchange and money (the universal commodity which evolves at only a high level of exchange) appears that "inequality of ownership develops". And at the same time as "inequality of ownership", "private property" ... a "new phenomenon": First, you cannot have exchange without some form of private property. If you do not "own" something how can you trade it? Anyway, if "men owned the herds", while women were excluded from this ownership, then why is this "new inequality" new? What kind of society is evolving here? And what is it that has translated the ancient division of labor into a new form of oppression? Trade? Money? Classes? Private property? Why? How?

The confusion continues with Emerson's capsule account of world history from the fall of primitive communism to the rise of capitalism. Stages, classes, and family patterns are thrown together in no particular order. And the description of the impact of all this upon women is more metaphorical than scientific, "slavery and serfdom, double exploitation on the job, oppression as an entire sex, of prostitution, legal and otherwise".

The relationship between women's oppression and capitalism, the most important question facing us, receives no serious attention. Here too the "women's question" is isolated from its social context. Women's oppression predates capitalism, so does the state. But we can hardly formulate a strategy for overthrowing the bourgeois state without taking into account its special nature. Neither can we devise a theory to liberate women which is not based on a clear analysis of the position of women under capitalism.

When Emerson does consider women under capitalism it is an "entire sex" rather than as a sex divided by social class. This relates to the earlier discussion of the national analogy and the method of permanent revolution. Emerson does include a quote from Laurie Landy on class divisions among women and how they affect women's consciousness. However the quote is at odds with the rest of the analysis which emphasizes what women have in common. We, as socialists, should be drawing the class line clearly in the women's movement, because we know that bourgeois women will actively betray the struggle for women's liberation. Emerson should have completed Laurie's quote on this subject:

Those who acknowledge that women are divided by class, but fail to recognize the basic and long-range differences in behavior and consciousness that flow from the class divisions must fail to reach a viable strategy for the organization and liberation of women. Just as the goal for socialism is the liberation of all humanity but the vehicle for this liberation will be the struggle of the working class, so too women's liberation must base itself in the context of a class-for-itself revolutionary perspective. (Women in Capitalist Society)

III. Feminist Consciousness

Emerson's consideration of the role of consciousness has a Hegelian quality. Feminism is posed as a universal and timeless consciousness of oppression which hangs above society and is "modified" by changing conditions. It seems to have an independent existence which interacts with social conditions instead of being seen as the creation of those conditions.

This abstract definition of feminism is related to a political problem with this discussion. Feminism is used to describe both the

universal resentment and striving against women's oppression and it is the specific ideology of bourgeois groups like N.O.W. Emerson does not clearly differentiate between the two meanings. We identify with the "inchoate striving". We do not identify with the restricted bourgeois ideology of N.O.W. The failure to make this difference explicit is again the failure to distinguish between the unformed politics of the masses of women (whom we support) and the clear-cut anti-socialist politics of their leaders.

Furthermore because no distinction is made between the oppression experienced by working women vs middle and upper-class women; no distinction is made between the kinds of consciousness which these different forms of oppression produce. This becomes clear if you examine the O'Neill quote which Emerson relies upon to explain the development of feminist consciousness. The rationale which he provides does not explain "women's consciousness" at all --- it only relates to the experience of women of the upper and middle classes of that period. Victorian morality could enforce an "oppressive domesticity" only upon those women who could afford it to. While Victorian values undoubtedly influenced the thinking of the working class, the condition of working class women prevented them from "thinking of themselves as a special class" --- unless one means specially oppressed and exploited which was not the consciousness which the Victorian "cult of purity" produced among the upper classes. During this period working-class women fully shared the misery of their class in the factories, sweatshops, textile mills, tenements, home industries, and prostitution houses of the cities.

As Laurie suggests in her pamphlet, for working women sexual oppression is only one part of their entire experience as working-class women. Their special oppression places them in an especially degraded status within the proletariat. Thus their consciousness tends to fasten upon aspects of their sexual oppression directly bound up with working-class experience (equal pay, etc). For bourgeois and even middle-class women sexual oppression is different. For bourgeois women, oppression is real, but it is less intense and it is different from that of workers --- are they deprived of equal pay? maternity benefits? child care? Are they oppressed to the same degree and with the same consequences? In fact their oppression contradicts their class experience. They will tend to focus on aspects of women's oppression which prevent them from sharing as full and equal partners in the privileges of their class. --- advancement into executive positions, etc. Middle-class women (a variegated group including the petty-bourgeoisie, professionals, declassé student types, etc.) display an ambivalent consciousness which mirrors their social position. (See Margaret B.'s amendments for fuller discussion). In any event the nature of oppression is different for different women and so is the consciousness which flows from this. Their goals --- no matter how inchoately stated --- are also different. Working women need the abolition of class society. Bourgeois women fight against this abolition; they have a stake in class society.

To the extent that these differences are blurred --- in the minds of working women and especially in the minds of socialists --- we are not faced with a community of interests covering the "entire sex" but the political underdevelopment of proletarian and socialist women. To the extent that working women --- and socialists especially --- subscribe to feminism as a real ideology (not as an amorphous resentment and struggle against oppression) they are remaining under the hegemony

of capitalist ideas. It is not our job to pacify women's illusions by proposing a "revolutionary feminist" ideology. If "revolutionary feminism means Marxism why not say so? If it means something different, then why deceive women about the road to their liberation? If "revolutionary feminism" applies to women moving toward Marxism then our job is to lead them in this direction, not reinforce their confusion. We must be clear that unstable ideologies like revolutionary feminism cannot be maintained over time. Its supporters must either come over to Marxism or revert to supporting capitalism. We must uphold the real interests of working-class women and fight at all times for the only strategy --- a revolutionary socialist strategy --- which can realize these interests. This does not mean that we cannot work with women who do not accept our full program for the liberation of women. This does mean that we actively attempt to win women to that program in the course of our common efforts.

To propose, as Emerson does, a separate ideology for the women's movement is no longer to propose only organizational independence for women but political independence as well --- political independence from revolutionary socialist politics. This is the implicit meaning of her comparison between the "competing ideologies" of the women's and working class movements. For women there is "revolutionary feminism" and for the working class? Revolutionary Marxism we must presume. The problem here is obvious. The logic of this method would be to propose a different ideology for each movement, when we should fight for revolutionary Marxism in all movements because it alone is the program for the fight against all oppression.

IV. Independent Organization of Women

This section of the Emerson document never explains why independent organizations are necessary and how socialists relate to them. All that is said is that "Marxists support and welcome the independent organization of women, just as socialists welcome the independent organization of all oppressed groups". Without discussing the attitude of Marxists to the concrete organizational expressions of such groups, Emerson's point becomes a grand gesture which cannot provide us with any guidance for our practical work.

Above all we want to win working women to socialist ideas, consciousness, program, and party in order to secure their liberation and the liberation of all humanity. Given the domination of women by men it is often necessary for women to organize independently in order to engage in political activity --- to develop their own political ideas and to actually go into struggle of any kind. To accomplish this we call for women's organizations. But we do not forget our goal of winning women to our program and separating them from their pro-capitalist illusions. In fact their self organization enables us to do this all the more easily.

Our attitude toward specific women's groups is a tactical question which must flow from our general purpose. We call for such organizations on our full program (we all agree that capitalism cannot grant women's liberation, thus capitalism must be destroyed). Organizations will of course arise without our program, led by women --- whether bourgeois, middle class, or proletarian --- who lead on the basis of all sorts of confused pro-capitalist, even reactionary ideologies. Our strategy in these cases is to win their followers to our program.

(2)

How we do this depends on many factors. What is the class composition of the leadership? The group? How "congealed" are the politics of the leadership? How open are they to friendly persuasion? Who is this group attracting? The answer to these questions and more determine what our approach should be --- whether united front, critical support, entry, etc. Emerson's discussion gives us no guidance in these questions, and if we were to accept its premises ("we welcome and support all organization") we would be paralyzed when more than one women's group is competing for support.

We call for and support independent organizations of the oppressed so that the oppressed can wage a struggle for their liberation in the course of which we can win them to a socialist program and leadership. To use an analogy, Trotsky described what he meant by "independence" of the working class:

Independence from the influence of the bourgeoisie cannot be a passive state. It can express itself only by political acts, that is, by struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle must be inspired by a distinct program which requires organization and tactics for its application. It is the union of program, organization, and tactics that constituted the party. In this way, the real independence of the proletariat from the bourgeois government cannot be realized unless the proletariat conducts its struggle under the leadership of a revolutionary and not an opportunist party. (Trotsky on the Trade Unions)

The same is true for organizations of the oppressed. Real political independence is only possible under revolutionary leadership. This is why we must win the most advanced women to the revolutionary party and we must build a working-class women's movement on a socialist basis.

V. The Women's Liberation Movement

Here the critical question of why the radical women's movement collapsed is never explained. One sentence refers to its isolation from the working class and "lack of a coherent ideology". This is the most common way of dismissing the topic in the U.S. What was the ideology of the radical women's movement? What should it have been? Why did it remain isolated from the working class? Why did it capitulate to the Democratic Party? We did not understand the radical women's movement when it existed --- or else we could have predicted its demise. Now that it is no longer an active "arena" we must not simply pass over our mistakes. We must re-examine those mistakes and learn from them.

Neither does this section provide a coherent strategy towards the bourgeois feminists. A few mysterious comments are dropped which are never elaborated. What is a "united front (of sorts)" with NOW and NWPC? What does "unconditional but not uncritical support to the women's liberation movement" mean when at present NOW and the NWPC constitute that movement?

At the conclusion of this section Emerson lays out a very one-sided interpretation of our strategy toward working-class women. We "strengthen women's organizations" inside the class to "build the

women's movement on the outside". Working-class women are needed to give the women's movement muscle. In fact it is not only their social weight but their class interests which result from their social position which make working-class women key. In struggle the oppression of sex and class thoroughly reinforces one another which allows working-class women to take the struggle for women's liberation to its highest levels. Furthermore we "strengthen women's organizations" to change the consciousness of the entire class. --- because it is the working class as a whole that is the vehicle for women's liberation. We fight for a socialist program within women's organizations because such a program speaks to the real needs of women and provides the most advanced women with a program that will allow them to play a leadership role in the class as a whole. The fact that Emerson is only concerned with "building a strong independent women's movement", not with the politics of that movement or its relationship to the working class, is only a further indication of the problem of her method.

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