

# PARTY BUILDER

Gus

## SWP Organizational Discussion Bulletin

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SAN FRANCISCO WOMEN'S LIBERATION FRACTION REPORT

by Debby Woodroofe

June, 1970

Last September, when we first began probing the women's liberation movement in San Francisco, we found that all the young independent women were involved in isolated, invisible small groups, and not ready to move into action or even openly recruit.

What we decided to do was to build women's liberation on the campus as a wedge to cut through the inertia and underground nature of the city wide movement.

A new course was being offered at San Francisco State College on women as a minority. Assuming that it would attract many women who would be a base for a women's liberation group on campus, a comrade took the course. We got 30 women out of the class to organize, for credit, a teach-in on the oppression of women. Although it was done on a modest scale, with no name speakers, it drew 500 people and established women's liberation as an issue on campus. Out of the teach-in, we helped set up a group, Independent Campus Women, that was focused around four demands: Women's Studies, free child care on campus, an end to job discrimination, and abortion and birth control. The organizing meeting drew 60 women, many of them staff. Next we returned to the city-wide movement with Independent Campus Women and joined the city steering committee -- the first non-small group to be represented. Although there was some hostility towards an action group, we made several allies among the small group women. Once ICW was on a firm footing and independents moved more into its leadership, we were able to take part more as YSAers, and had the advantage of being already known to the city leadership as serious builders.

With both ICW and the YSA asserting themselves as part of the women's liberation movement, we effectively have helped to turn the women's liberation movement inside out. What was once a very backward, ingrown movement has become a visible, militant formation, energized by lively debate over program and direction. Our intervention brought people to realize that the small group was but one weapon in the struggle for women's liberation and not the only form. The exhilaration of acting together as sisters has caught on among certain sections, and we have had a rash of actions. Of course it has not all been up-hill. We faced an entrenched leadership that attempted to drive us out, and there are many basic things that still have to be debated out, but the important thing is that it was our participation that set all these

things into motion.

Current State of the City-Wide Women's Liberation Movement

The small group remains the form that the women's movement takes. There are some 40 groups, with new ones continually organized out of monthly orientation sessions. Each of these groups has representation on a city wide steering committee, the Intergroup Council, which meets bi-weekly to write a communications newsletter. The YSA is the only political tendency openly represented on the Council, although other tendencies are starting to come in under the guise of being small groups.

What has happened is that the Intergroup Council has tended to become a substitute for the movement -- i.e., it is where all the debate and decision-making takes place. It has become a body with a life of its own. Thirty women regularly attend. It is dominated by scholars of the small group. They are the women who started women's liberation here three years ago, and have done extensive thinking and writing on the small group process. So they have a vested interest in the small group remaining the form the movement takes.

Key to the current situation in the movement has been a series of "political meetings." They were initiated by the Socialist Workshop (Spartacist initiated) and pushed for by the YSA. The objective was to get together as a movement and start grappling with some of the disputes such as, who is the enemy? etc. Each group was asked to make a presentation.

Three hundred women came to the political meeting. For five hours, some 20 groups gave presentations. Since it was the first mass meeting, the speeches took place in a vacuum and were very abstract. But the vast majority of the small groups all said the same things:

1) The small group has brought us close to each other, convinced us our demands are legitimate, and given us a space where we can begin to liberate our most human instincts. But it is absorbing all our energies and keeping us from feeling our collective strength as a movement. We should start talking about action now.

2) The New Left has betrayed us. They told us our demands were secondary, so we had to go off on our own. Although we can make temporary alliances, we must

continue to be an autonomous movement, raising our own demands. Furthermore, we must avoid the elitism and authoritarianism of the New Left. We want our movement to reflect the human values of the new society we are fighting for.

3) Capitalism is incapable of ending the oppression of women. We need a new type of society. But we have no model. We need a revolution, but we want more than what the women in Cuba, China and the Soviet Union have. Maybe socialist theory has to be revised in terms of women

4) We value spontaneity, but that doesn't mean we can't have some structure. We need a Women's Center where we can hold classes, meet informally, and send new women.

That was the sense of most of the talks. Redstockings spoke on the need for a feminist revolution, to establish the dictatorship of women. The Socialist Workshop urged that women's liberation adopt a socialist program or else it was a popular front.

The presentation given by some small-group spokeswomen represented the beginning of their real decline. They proposed drafting a set of principles that would "define" women's liberation. If you didn't agree with all of them, you couldn't say you were in women's liberation. What they were saying was: This movement is getting too big. We don't have any control over who can be in it. One woman gave an example: During the city strike, she saw a woman with a banner, "Women's Liberation Supports the Striking Nurses," and she had never seen that woman before, yet she was claiming to be in the movement. She said those women who were in small groups were women's liberation; those who just go to actions should find a new name for themselves. The new women at the meeting who heard this thought she was crazy.

The YSA presentation was towards the end -- under organizations, along with Workers' League and Women's Party. An IS woman moved that our report be dropped since we had a literature table and anyone who wanted to know our ideas could ask there. But the tone of the meeting was to hear everyone and no one else agreed. We gave a very short, simple statement -- stressing unity in action, and hammering away at the tremendous power we have and the numbers of women remaining to be brought into the struggle. We said: We have, as women, been invisible for too long. We must move into action, as well as continuing the small groups. We gave the New York abortion demonstration as an example. At the end we were applauded, the only applause of the day.

Since there was no time for discussion, another meeting was set up for the next week to revolve around two key questions: 1) who is the enemy, males or capitalism, and 2) what should be the structure of San Francisco women's liberation?

The next meeting was much smaller, only 120. The discussion on who is the enemy was the usual with Redstockings saying male supremacy is more basic than class oppression and should be the focus of our attacks; others saying capitalism had to go first, but feeling that where there was socialism, women were not free. We are able to intervene in this type of discussion very effectively. We just point out that in this country we are organizing before the revolution. We already have a conscious, militant movement. And we're not going to let a revolution pass us by. We're going to be right in there, strong from years of organizing, making sure women benefit from that revolution. That is how the YSA helps give the movement confidence. We say we are building a movement that is here to stay with nowhere to go but forward.

The meeting disintegrated rapidly. The CP was there for the first time -- we told them about it. The woman they are pushing now is a "manufactured" welfare mother. She harangued the women: Why do you hold your Intergroup Council meetings on Sundays? You're discriminating against poor working women. That's the Lord's day to them and if you ever want them to join you, you'd better change.... Then the Spartacists and other radical sectarians moved in. If there is one thing our opponents have in common it is that they always stress the differences in the movement rather than looking for places where we can unite. The Spartacists said: Look at this meeting. The reason it is so chaotic is that we don't have any program. How can you expect Redstockings and the Democratic Party to meet together when their only point of agreement is that they are against the oppression of women. We shouldn't be afraid to have a split. We need one.

The meeting was adjourned, and a third scheduled. It is up for grabs what will happen. Several proposals are being prepared. Several people are talking of a Bread and Roses type formation that requires its members to be socialists. Others are proposing a series of action projects that would recruit members from the small groups. We haven't worked up our position yet.

By far the most important thing to come out of these meetings is the fact that they have established mass meetings as a regular form for the movement. Our participation has been greatly appreciated

by a large section of the small group women. We are the acknowledged leadership of the action-oriented section of the movement, and often whenever any of the small groups want to organize an action, they call us and ask how to organize it. Also appreciated is our literature. The bookstore has everything there is on women's liberation: the New England Free Press literature, all the journals and newspapers, Socialist Woman, and the bourgeois publishers' books, in addition to Pathfinder pamphlets. We can count on selling an average of \$30.00 worth of literature at every meeting.

The fact that we participated in the name of the YSA as well as as part of Independent Campus Women has had its impact too. The women tend to be very hostile towards what they call "male-dominated tendencies" and would like to exclude them. But their recognition that we are among the best builders of the women's movement, both with our press and campaign, has made it impossible for them to exclude us and sets a tone of non-exclusion. We have, however, run into a problem. We are viewed as among the most talented and skilled women in the movement. Some women say to us, "It's too bad you are in the YSA and have to spread your energies among other struggles. You should drop out of the YSA and just give your skills to the women's liberation movement." They have yet to be convinced that it is precisely because we are in the YSA and SWP that we are so organizationally skilled, and not in spite of that!

#### Our Work on the San Francisco State Campus

The formation of Independent Campus Women has been key to the success of our efforts to build the women's liberation movement. Although we are acknowledged leaders of the campus movement, it has a strong layer of independent leadership as well. After the teach-in, we held a public meeting around the political firings of 12 AFT professors, the vast majority of whom were women. The forum, "The Ladies are Not for Burning," went into the special significance of a woman, even a professional, losing her job, and pointed to the institutionalized chauvinism rampant even at the most professional levels. The forum was attended by 150. The most important gain was that we established good relations with several AFT women and they have become regular members of ICW. This was followed by a period of stagnation while we debated out how to draw in new women -- small groups, action, educationals. The group degenerated into a lunchtime coffee club for a while.

In March, the AFT women attended a New University Conference convention where a call was made for demonstrations at every campus in the state the Friday before Mothers Day to demand free child care.

The idea was to visibly demonstrate the tremendous need for child care by striking a series of coordinated blows. The AFT women came to the YSA and asked us to organize the action. We took it to ICW and got them to sponsor it, and then we took it to the Intergroup Council and got their endorsement, a loan to get leaflets out, and commitments from three small groups to throw their forces into building the action.

Given the excitement that the action generated, it became clear that child care was the issue with the most potential in the Bay Area. We worked out a really exciting program for the "child-in." The focus was a rally with Marlene Dixon, a welfare mother, teacher, child psychologist, a BSU woman who was active in getting a child care center at Laney College, AFT, a campus employee, SWP candidate, women's liberation speakers, and a representative from the Canadian abortion caravan movement. A group of 6th graders who have their own women's liberation group agreed to do a skit satirizing TV commercials. Several radical theater groups volunteered to perform. Local television and radio children's entertainers donated their time to entertain the children with clown and puppet shows. All kinds of people kept calling us about getting on the program. The culmination of the action was to be a march through the buildings chanting and then a delegation of mothers and children would be sent to Dr. Hayakawa with our demand for free, 24-hour, parent-controlled, state-funded child care on the campus.

That was not all. There was to be child care on campus all day for children whose mothers worked. Students were asked to take their children to class with them. We had children's films to show all over campus. For that whole day the campus was to be swarming with hundreds of children -- in class, on the greens, in the halls.

Support from the community was unbelievable. Everyone knew about it. Nursery schools we had never heard of called us to say that they were closing down that day and bringing the children to campus. Welfare Rights Organization passed a resolution urging its members to come. Children themselves were organizing their friends. Housewives called in from all over. The media was very interested as were several film-makers. The idea of a child-in captured everyone's imagination, and it was viewed not only as an important political event, but as an action that was tremendous fun to work on and to go to. Support burgeoned so rapidly that we were never able to really coordinate it. It was to be the women's action!

We were realistically expecting around 5,000. It was a particularly significant milestone in that it was the first women's action that was not on a "zap" basis -- i.e., the first to be organized over a long period, built in the media, and broadly based. Women's liberation had held a series of good actions before, but they had never attempted to organize more than their own membership. Another important aspect of the action was that it trained a whole layer of women on how to build an action. Its success also promised to establish the women's liberation movement in the community as a serious, legitimate movement that had potential relevance to almost all women.

Then came the Cambodian invasion and the Kent State murders. The campus voted to strike on the day the child-in was scheduled. The women's movement geared into the war, especially the murders of two sisters at Kent. It was obvious that no one would bring their children near the campus with the Tactical Squad there, and antiwar sentiment was so strong, a child-in would have come off like a diversion. It was clear that to go on with the action would have made it very small, and what had so much potential would appear as a defeat. We were forced to postpone it to some indefinite time. We called a press conference and urged women to join the picket lines on campus.

It should be pointed out that support from the campus for the child-in was never as dramatic as it was from the community. This is partially due to the general problems at San Francisco State -- i.e., no student union, no daily paper that can be used to wage a campaign, and a general demoralization since the defeat of the strike. The other problem was PLP. Their intervention in the child-in is a graphic example of their defeatist politics.

On campus, we put out a leaflet calling for a mass meeting to build the child-in. 80 women came: 20 PL/SDS, 20 Black women, and the rest independents, many of them new. After the agenda was read, a Black woman stood up and said the agenda was going to have to be scrapped because she had brought some BSU sisters with her to demand that Independent Campus Women censor some of its members for a racist letter they had written. The letter was one signed by three ICW women and 3 men (although they did not sign themselves as members of ICW) condemning a speech Dick Gregory had made on campus in which he casually referred to women as bitches and whores. We explained that individual members of ICW were free to express their individual opinions, that we were a coalition and not a disciplined organization that would expel or censor its members.

Then PL joined the attack: What kind of organization was this that would let

racists join it? What were we doing fighting for women's liberation while Blacks were getting shot? The child-in was racist because Blacks can't even come to school unless there are more federal funds, and if we want to recruit Black women, more funds should be one of our demands. They also said we were racist because we were in an alliance with Hayakawa. What they were referring to was the fact that we sent a delegation to Hayakawa (who has a reputation in NOW as a friend of women's rights) to ask for a contribution to build the child-in. It was clear that PL had prompted the BSU women to come to the meeting.

PL has been the only other tendency on campus relating to women's liberation. The focus of their intervention often seems to be to "smash Independent Campus Women." Their intervention is erratic. They will not show up for weeks, and then come in 20-strong. Their general strategy is to wait until an action gets going, and then come into the meeting and attack that action as racist. Women's Studies is racist because it assumes something useful can be done within the context of a racist university. Abortion repeal is racist because it leads to forced sterilization, and so on. Their breast-beating is generally ineffective, but it does have the effect of making the views on racism, not the action, the central issue, and many new women are driven away by our continual battles with them. Independents are very dependent on the YSA to take the leadership in attacking PL's role politically, and come to us for arguments to use against them.

#### Our Experiences with Opponent Tendencies

Comrades from other areas have reported that women's liberation is an arena where sisterhood seems to override our opponents' usual hostility towards us. That has not been the case in the Bay Area. Since we are more involved in women's liberation than any of them, their general approach is to come in mainly to attack us. Their politics are generally a continuation of their antiwar line.

The one thing all our opponents share is that they place conditions on the women's movement for their support. They refuse to let it remain autonomous and focused on the issue of women's liberation. Another similarity is that they have no program to bring to it. A growing women's liberation movement can do nothing but drive a wedge through our opponents. None of them are equipped to deal with new struggles. In the Bay Area, we are starting to see internal dissension and splits over women's liberation and we can expect that women's liberation may well recruit out of some of these tendencies.

### Progressive Labor

The only place PL has intervened has been on campus. The demand they have to offer to the movement is "Fight Male Chauvinism" -- that is, don't attack the material basis of women's oppression, but fight chauvinist attitudes in the movement. They would put the onus on individual men, generally movement men, to reform themselves, and let the capitalist system get off free.

They operate an SDS women's liberation group, but its only purpose seems to be to give the SDS women a place where they can develop politically and as articulate speakers without the intimidating factor of having their brothers present. The emotional impact of women's liberation has had its influence on their ranks, however, and we have heard of SDS women who decided not to join PL because of the Challenge recipe incident, etc. Their general strategy in women's liberation has been to make friends with women workers on the campus, and aside from the disruptive influence they have had on Independent Campus Women, they are not now a serious threat.

### Workers League

Their recent position paper on women's liberation (printed in the Bulletin) qualifies them as the most sectarian tendency of all. The only reason they are worth mentioning is that they recently recruited one of the leaders of women's liberation. She was frustrated with the failure of women's liberation to develop into a highly political movement overnight, and rather than trying to help that process, decided there was something inherently counter-revolutionary about women organizing as women. The Workers League's basic line is that the women's liberation movement is a diversion created by the ruling class to perpetuate phony division in the working class. She said that being in women's liberation implied that you had to always take the side of other women, and that therefore, women's liberation should side with Dianne Feinstein (a Board of Supervisors member who opposed the city strike) and not the striking workers. Since that farewell speech, they have abstained from the movement.

### Revolutionary Youth Movement II (Avakian)

Their basic line is that women's liberation consists of women becoming the most ferocious fighters in the struggle against racism and fascism. They consider themselves the vanguard of the rank and file that is making the decisions the people would make if they were smart enough. They organized an International Women's Day rally which had women speaking on every struggle except women's liber-

ation. The purpose was to show that women do other things than just fight for their selfish selves. We attempted to turn it into a real women's liberation rally, but RYM had the support of the CP, the Panthers and Los Siete, and we were unable to do anything. When we took a literature table to their rally, they urged, from the platform, the crowd to attack the YSA "pig" table, which a small number of ultralefts did. The incident was publicized in the bourgeois press and we got signatures on an open letter to the movement condemning violence in the movement as a substitute for political debate. Since that event, RYM has become somewhat of a pariah of the women's movement and they have been hesitant to show up at anything but their own functions.

### Spartacist League

One of the leaders of women's liberation is in the Spartacist League. Because she operates underground, her role is to convince the women's movement to adopt a socialist program rather than to try to build the Spartacist League. She is very comradely towards us, but she says: Comrades -- let's work together as socialists and create a socialist movement; to say we want a movement that's against the oppression of women is not enough of a program. She has recently isolated herself by saying that we should welcome men into meetings. The YSA has found the Spartacists the only tendency it is possible to work with without being at each other's throat and nail, but they do not understand what unity in action means, and during the child-in when we tried to involve NOW and the Democratic Party, they accused us of forming a popular front.

### International Socialists

IS women are all in Berkeley, so we have had little experience with them. We do know that during the fall, they were very large. They recruited two women's liberation groups directly to the IS Women's Caucus on a totally unprincipled basis, but lost most of them. They appear to operate as a real caucus, making their own decisions and with an autonomous relation to the rest of IS. One of their members is an official in AFSCME, and they claim she is making inroads into the working class. We dealt with them around a forum we were organizing with some trade union women on protective legislation. IS said there should be a socialist speaker at the forum. The trade union women objected -- they are from a very backward, red-baiting factory and they were afraid their union would attempt to discredit the whole meeting and say it was Communist-inspired if a socialist was listed on the program. We said that it was a tactical rather than a principled question and that it should be up to the

trade union women to decide what would be the best thing for the meeting, and IS attacked us as phony socialists and walked out of the action.

Communist Party

After sniffing around for a long time, the CP has finally come into the women's liberation movement. With their line on the family, we can look forward to really taking them on. We have run into them in 4 places: NOW, RYM, Welfare Rights, and a small group! -- apparently a continuation of their "something for everybody" politics. In NOW, they are pushing a Stalinoid Democrat who is running for Congress on a women's rights (carefully not women's liberation) platform. To involve themselves in the Welfare Rights Organization, they took a college graduate, ex-Vista worker, put her on welfare, and announced that she was the leader of Welfare Rights, and have her speaking all over. Their intervention into the small group women's movement has been the most interesting. They came to one of the political meetings and heard a lot of slander about male-dominated groups and the sanctity of the small group. So the next week they came back with a small group -- Sisters All Learning Together (SALT) -- composed of CPers and New Mobe contacts. The first thing the SALT sisters did was to ask why the YSA was allowed on Intergroup Council when it was not a small group.

One interesting thing is that the CP seems to be split, mainly along generational lines. Our comrades observed this at a New Mobe women's meeting. The older Stalinists think women's liberation should go no further than Women for Peace groups and labor caucuses and reforms. The younger women that aren't party hacks seem to be emotionally caught up in what women's liberation is saying about chauvinism in the movement, etc. and we saw some fights about how involved they should get and how autonomous women's liberation should be from the general "movement."

Other Actions Our Fraction Helped Build

1) Breaking the Shackles: A Conference for Women. This was organized by the Graduate Women's Sociology Caucus in Berkeley. Its character was academic and somewhat dull, but when it appeared the Caucus was not going to be able to pull it off, we moved in and helped them organize it. It got full-page spreads on the Women's pages and drew new layers of professional women into women's liberation.

2) International Women's Day. We covered the RYM demonstration, and helped build a healthier action in Berkeley.

3) April 15 Women's Antiwar Rally. This was organized by New Mobe. We intervened with SMC, and managed to get them to add women's liberation speakers. Those attending the rally were mostly from women's liberation or Welfare Rights. The CP's welfare speaker, however, prevented an alliance of power between these two sectors from coming out of the rally. She white-baited the women's liberation movement and said there could be no alliance until women's liberation renounced its white skin privileges.

4) CBS Demonstration. This was organized by small group women on the day of the stockholders' meeting. Several women were planted inside with proxies and disrupted the meeting, while 100 picketed outside. Their slogans were "We Want Child Care, Not Soapsuds," "CBS Degrades Women," etc.

5) Protective Legislation and Women's Rights Forum. There has been much discussion in the Bay Area movement about the proposed Equal Rights Amendment and the effect of its passage on the protective laws for women. This issue is key because the women's liberation movement has a good working relationship with a trade union women's caucus, Women, Inc., in the nearby paper mills. They asked women's liberation to organize a public meeting to discuss this issue. About 150 came, including a significant number of trade unionists. Women, Inc. has asked our candidates to tour their plant and hold a press conference exposing the conditions there.

6) Women's Cambodian Invasion Protest. This took place right after the invasion. Although the line of the organizers was rotten -- if women had state power, this wouldn't have happened -- hundreds of small group women came out on short notice. We had been talking to them for months about the SMC women and the war position, and only got a lukewarm reception, but the invasion forced them into motion and they spontaneously adopted SMC's line, having already heard it but not being ready for it until that time. They picketed the Federal Building, and then marched all through the city for several hours, chanting "Out of Cambodia -- Off Our Backs" and "Out of the Kitchen, into the Fight, Up from Under, Sisters Unite." The exhilaration of marching together through the streets with their own banners was so great they have decided to do it often.

Currently, they are gearing into "offing" Count Marco, a gross chauvinist who writes a daily newspaper column slandering women. They have made good contacts with several women on the paper.



Internal Organization of Our Women's Liberation Work

In organizing our women's liberation activities internally, many problems have been overcome by integrating women's liberation into the total work of our movement. This has been done on a variety of fronts. The bookstore stocked everything there is on women's liberation. Comrades were encouraged to read all of it, including, and perhaps most importantly the "consciousness-raising" articles, so that they would be familiar with what the debates were over in the women's movement and the kinds of questions we were taking on. Regular forums, bringing in movement speakers, and educational were scheduled. Generally there were weekly reports to the YSA and branch on our work. We maintained a bulletin board with clippings and leaflets and announcements of upcoming meetings. As a result, there is a generally high level of consciousness and interest in our work in women's liberation, even though half our movement is cut off from day-to-day participation in it.

In our future work the campaign is very important. Most of the leading women's

liberation figures are endorsers, and the women's liberation aspect of the campaign has generated the most interest from the press. Independent women have been impressed with the fact that our campaign is a builder of women's liberation. Through the campaign, Dianne is able to take their struggle all across the state, onto every campus, and into the media in a systematic way that they cannot. We are in a position to turn our campaign apparatus over to the women's liberation movement for them to use to expose repressive abortion laws, the degenerate working conditions at the phone company and in the paper mills. We are their campaign, and we have just started to realize ourselves all the things we can do.

For a long time, the women's liberation movement remained on the level of basic exposure on the ways women are oppressed in this society. We seem now to be entering a more dynamic period of lively debate over strategy, steps towards mass action and perhaps national coordination. Our movement will be an essential part of this process and it is one that is certain to give us a new layer of women cadre.

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A SUGGESTION FOR GETTING SUBSCRIPTIONS

[The following letter was sent out by the Philadelphia branch. From a mailing to approximately 100 women, 12 subscriptions to The Militant came in.]

\* \* \*

Dear Sister,

"Women are on the Move" throughout this country. From Seattle, Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, San Francisco, Houston and Philadelphia, women's and feminists' groups are mushrooming and activities are taking place. Yet, one would not know this from reading the Philadelphia dailies. You are probably aware of the distortions and the inadequacies of these papers, especially when it comes to women's liberation news and reports.

May I suggest a publication which will supplement and accomodate your interest in women's liberation? The name of the publication is The Militant, a weekly 16-page socialist newspaper which has coverage on the major events of our times -- antiwar, student, labor and Third World -- which includes the particular area of women's liberation. Aside from articles

which carry information on abortion actions, conferences, etc., there are analytical articles dealing with the political, cultural, historical aspects of women's liberation. For example: Recently, it had an article on the role of the "nuclear family" by noted Marxist anthropologist, Evelyn Reed. This article asked and answered the question of whether the present day modern family was a progressive or decadent institution. In addition to these types of material, the paper features a special "Women's Liberation Notes" column which gives the latest quips and round-up of women's liberation.

Are you interested?

If so, as an introduction to the paper, you can take a three-month subscription for only one dollar, i.e., 13 issues for less than 8 cents an issue. Enclosed is a subscription blank for you to fill out and send either directly to New York, or for quicker service, send it along with your dollar to The Militant, 686 N. Broad, Phila. 19130.

Venceremos!  
s/Mareen Jasin  
Subscription Director



NEW YORK WOMEN'S LIBERATION FRACTION

Report by Ruthann Miller, June 9, 1970

The New York women's liberation fraction, since its initial organization, has been involved in a wide variety of areas. At times, one or another of these activities has become the central work for a period, as was the case with the New York City abortion demonstration in March. Our strength in being able to mobilize the movement for such actions has come from the base we have been able to build in the New York women's liberation movement. All of the comrades on the fraction are assigned to women's liberation groups, or to one of our areas of work directly tied to women's liberation, such as the 1970 campaign.

We are now active in building the following types of groups: Redstockings, a citywide group composed of many small groups; two campus groups; a high school group, as well as a high school women's liberation coalition; a Black women's liberation group; Older Women's Liberation (OWL); a loosely coordinated women's center; and a citywide abortion group, as well as investigating new groups and functioning in united fronts wherever we can.

Redstockings, like many of the groups in New York, experienced a huge growth following the November Congress to Unite Women. By holding publicized monthly orientation meetings, they were able to draw in from 60 to 80 new women each month. At first, it operated quite openly, both politically and structurally. The political concepts of the Manifesto, written by the original Redstockings group (known as the "x" group), were supposed to be open to further discussion and evaluation. But, the combination of not knowing what to do with the large number of women they attracted, as well as the challenges of many of the new women to their political analysis, caused many in the x group to move away from this openness. This created a great deal of internal upheaval which took the form of personal attacks on the x group, some red-baiting of the SWP by the x group and those they influenced, accusations by the x group that members of Redstockings had not renounced their class and white skin privileges, and almost total inactivity aside from consciousness-raising in the small groups.

For the past period, we have been active in several of the small groups of Redstockings, and have recently decided to make a major effort to try and resolve these problems. The perspective we are fighting for is that of opening a structured, political discussion on the basic politics and goals of Redstockings. This discussion would be held in each small group, and in large joint meetings -- orally and in writing -- in order to maximize the participation of all Red-

stockings. We envision a conference after such a discussion to vote on politics and structure. We see this discussion as basic to building Redstockings as an action-oriented women's liberation group having a basic program able to draw in new women, able to initiate united fronts and able to serve as an example to the rest of the movement.

Those who disagree with this orientation are mainly the women in the x group who are now functioning as unelected leadership. They fear disagreement with their politics (renounce white skin middle class privileges, all women are a class, etc.) if decisions on policy were made on a democratic basis. At first we intended to help initiate the discussion in Redstockings by proposing an action which would pose the question of the nature of Redstockings as an action organization in a concrete way. Before we could do this, however, the situation moved ahead to the fight for an open and democratic discussion over the general perspective of Redstockings, a discussion which is now still in progress.

We have, at the same time, been following up on the abortion issue. We are now active in an abortion group which is gathering information and visiting hospitals asking questions on what the hospitals intend to do when the law goes into effect July 1. Our election campaign is also working on this issue. We are trying to initiate a press conference on July 1 which would involve as many women's liberation groups as possible in order to make available to the public the facts concerning the difficulty of getting abortions and the need for free abortion clinics. This informational, educational campaign will help to lay the groundwork for future mass actions demanding such clinics. The abortion group has been functioning out of the New York Women's Center. It is not a continuation of People to Abolish Abortion Laws (PAAL), the united front organization which organized the abortion demonstration of 2,000, but rather it is a continuation of the Women's Abortion Project, one of the groups involved in the PAAL coalition.

We have launched a series of classes sponsored by women supporters of the 1970 SWP campaign and the YSA. The classes are organized around the questions most asked in the movement, i.e., "Origins of Women's Oppression and Male Chauvinism," "Women in the Post-Capitalist Countries," "Third World Women," "Socialism and Women's Liberation," "How Women's Liberation Relates to Other Struggles," etc. Forty-three women attended the first class. Some of them have begun to go to the YSA

"fundamentals" class and several have, through classes and our general campaign women's liberation work, joined the YSA.

We have two comrades active in the Black Women's Alliance. BWA was begun by SNCC women, and then broadened out to include other Black women. It is now discussing broadening even further to include all Third World women. It is organized around the triple oppression of Black women as Blacks, as women and as workers and has begun to carry out actions as well as consciousness-raising and educational discussion. At their last meeting (attended by 30 women) they decided to carry out activities to raise bail for Panther 21 defendant Joan Bird.

On campus, we are active in women's liberation groups at Barnard and Columbia and at Hunter College. In both places, the women's liberation groups were actively involved in the Cambodia strikes. Columbia, one of our main bases of support for the PAAL demonstration, and also for the women's liberation contingent on April 15, has the best potential for any actions which occur in the fall. A panel discussion on women's liberation held by the YSA at Columbia was one of the first women's liberation activities there. The Hunter group is involved in the child care issue, one which we feel has great possibilities for the fall, both on campus and off.

Our experiences in linking up the women's liberation movement and the antiwar movement in actions against the war have not been as successful here as those in other areas of the country. We were able to build a small contingent in the April 15 demonstrations, mainly around the economic link-up (money for child care, not war), and around the Vietnamese right to control their own lives. Essentially what we have done is begun a big educational job in this area, taking every opportunity to explain why it's in women's interests to fight against the war and to build as much support for the antiwar movement as possible. We also try to explain that the best way to cut across any chauvinism in the antiwar movement is to involve the women's liberation movement in every action it has.

During the recent campus upsurge, we organized a regional SWP campaign tour, with myself, as candidate for comptroller, speaking on various campuses around the state on women's liberation. We made contact with quite a few different women's liberation groups, some which now look to us for assistance and direction. This type of regional organizing around the issue of women's liberation looks like it will be very productive, both in building the women's liberation movement and building the YSA.

In May, another New York regional Congress to Unite Women was held. As with the last one, this conference was organized without a clear perspective of actions stemming from its decisions. Since the time of the last conference, however, varying political tendencies within the movement have hardened to such an extent that it was difficult for the different tendencies to come together without there being a significant agreed-upon purpose for the conference. An ultraleft group made up of those who take the approach of renouncing white skin and class privileges as the main orientation of the movement, along with others, attempted to place before the conference an ultimatum that the conference orient itself to their particular point of view only. Through a series of disruptions, they prevented any of the projected plenary sessions from being held. Added to this was the distrust generated by a smaller group of reformist Democratic Party-oriented women who want to divert the movement into supporting women candidates and various legislative measures. The main bulk of the women were confused and discouraged by the disruptions and many left after the first day of the conference. Our main efforts were toward trying to fight for democratic procedures and the right of all ideas to be heard by the women present. After the conference, in evaluating our intervention, it became clear that the outcome of the conference might have been better if we had been more aggressive in pushing for a clear perspective of action for the women there, the majority of whom were new to the movement.



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- june 6** "THIRD WORLD WOMEN SPEAK ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION"
- june 13** "HOW SHOULD WOMEN'S LIBERATION RELATE TO OTHER STRUGGLES?"
- june 20** "IS SOCIALISM THE ANSWER TO WOMEN'S OPPRESSION?"
- june 27** "IS THERE A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN AN INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY?"

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AUSTIN WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Excerpts from March, April and June Reports

by Laura Maggi

March 23, 1970 Report

International Women's Day was celebrated here in Austin with teach-ins on abortion, birth control, and the family, sponsored by the Women's Liberation Front. Evelyn Sell's talk on "What's Going on in Women's Liberation?" in Houston March 8 was very well received, and we sold all of the literature we had on women's liberation. We had made up a campaign leaflet for the occasion, and the campaign generated much interest.

At the SMC regional conference here in Austin, the women's workshop went well. There were women present from Killeen, Austin, Dallas, Arlington, and San Antonio. The women first discussed how we could relate the issue of women's liberation to the war. Most of the discussion pointed out how money went to war instead of welfare, and so on. Then we discussed why it was good to participate in the spring actions. Supporting Vietnamese women's liberation fighters was discussed, and also how much it helped us to organize and carry out activities ourselves. Everyone thought that the proposal SMC passed at the February conference was a very good start toward supporting the fight for women's liberation and against the war.

March 30, 1970 Report

Today Evelyn Sell, myself and one of the leaders of the Women's Liberation Front met with the objective of establishing a work committee on the abortion laws in Texas. The committee will be announced at the next Front meeting, and we expect to have several more women work with us in this project. Our perspective is to start with something sort of small and "safe," i.e., a petition campaign in support of our impending suit and against the abortion laws in general. We plan to coordinate with Houston, Arlington, Killeen, and any other city that has a women's liberation group.

The abortion suit itself is still in the petition stage, using a young couple and a pregnant girl as plaintiffs. No doctors were willing to come forward to help us in this, for they felt it would jeopardize their careers. Judge Sarah T. Hughes in Dallas has been contacted, and she wants to hear the case if it ever gets out of the DA's office. The chances are good that it will proceed to a hearing, which would give us an opportunity to mobilize support.... The lawyer, an Austin woman, is a member of the Women's Liberation Front and is

anxious to work with the abortion committee.

It is possible that the case will be thrown out. If that happens, we have another route open to us to attack the abortion laws. Next year, the Texas Penal Code is up for revision. The women's liberation lawyer happens to be working with the people (all men) who are recommending revisions of the law. They are recommending "reform and liberalization" of the existing law. Our perspective is to try to push that to "abolish."

April 15, 1970 Report

Abortion case news. Our brief was filed on Monday and the state has two weeks to reply to it. We then have one week to reply to their reply, and the first public hearing will be on the 22nd of May. The abortion work committee of the Women's Liberation Front is getting off to a good start. We had our first meeting last Wednesday and drew up a petition.... I spoke to Arlington, Texas women's liberation and they will be willing to help us on the case.... Houston women's liberation will also help us.... We are projecting a state-wide campaign which should be pretty effective. The abortion work committee is going to start a regional newsletter to keep in contact with other groups and we project a state-wide conference in the fall.

I was asked by the Arlington SMC to come up for their Women's Liberation Day to speak and help conduct a workshop, as I had done at the regional SMC conference. The women's liberation group there is very new and small (four women), but they did a terrific job of organizing the thing. They had had numerous hassles with the administration (whose final effort at stymieing the day was to announce that it couldn't be held because an SMC banner had been put up illegally over a door, rather than on the side). It was the first action these women had organized, and it turned out very well. I was interviewed by three newspapers and one television station, and about 140 people were there. (That may not sound like very many, but for Arlington, Texas, it was just wonderful!) More women announced they wanted to join women's liberation and work on the abortion case, so it looks like the group down there will be getting along well.

April 28, 1970 Report

Work on the abortion work committee

is going extremely well. We set up a table every day last week on campus and got over 1,000 signatures. The fact sheet we put out had a clip-out on it and we have been receiving four to five letters every day with offers of help and inquiries.

play, "What Have You Done For Me Lately?", with a minimum of expense (\$2.00 for poster board) and raised \$27.00 for the Committee to Repeal Abortion Laws.

The first "Women's Liberation Newsletter" was put out by the Women's Liberation Front last week. It went out to a mailing list of 200 people.

June 3, 1970 Report

We recently put on Myrna Lamb's

\* \* \* \* \*

STATISTICAL REPORT ON EVELYN REED'S WESTERN & SOUTHERN WOMEN'S LIBERATION TOUR

April - May 1970

<u>City</u>	<u>Meetings</u>	<u>Number Present</u>
Seattle, Washington (4 talks)	Press & TV (at U.)	30
	U. of Washington	70-80
	Edmonds Community College	100+
	SWP Forum	40
Vancouver, BC (4 talks)	"Meet Reed" Party	50
	Simon Frazer U. (Benston Panel)	100
	U. of British Columbia	100
	LSA Forum	70-80
Portland, Oregon (4 talks)	Press & TV (at U.)	10
	U. of Oregon	200+
	Reed College	70
	Reed College Dorm Party	20
Bay Area, Calif. (6 talks)	City College	50
	Cal. State Hayward	40
	S.F. State	50
	U.C. Berkeley	60
	Press Conference (HQ)	3 (no TV)
	SWP Forum	80-90
	Joint SWP-YSA Fraction	50
Los Angeles & San Diego, Calif. (7 talks)	Cal. State Fullerton	? (outdoors)
	San Diego State	50
	U.C. La Jolla	50
	Occidental College	50-60
	Cal State L.A. (Sociology Club)	35
	U.C. Irvine	75
	SWP Forum	60
Fraction meeting	8	
Phoenix, Arizona (2 talks)	Press & TV (at U.)	8
	U. of Arizona	150
Austin, Texas (3 talks)	Meeting of "Women United"	50
	Press Conference at Capitol	10
	U. of Texas, Educational Weekend	90
Jackson, Mississippi May 8, 9, 10 (1 talk & workshops)	Keynote at Southern Female Rights Union Conference	250
	Workshops, etc.	35
<u>TOTALS</u>		
Universities & Colleges	18	<u>Approx. attendance</u> 1,500
Press & TV (1 hour & more)	4	60 present at conferences
SWP Forums	4	250
"Meet Reed" talks	2	70
Austin W.L. (10 min.)	1	50
Jackson, Miss. W.L.	1 keynote	250
Jackson, Miss. W.L.	2 workshop	35
32 talks		2,215 plus thousands of TV viewers & press coverage

## HOW TO GIVE REPORTS

By Linda Jenness

A report should be an honest, accurate assessment of a given area of work. Every single report that is given at a meeting is a political report, and because of that, each one requires a certain amount of political motivation, political explanation, and should clearly and simply inform the membership of where we stand. (That's one reason we use charts sometimes for reports. Charts are often a quick and clear way to explain some facts.)

Because the Atlanta branch is small, and many of us are involved in the same areas of work, the same fractions, the same committees, we have a tendency to think that all the comrades already know what is in the report before it is given and so we can tend to slough off information or fail to motivate a report politically. That's a mistake. Each report should be given as though the branch had 100 members, all involved in different activities and fractions -- so when the membership comes together once a week, they leave with full confidence of what is going on in each area.

The branch agenda is proposed by the branch executive committee. In large branches that is no easy task. The executive committee has to decide which are the most crucial reports to be heard on any given week, which can wait a week, etc. And in planning the agenda the executive committee also plans out the proposed time allotted for the report and discussion to the best of their ability. Time limits put on reports are one factor that make the preparation of reports so important.

Why do we have time limits, why do we try to have our meetings last one hour with an additional hour for an educational? Several reasons. One is that when we talk about building a mass, working class party we mean it. That means that people have to get up in the morning and go to work. They work all day and the political work they do is in the evenings. Meetings cannot jeopardize their jobs by not letting them get to bed until 2 or 3 in the morning, nor should they unnecessarily take up time to do jobs and tasks that have to be done. Another reason is that we are a combat party, we are interested in action, and if you really stop and think about it we spend very little time in meetings -- one hour a week for the branch meeting itself. I imagine that compared to other organizations that is a very minimal time -- and that is because we are action-oriented.

We come to a meeting and we want the facts and the political motivation, in order to go out and do something. We can

do that because we aren't deciding the general line at each meeting. The general line of our work is decided at conventions, not at branch meetings. Then we have periodic tasks and perspectives discussions to discuss how to implement the general line in our local area. So when I say that each report is a political report, I don't mean that you open discussion on our general line every time -- but discuss its application on a local level.

Now let's discuss what this means to the person preparing a report.

Usually you have 5 or 10 minutes to cover the area of work as well as possible -- and that means you have to think about it! A branch treasurer, for instance, is covering 10 or 15 hours of work a week in 5 or 10 minutes. An antiwar report is covering up to 100 or so man-hours of time a week in 10 or 15 minutes. This means that you have to cover and report a lot in your time limit. The more preparation you make, the more you can say in less time; and the less preparation, the longer it takes you to say less -- I think that's a general rule that's always applicable. It means that if you have trouble organizing everything in your head and remembering it, which almost everyone does, you should write out the report, or at least outline it. It also means that you shouldn't bring up points that are just being considered or discussed and that should really be brought up later as concrete proposals.

One reason that we are able to condense into 5 minutes a week's worth of antiwar activities, for instance, is because we function through committees and fractions. A fraction is a functioning unit of the organization designed to intervene in the mass movement and is composed primarily of comrades doing work in a given area. A fraction is able to work out the detailed things and carry them out. Committees are units of the organization that deal with the functioning of the party on primarily internal things, sales, election campaigns, forums, literature and bookstore, etc. It's because we function in this way that we can keep reports to concise lengths, because we don't have to hash over every detail through lengthy debate in the branch meeting.

As a norm, reports are accepted unanimously, and that can make us a little lax I think -- it's because of the homogeneity at present of our party. But reports should always be given with the understanding that comrades are making a

decision. The branch is being asked to make a decision by voting your report up or down.

And precisely because comrades are being asked to make a decision, any specific proposal in a report should be explained and motivated. If comrades are lax in any particular area of work, subs, sales, antiwar, sustainers, it doesn't do any good to chastise comrades about it in a report, or anywhere else for that matter. The only solution is to motivate the proposal politically and make comrades understand why it is important -- and that's the responsibility of whoever is giving the report for that area. It takes a great deal of thought and some preparation to think out how to explain its importance and significance. We all must remember that most of us joined the SWP because we are rebels -- we didn't like our parents, our bosses, our principals, or the capitalist state telling us what to do -- and we don't like comrades telling us what to do. It goes against our rebel nature. The discipline in our party is totally dependent on political education and understanding. We have no police force or any other way to enforce discipline, only political understanding. And part of the responsibility for that understanding and motivation lies on people giving reports.

And now I have a "manners" section in this article -- which does not come from any prudishness on my part, but for very practical reasons. Someone giving a report is presenting a proposal to the entire membership and is asking the membership to judge it. The reporter should not be discourteous or do anything to distract people during his or her report. He shouldn't smoke while giving a report -- it is very distracting and offensive to some people. There is no need during a 10 or 15 minute report to drink cokes or anything else. (If someone is giving a very long report or educational and needs a glass of water to clear his throat that's one thing -- to drink cokes during reports is another.) And, of course, you shouldn't bore comrades to death by going over dry statistics week after week. With a little thought almost any report can be made interesting. If people fall asleep during a report then they can hardly judge how to vote on it!

I want to make a couple of points about discussion of a report. First of

all, comrades should never feel inhibited to question or comment on any report. If comrades have questions, if they feel something has been left out or over- or under-emphasized, they should take the floor. (And that means walking up to the podium to make comments or at least standing if just to ask a question.) One reason to participate in the discussion

is for clarification, another is to add to the ideas of a report -- no one pretends that the reporter has the ultimate knowledge about an area of work, and the ideas and thinking of the various comrades is very helpful. But while no one should feel inhibited, they should also be considerate and understand the time limitations that we have. If someone has a question that is just of interest to himself and not to everyone, or if it's some small arrangement that can be taken care of after the meeting, they should wait and not waste the time of the entire branch. There's no need to repeat something said in the report or to repeat the obvious.

Just because I think there has been a little confusion lately, I want to point out what I think the differences are between a class and an educational. A class, generally, runs for two or more sessions, and generally has some required reading and preparation for those attending the class. Classes are held on The Struggle for A Proletarian Party, on Black Nationalism, on economics, etc., on broader topics that you are centering in on for two or more sessions.

An educational, on the other hand, usually tries to center around very current points, problems in the branch, a speaker from out of town, plenum reports, SMC conference reports, questions and problems that arise in electoral work (such as our discussion on the Tate campaign), educationals on our opponents, etc. Oftentimes an educational is really just an extended report, something that the executive committee felt could not adequately be covered in the time allotted for the business meeting. Educationals are more conjunctural, in my opinion, than classes are. Because of that, the discussion period during educationals is very important, because we are actually trying to work things out and get the ideas and suggestions of different comrades. The educational we had on the sanitation strike is a good example of that.



ATLANTA FORUM REPORT

by Joel Aber, June 1, 1970

Since the school year has just ended, and since we are about to change gears a bit as the Atlanta summer school begins, we thought this would be the best time to assess the first season of the Atlanta Militant Bookstore Forum.

When we began the first weekly socialist forum series ever held in the South, we were unsure whether our branch would find it worthwhile to maintain a regular weekly forum series. That was back in February. Now, after four months, there's no question in our minds about the success of the weekly forums. As the chart below demonstrates, attendance at the forums has been excellent, averaging about 40% non-members of the YSA or SWP. Our literature sales and profits have also been good, with the profit equaling a good-sized weekly sustainer.

Although the total number of non-comrades who attended is difficult to estimate, it is probable that at least 75 to 100 were at at least one forum apiece. The three forums with largest attendance were on diverse topics (Malcolm X, strategy and tactics of the

antiwar movement, and the debate on Zionism).

The forums have already become known as the radical forum series in Atlanta, and they have been successful in drawing prominent spokesmen for other tendencies and groups to speak, including two leaders of union locals for different forums (Leroy O'Quinn of AFT and Tom Evans, Assoc. Director of AFSCME District Council), a professor-clergyman, an Arab professor, a member of the Great Speckled Bird staff (underground newspaper especially important in the radical movement here), and a leader of RYM.

The forums have undoubtedly been instrumental in recruiting several of the new YSA members, who were exposed to our ideas for the first time or saw how thoroughly we ran rings around our political opponents who were speakers.

We've decided to continue our forums through the summer, but on a bi-weekly basis until the fall term begins.

Attendance

<u>Date</u>	<u>Comrades</u>	<u>Nonmemb.</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Sales</u>	<u>Profit*</u>	<u>Topic</u>
2/20	22	29	51	\$12.25	\$14.39	Malcolm X Memorial
2/27	20	14	34	14.25	10.13	Orig. of Women's Oppress.
3/6	16	10	26	19.73	12.88	Women's Lib. Current Tr.
3/13	19	15	34	7.69	7.11	Atlanta School Crisis
3/20	18	2	20	4.00	1.19	Biafra
3/27	16	6	22	7.00	7.00	Ga. State YSA Cands.
4/17	23	20	43	10.98	17.25	Strat. & Tac. antiwar mvt.
4/24	20	16	36	4.73	12.97	Marxism vs. Christianity
5/2	28	9	37	no rec.	44.50**	Signif. of May Day
5/8	16	28	44	13.04	15.65	Arab-Israeli Crisis
5/15	22	9	31	5.00	11.00	Atlanta city wrkr. strike
5/29	21	6	27	5.00	-1.85***	Augusta, What Really Hap.
<b>Average</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>32.0</b>	<b>\$ 9.40</b>	<b>\$11.84</b>	
			<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$104.75</b>	<b>\$142.10</b>	

\* Excluding literature profits  
 \*\* \$3.00 admission including dinner  
 \*\*\* Including expense for news release (\$8.00)