

# Women and Revolution

Number 3

May 1972

## PL ON THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN —

# A History of Capitulation

The Progressive Labor Party originated as a split from the CPUSA — politically to the left, subjectively revolutionary, and oriented toward the working class. However, PL was never able to develop a coherent understanding of Stalinism which it never rejected; and subsequently became a Maoist organization, only to grow more and more critical of Mao, and finally to break from him without ever seeing the Stalinist roots of his betrayals. After having gained the leadership of the left wing of SDS in 1969, PL embarked on a policy which substituted Challenge-selling and demonstrations for a serious attempt to gain the leadership of the working class. Since last summer, reacting to the failure of this policy and its resulting isolation, PL has decided "against sectarianism" and has turned drastically to the right, suppressing revolutionary politics in every arena of its activity.

A discussion of Progressive Labor's approach to the family and to the women's liberation movement is important. PL claims to be the Marxist-Leninist vanguard party. But PL's false theory and practice on the question of women's oppression is liquidationist of the struggle to reach working class women and to integrate them into the revolutionary movement and is fundamental abandonment of Marxism. It must be shown that their analysis has nothing in common with the revolutionary interests of the working class. Furthermore, PL's present right turn is

manifested in the abortion movement as a reversal of its original opposition in order to enter WONAAC, the SWP/YSA's Pop Front, in a way which is opportunist and self-deceiving, demonstrating decisively the bankruptcy of its claim to revolutionary leadership.

Only Marxism provides us with a scientific understanding of the family, and of the nature of the oppression perpetrated through it. A scientific understanding must answer these questions: What was the historical genesis of the family? What are its fundamental characteristics? How does it function under capitalism and within the two decisive classes of capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat? The answers which Marxism provides to the first two questions are perhaps well-known, but it is necessary to summarize them here, because PL entirely ignores them when it comes to applying them to capitalist society today. In fact, they implicitly deny them and as a result turn their backs on the oppression of women and patronize working class women, rather than drawing them into the class struggle.

### Marxism and the Family

Engels shows in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* that the modern family, the monogamous family, arose with the development of private property. The need to guarantee the inheritance of

property could only be satisfied by monogamy, and is inseparable from the existence of private property. He further shows that this need is the only reason for the existence of such an institution. Only the rise of the modern family consolidated the privileged relation of men to the means of production and the social surplus, and firmly established the oppression of women as a hallmark of social life.

The essential characteristics of the family are therefore as follows. The family is an institution based on legal, economic and cultural coercion, in which monogamy, economic dependence and domestic slavery are imposed on women. Men are given economic responsibility for wives and children, and maintain a privileged position both within the family and in society in general. It is important to understand that monogamy does *not* mean any stable relationship between a man and a woman (which for example also describes the basically non-oppressive pairing family which preceded the rise of private property), but an enforced relationship, one maintained on a false basis. This coercion, whether in personal relations or in reproductive function, is not necessary — or rather it is necessary only because of private property.

### Nuclear Family in Capitalist Society

The family is the economic *unit* of capitalist society not only because it is a keystone of private property, but because it is the unit in which the *reproduction of the labor power of the proletariat* takes place. Both functions determine the division of labor within the family, in which the male is breadwinner and the female domestic slave. This division of labor, imposed on the proletariat by the bourgeoisie for its own purposes, is the material basis for male chauvinism.

The second function is fundamental to the question of the existence of the family in the proletariat. Engels points out that the family was never essential for the exploited classes, who own no property, and in fact always existed for them in mitigated form; but at the same time no alternative institution ever developed — precisely because it underlies the private property of the ruling class. The difference between the bourgeois family for the capitalist and for the proletariat, and the attitude of communists toward the family, is first expressed in the *Communist Manifesto* (in words particularly relevant to PL):

"Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the communists.

On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital."

This initial approach of Marx and Engels hardly exhausts the question. "The practical absence of the family among the proletariat" is a description which fits the vicious system of female and child labor which prevailed at the time it was written; and in spite of the changes represented

## FEMINISTS SELL OUT COLUMBIA U. MAIDS

The misleadership of the recent struggle at Columbia University against the layoffs of thirty maids was a classic example of the inability of feminism to deal with women's real oppression. Thirty maids, mostly black and all women, received notice that Columbia was laying them off for "budgetary reasons". Columbia must respond to the current recession in the same way as business and government, whose prominent members run Columbia as "trustees": reduce services, lay off workers, increase the workload and attack the living standards of those workers "lucky" enough to keep their jobs. Columbia had previously refused to hire additional maids and janitors when it opened its new SIA building, creating more work for the janitorial staff it already had, and furthered speed-up by firing the thirty maids and hiring only 6 janitors to replace them.

### TWU Bureaucrats Aid Layoffs

The layoff of the maids was aided by the leadership of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) local 241 which covers Columbia buildings and grounds workers, including maids. Not only did the union leadership refuse to fight the layoffs, but all along had undermined the unity of workers in local 241 by permitting separate job classifications at separate rates of pay for men and women campus employees who do the same work. Maids receive \$18 a week less than janitors for doing *exactly the same work*. Columbia University, like any capitalist

employer, uses sexual discrimination to divide the workers and drive down living and working conditions. The local 241 misleadership, like any other trade union bureaucracy, goes along as long as it continues to get its cut of the union dues. The unity of Columbia workers is further undermined by the division of Columbia employees into two unions, 241 and local 199 of the Drug and Hospital Workers Union, and the division of 199 employees into two sections, clerical and cafeteria — a division which is racial (the clerical workers are white, the cafeteria workers black).

### Feminist Exclusionism

The only defense against such an attack as Columbia's firing of thirty maids is a powerful, *unified* working-class movement. The Women's Affirmative Action Coalition (WAAC), a legalist, feminist group which managed to place itself in the leadership of the Columbia struggle, sought to channel it in exactly the opposite direction. The WAAC refused to appeal to any other campus workers or to organize any united work action against the layoffs and confined its main line of strategy to court action against the university and the Transport Workers Union. The WAAC actively *encouraged* antagonisms along sex lines by refusing to allow men to be present at most of its meetings, *against the maids' own wishes*. Women and Revolu-

*Continued on page 7*

*Continued on page 2*

**Bolsheviks on Women's Liberation ... p. 4**

continued from page 1

# A HISTORY OF CAPITULATION

by the female and child-labor laws, it is *still* valid to the extent that when needed by the capitalists, women are still available as a pool of cheap reserve labor. This first reform legislation was only won by a long period of class struggle, and was an integral part of the struggle for a maximum working day. On the other hand it was also in part a response to the fact that the brutal exploitation which accompanied the industrial revolution was so extreme that it was physically destroying the labor power of the working class. Marx points out in *Capital* that female and child labor has a dual character:

"However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless, modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes...although in its spontaneously developed, brutal, capitalistic form, where the labourer exists for the process of production, and not the process of production for the labourer, that fact is a pestiferous source of corruption and slavery."

Likewise, these gains embodied in the first factory laws had a dual character: the re-entrenchment of the family was the price for the improved working conditions.

The simple fact was that the family provided economic services which were indispensable and for which the capitalists were unwilling to and unable to find a substitute. The existence of the family among the proletariat had several additional virtues for the ruling class. It reduced the immediate threat of proletarian discontent in times of economic depression by removing substantial numbers of women from the full-time work force, making them domestic slaves. By keeping women "in reserve," out of full-time productive jobs, it kept them available at reduced wages for super-exploitation when needed. Finally, it fostered illusions and divisions within the working class, isolating women from any participation in the class struggle and political life, inducing in them a backward consciousness; and giving male workers a fictitious stake in the system, the false satisfaction of male privilege in the home, and a conservatizing economic responsibility for his "dependents."

## The Family: A Fighting Unit For Socialism?

Progressive Labor recognizes, in word, the special oppression of women in capitalist society, and especially the divisive effects of male chauvinist employment practices on the working class. But it has consistently *defended* the family, and in practice has propagated some of the most reactionary positions to be found on the Left. These include opposition to free abortion on demand; a patronizing approach to the wives of workers and their role in the class struggle (see the October 5, 1970 *Challenge* article on Bethlehem Steel for an example); the notorious *Challenge* "women's page"; opposition to equal opportunities in the professions (e.g. May, 1970 *Challenge*); and most recently a Valentin's Party advertised in *Challenge* with the blurb, "Be a working class sweetheart." These examples reflect PL's history of pandering to the male-chauvinism of the working class, and the complete abandonment of any serious attempt to bring working-class women into the revolutionary movement, without whose active political participation the revolution cannot succeed.

PL attempts to justify this capitulation with the originally Stalinist theory that "the family can be a fighting unit for socialism", advanced by PL at the June, 1969 convention of SDS and still defended by PLers (as recently as the UAG Anti-Sexism Conference in Boston in February). This slogan is simply crassly opportunist through and through: it is a little difficult to understand how anyone wanting to call themselves "Marxist-Leninists" could support anything so much at variance with Marx and Lenin, and so completely insensitive to the oppression and

political backwardness imposed on both working-class men and women by their role in the family.

Perhaps the most sophisticated version of the argument for this "theory" is to be found in an article published in the February 1971 issue of *PL Magazine*, written by two PL sympathizers, Katherine Kaufer and Tom Christoffel, published without criticism (the only editorial comment being a slur against homosexuals). The article draws an analogy between the trade unions and the proletarian family, and concludes:

"Capitalism nurtures many institutions, including the family, as parochial bastions for the divisive values and practices needed to maintain the economic system. But this function does not have its source in the institutions themselves. The problem with the family, as with so much else in our economic system, is the way in which capitalism uses and distorts it. This point is crucial, for it indicates that alternatives to the nuclear family -- extended families, communes, free floating individuals and groups -- could be made to play the same had functions as the family currently does. Female subservience, economic domination by men, parochialism, possessive control of children, all these serve capitalism's needs and would be fostered by capitalism in all social institutions. Thus the fight against male chauvinism must focus on the poison itself -- not on the nature of the bottle that contains it."

The analogy with the trade unions is on the face of it sheer nonsense -- they are institutions unique to the working class, which the capitalists fought against tooth and nail -- quite otherwise with the family, imposed on the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. The distinction between "bottle" and "poison" is forced and false. The passage quoted does contain a valid observation -- that it is utopian and counterproductive to claim, as some feminists do, that the institution of the family is *at the root of* capitalism, and to try to eliminate the institution *within* capitalism. On the contrary -- the nuclear family is an evil which cannot be eliminated until the economic system which fosters it and depends on it has been abolished. But it is no less an evil. Even if we were to admit that male chauvinism can be detached in struggle from the institution of the family (as it clearly cannot), we still have to ask: Why is it that capitalism chooses to package the poison in this particular bottle? Why does the oppression of women occur without exception in this particular form?

But in any case, there is nothing whatsoever progressive about the institution of the family. Yes, capitalism distorts and uses for its own purpose any institution it can, even those which serve a real function. But no one with any sense will conclude that all institutions in capitalist society are fundamentally good if they can only be rid of their

"bourgeois aspects"! The police, the army, and the whole state apparatus are all institutions used by capitalism, but to rid them of their bourgeois aspects is to do away with them entirely. Can the comrades in PL have made such an elementary mistake? The family, exactly like organized religion, is a *bourgeois institution*, reactionary through and through, regardless of whether it is composed of proletarians. To take the article's position to its logical conclusion, the authors would have to endorse the policy of the Newton wing of the Panthers -- into the Church: "Make the Church a fighting unit for socialism!"

The authors of the article are afraid to draw these conclusions but come alarmingly close:

"Emphasis on shared husband-and-wife responsibilities for child-raising, housekeeping, and other aspects of family life and on greater *community interest* (!) in lightening such chores would distribute these responsibilities and tasks in a more *rational way*, lessening the special burden on women and *strengthening the family, the home and the neighborhood* so that they become havens of mutual support and comfort instead of the misplaced focus for the discontents of exploited people who abuse and weaken one another." (emphasis added)

This is basically phrase-mongering which hypocritically echoes bourgeois propaganda on the family, covered up by pseudo-radical rhetoric. Instead of calling for the socialization of the necessary tasks now performed in the family, they call for the redistribution of labor within the working class, and *within the family*. Instead of exposing bourgeois myths about the sanctity of family, home and community, (which deceive and divide workers) they call for the strengthening of those ties. Instead of a program to fight the oppression of women within the family which exposes capitalism as the real enemy, a utopian scheme to rationalize the family *within capitalism*. The real nature of the family is deliberately obscured.

## Reactionary Institution

In general, the argument of the article on the question of the family is dishonest, equating all criticism of the family with "breaking up families," and claiming, without evidence, that the family is beneficial to the working class:

"Furthermore, to attack the institution of the family, which is so vital to the economic security of the workers, is of no practical help to working people, with the result that the focus on the family isolates the middle class struggle against male chauvinism from that of the working class..." (emphasis added)

continued on next page

## Women and Revolution

For information about meetings, activities, literature, contact:

### BAY AREA

P.O. Box 40663  
San Francisco, Calif. 94140  
(415) 848-3029

### BOSTON

P.O. Box 137  
West Somerville, Mass. 02144  
(617) 321-3826  
(617) 876-1787

### LOS ANGELES

P.O. Box 38053  
Wilcox Station,  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90038  
(213) 467-6855

### NEW YORK

P.O. Box 318  
Canal Street Station,  
New York, N.Y. 10013  
(212) 569-1180

Women and Revolution is an organization to fight the special oppression of women and is based on the Spartacist League's program for women's liberation.

Again, there is an element of truth, but again, the true is deliberately confused with the false; replacing the family is not the way to make a revolution, but will be one of its results, and attacking the institution of the family is absolutely essential to the task of mobilizing working women against their oppressors. Is the family really "vital to the economic security of workers"? On the contrary, it is an obstacle, a brake on class consciousness, a material threat to economic security. It makes of women a huge reserve labor force. It makes economic security more difficult to obtain for the working husband, since his responsibility for providing for a family is used as a club over his head. But most fundamentally it makes housewives economically and psychologically dependent on their husbands, isolates them from the class struggle and limits their political development. Finally, the family is inseparable from the reactionary premise that a woman's place is in the home. All this should be obvious. It is because the family as an institution is based on coercion.

The only conceivable reason why this view might

women's freedom and full and equal participation in social life. The primary obstacles to this freedom are the absence of social institutions to fulfill the duties forced on women by the family; the oppressive conditions of childbirth - notably the lack of decent medical care and the criminal state of abortion laws and practice; a sex-tracked educational system and discriminatory hiring practices; and the resultant exclusion of women from real role in the productive process. In order to expose the real source of this oppression and to unite working class women in struggle against it, and in order to unite their struggle with the general struggle of the working class against the rotten system which keeps them in chains, revolutionaries must raise demands that these obstacles be removed, that women become truly equal. Every device to push women down to the level of secondary importance and into parochialism must be combated. Male workers as well, will never achieve a revolutionary consciousness by clinging, however camouflaged, to false privilege.

The vehicle for this is a program of transitional

they divide their program into a minimum, reform program and a maximum program of "communist ideas" (consistent with an elitist and tailist conception of "serving the people"). To emphasize the former meant opportunism in the classical sense - outright reformism. To emphasize the latter simply meant isolation from the working class, so that it was necessary to doctor up the "communist ideas" with alien, bourgeois refuse like support for the family and a puritan attitude toward homosexuals (equating them with drug addicts). Now the emphasis has shifted to the right, to uncritical support for openly reformist movements in an attempt to find what amounts to a successful gimmick for gaining mass support. An index of the disoriented execution of this right turn is the 180 degrees reversal without explanation or retraction, of PL's original opposition to the abortion movement, in order to support (via UAG and SDS) the recently consolidated WONAAC Popular Front. This reversal began at least as early as March '71 when "New England Regional SDS Women" supported the struggle for free abortion on demand in an International Women's Day march, revealing the unpopularity of PL's line within SDS (as well as the male-chauvinist tendency for SDS to consider fighting women's oppression as "women's work"). Typically, faced with opposition within SDS and the loss of women from SDS, PL did not defend its position and did not retract it either, but simply tried to pretend that their reactionary position had never been expressed.

The clearest example of the new line is the Anti-Sexism Committee of UAG in Boston which calls for free abortion on demand; an end to forced sterilization and a joint fight against racism and sexism; and non-exclusion of men from the struggle against sexism. The demands are in themselves good; but UAG fundamentally misconceives the problem. For UAG the problem is sexism, male-chauvinist ideology separate from any concrete material base but resulting in the oppression of women; it is therefore a *morally evil* ideology and it is solely as a moral evil that UAG as an organization goes about fighting sexism. But what has to be fought is not primarily an ideology, but the concrete oppression of women, which is necessarily a fight against the oppression perpetrated through the nuclear family, and against capitalism; it can only be fought by working for a socialist revolution led by the working class. In fact, the emphasis of UAG is exclusively on isolated reforms which do not represent a serious attempt to fight women's oppression. This emphasis is justified by the argument that involving liberals in the struggle for reforms, on a strictly moralistic basis, will eventually turn them into communists. But, of course, in order not to drive off the liberals, it is necessary *not to say a word about capitalism, working class, class struggle, or socialism* - this is said by people who call themselves communist! UAG confines itself to liberal moralism, which is *bourgeois ideology!* It could not be any clearer that this

see  
**WORKERS VANGUARD** NO.6  
**"WONAAC SPONSORS BOURGEOISIE, OUSTS COMMUNISTS"**  
 for coverage of the February WONAAC Conference

seem plausible is that the first important reforms won by the working class were the female and child labor laws. But it should be clear that the consolidation of the working class family was a by-product of those reforms, representing one of the prices imposed by the bourgeoisie for the economic security gained. The bourgeoisie imposed this solution because it was impossible to develop an alternative institution, in order to realize the progressive potential of the integration of women and children into the productive life of society without abolishing the basis of their class rule - and because they realized the enormous utility of the family, like religion, for pacifying and dividing the working-class. The working-class simply did not have the strength, organization or consciousness to win a "reform" which could only have been implemented by the overthrow of capitalism - only the abolition of the wage system could offer employment to all at an adequate living standard and really establish the material basis for a higher form of social life.

**For a Revolutionary Program**

What is the attitude of Bolsheviks toward the family? Revolutionaries seek to awaken working-class women to independent political life. For this it is necessary to break them out of the isolation into which the family forces them. Lenin drew an analogy between the question of divorce and the question of national self-determination, advocating support of divorce on demand of either partner, pointing out that support of this right did not mean advising everyone to obtain a divorce:

"...one cannot be a democrat and socialist without demanding full freedom of divorce now, because the lack of such freedom is additional oppression of the oppressed sex - though it should not be difficult to realise that recognition of *freedom* to leave one's husband is not an *invitation* to do so...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, kitchen ..

"Only those who cannot think straight or have no knowledge of Marxism will conclude: so there is no point...in freedom of divorce...The fuller the freedom of divorce, the clearer will women see that the source of their 'domestic slavery' is capitalism, not lack of rights."

Does PL deny the right of full freedom of divorce? But this is the only thing that support for the family can mean. In practice it would mean condoning the use of force to keep a wife from leaving her husband. A parallel case is the question of illegitimate children. To uphold the family is, to uphold in some form discrimination against illegitimate children. But the working class has no interest in supporting this hypocrisy. In practice PL's idea of "building family solidarity" is a male chauvinist one, involving women in struggle not on an independent political basis but simply as better helpmates (see the Oct. 5, 1970 Challenge).

At present, freedom of divorce has to a certain extent been won. To this extent it is our task to expose the unavailability of this freedom to the working class, the class nature of the economic conditions that stand in the way of

demands. Such a program must include the following:

- Support for the complete equality of women - including the elimination of all restrictions on income and access to the professions, as well as an end to all job discrimination and pay differentials by sex or race.
- Extension of protective legislation to cover all workers, not just women. Otherwise "equal rights" means the unequal "rights" of many women to be forced to work overtime. The point is to protect men and not rob women of a necessary labor protection in order to render both male and female workers equal.
- Free adequate health care for all, including free abortion on demand and free contraceptives on demand as well as no forced sterilization.
- Free 24-hour child care and the socialization of household duties.
- Full freedom of divorce on demand of either partner; no alimony.
- An end to all marriage restrictions.
- An end to educational tracking by sex, race or class.
- Equal pay for equal work.
- All workers must be unionized.
- A sliding scale of hours and wages to provide full employment with no loss in pay.
- Workers' control of industry. (see the Women and Revolution program for a more complete version).

**From Left to Right Opportunism**

PL's approach to the abortion question - which is of vital interest to working class women - is characteristic and significant, especially considering the changes it has undergone. In 1969, at the New Haven National SDS Council, PL opposed calling for free and legal abortion on demand, calling it a "middle class" demand. On the face of it that is false; middle-class women can afford expensive abortions, working class women cannot. For PL, it is "middle class" at bottom because sections of the working class were opposed to abortion, or passive towards it. But it is easy to see that this "faithfulness" to the working class is actually, if unconsciously, faithfulness to the bourgeoisie, via their ideological penetration of the working class; and in this case, faithfulness to - the Catholic Church! The Catholic Church is also interested in the preservation of the nuclear family. The demand is also "middle class" for PL insofar as the movement for abortion reform was led by petty-bourgeois feminists. But this is simply to give up the leadership of the struggle to the bourgeoisie! Both aspects of PL's reaction reveal opportunism in its left, sectarian form - the capitulation to bourgeois influences in the working class in order to get close to workers on a false basis; and capitulation to bourgeois leadership of reform movement by abstention, by refusing to intervene at all, on the grounds that they are bourgeois led. In practice, the "family as fighting unit for socialism" has meant opportunism, pure and simple.

The other side of the coin is that this form of opportunism at least allowed PL to maintain a clear view of who was bourgeois, and of the evils of a movement led by the nose by the bourgeoisie. But PL has never been able to break out of the false conception of working class leadership and class consciousness manifested in the way

**SUBSCRIBE**  
**WOMEN and REVOLUTION**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY & STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

SUBS: \$ 5.50 for 5 issues. Inquire for bundle rates.  
 MAIL TO: P.O. Box 318  
 Canal Street Station  
 New York, N.Y. 10013

liberal form of struggle, rather than diverting liberals to communism, will divert communists to liberalism. Struggle is a way in which people are radicalized; but the struggle for reforms, if communists gag themselves and insist on confining the struggle to the limits imposed by capitalist society, can just as easily build liberal bourgeois consciousness, or complete cynicism. The perfect example of this is the SWP. Furthermore such limitations make them impotent to oppose bourgeois leadership in existing movements, thus rendering *objective support* to their influence. Implicitly UAG follows a path which either abandons the working class or betrays it.

**"Bourgeoisie In - Communists Out"**

This is precisely what happened at the WONAAC Convention in February. As a large segment of the women's liberation movement was led into the arms of liberal bourgeois reformists, UAG remained completely silent. When members of Women and Revolution were expelled

*Continued on page 8*

# BOLSHEVIKS ON WOMEN'S

*The last issue of 'Women and Revolution' carried the first part of a report concerning work among women from the decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in July of 1921. It dealt primarily with the relationship between women's liberation and socialism, the need for class unity and the rejection of the class collaboration which infects the feminist movement ("All women are sisters," etc.).*

*This second part of the same document deals in greater detail with the various methods for work among women in soviet (now deformed workers' states), capitalist and economically backward countries. While tactics vary according to the situation, the principle of class unity continues to be maintained throughout.*

*At the First All-Russian Congress of Working Women and Peasant Women in 1918, the question of separate women's organizations to deal with women's needs was raised, but it was resolutely opposed by the delegates on the grounds that working women had no problems to solve which were fundamentally distinct from those of the working class as a whole. This view was upheld at the Third Congress of the Comintern, but in view of the continuing oppression of masses of women, resulting in their backwardness, it was considered necessary to establish special sections of the Party under the direct control and responsibility of Party Committees for intensive work among women. In this way, the Party as a whole took upon itself the crucial task of combatting the oppression of women, rather than leaving the work to "independent" women's organizations or to caucuses within the Party composed of the women comrades only.*

## METHODS AND FORMS OF WORK AMONG WOMEN

Owing to all the above-mentioned reasons, the Third Congress of the Comintern holds that the work among the proletariat women should be carried on by the Communist Parties of all countries, on the following basis:

1. Women must be enlisted as full-fledged members of the Party, on the basis of equality and independence, in all militant class organizations, trade unions, co-operatives, factory committees, etc.

2. To recognise the importance of recruiting women into all branches of the active struggle of the proletariat (including military service for the defence of the proletariat) and into the construction of new forms of society and the organization of industry and life on a Communist basis.

3. To recognise the functions of motherhood as a social function, promoting and supporting appropriate measures to aid and protect women as the bearer of the human race.

Being earnestly opposed to the separate organization of women into all sorts of parties, unions, or any other special women's organizations, the Third Congress, nevertheless, believes that in view of: (a) the present conditions of subjection prevailing not only in the bourgeois capitalist countries, but also in countries under the Soviet system, undergoing transition from capitalism to Communism; (b) the great inertness and political ignorance of the masses of women, due to the fact that they have been for centuries barred from social life and to age-long slavery in the family; and (c) the special functions imposed upon women by nature childbirth, and the peculiarities attached to this, calling for the protection of her strength and health in the interests of the entire community, the Third Congress therefore considers it necessary to find special methods of work among the women of the Communist Parties and establishes a standard of special apparatus within the Communist Parties for the realisation of this work. The apparatus for this work among the women in the Party should be the sections or committees for work among women, organised by all party committees commencing with the Executive Committee and ending with the city, district or village party committees. This decision is obligatory for all parties attached to the Comintern.

The Third Congress points out that, among the tasks set before the Communist Parties carried out through the sections are: (1) To educate the wide masses of women in the spirit of Communism, drawing them into the ranks of the Party; (2) to fight against the prejudices of male proletarians towards the 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 the women by drawing them into all kinds and forms of political struggle, to awaken their activity and participation in the struggle against capitalist exploitation in the bourgeois countries by mass demonstrations against the high cost of living, against the housing conditions, unemployment, and in other revolutionary forms of the class war; the participation of the women workers in the construction of the Communist State and in the Soviet Republics; (4) to put on the order of business among the tasks of the parties and to pass rules tending to the direct enfranchisement of the women, recognising her

equality and the protection of her interests as the perpetrator of the race; (5) to wage a well-planned fight against traditions, bourgeois customs, and religion, clearing the way for better and more harmonious relations between the sexes, protecting the physical and moral strength of labouring humanity.

The entire work of the sections or committees should be carried on under the direct control and responsibility of the Party Committees. A member of the local party committee should be at the head of such section or committee. Communists should be members of these committees or collegiums wherever it is possible.

All measures and problems of the committees or sections of work amongst the women must not be handled by them independently, but in the Soviet Republics through the respective economic and political organs (branches of the Soviets, Commissariats, Trade Unions, etc.), and, in the capitalist countries, with the support of the respective organs of the proletarian parties, unions, factory committees, etc.

In all places where the Communist Parties exist illegally or semi-legally, the Party should organise an illegal apparatus for work amongst women. In all illegal bodies there must be at least one party member to organise the women for illegal work.

The present period requires that Trade and Industrial Unions should form the principal basis for work amongst women, both in countries which still carry on the struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist yoke as well as in the Soviet Labour Republics.

The spirit with which the work amongst women should be imbued is that of the unity of the Party movement, of an intact organisation, of independent initiative and independent of Commissions and sections aiming at a speedy and complete emancipation of women, to be brought about by the Party. What should be striven after is not parallelism in activity, but assistance in the activity of the Party by means of self-development and initiative of the working women.

## WORK OF THE PARTY AMONGST WOMEN IN SOVIET COUNTRIES

It is the task of the Sections of the Soviet Labour Republics to educate the masses of working women in a spirit of Communism, by attracting them to the Communist Party, to inspire and develop activity and self-reliance, by drawing them into the work of constructive Communism and bringing them up as staunch defenders of the Communist International.

It is the task of the Sections to attract the women to every form of Soviet construction, including questions of defense, as well as all the many economic plans of the Republic.

In the Soviet Republic the Sections should see that all the regulations of the Eighth Congress of Soviets regarding the attraction of working and peasant women to the work of building up and organising public production, as well as their participation in the work of all those organs which direct, manage, control and organise production should be carried out. The Sections should participate through their representatives and through the Party organs in the elaboration of new laws and exercise an influence on the alteration of such as require much alteration in the interest

of the enfranchisement of women. The Sections should take the greatest interest and show most initiative in the development of those laws which deal with the protection of the labour of women and children.

It is the duty of the Sections to attract the greatest possible number of working and peasant women to all election campaigns of Soviets, as also to see to it that working and peasant women are elected as members of Soviets and of Executive Committees.

The Sections should make it their business to assist in every way possible in making a success of political and economic campaigns carried on by the Party.

It is the task of the Sections to assist the growth of skilled women labour by means of professional education, as well as to facilitate the admission of working and peasant women to the corresponding educational establishments.

The Sections should facilitate the entrance of working women into the Commission for the Protection of Labour in various enterprises, and should also accelerate the activity of the auxiliary Committees for the Protection of Mother and Child.

The Sections should make it their business to assist the development of all social institutions, such as communal kitchens, laundries, repairing shops, institutions of social education, communal houses, etc., which, basing as they do the conditions of life upon a new Communist principle, ameliorate the difficulties which women experience during the transition period; assist their rapid enfranchisement and transform the slave of the family and the home into a free co-worker in the great social renaissance, a fellow creator of new forms of life.

Through organisers working with women elected by the Communist fraction of Trade Unions, the Section should assist in the education of women workers, members of the Trade Unions, in the spirit of Communism.

The Sections should look after the due attendance of the working women at all general factory delegates' conferences.

The Sections should carry out a systematic distribution of auxiliary workers, for all the Soviet, economic and Trade Union work.

The Sections must first of all take deep and firm root amongst the proletarian women, wage-earners, and organise propaganda amongst employees, housewives, and peasant women.

To build up a firm connection between the Party and the masses of the people, and to spread its influence over the non-party members of society, and also to develop the method of the education of the women folks in the spirit of Communism, by teaching self-activity and participation in practical work, the Women's Sections are to organise delegate meetings of women workers.

The delegate meetings are the best means to educate the women workers and peasants, and to spread the Party influence amongst the backward masses of women workers and peasants.

These delegate meetings are formed from factory and shop representatives of a certain region, city or volost. In Soviet Russia, the women delegates are drawn into all kinds of political and economic campaigns. They are sent into different committees in industry, are invited to control Soviet institutions, and used for regular work in the Soviet Departments, in the capacity of clerks, for two months (Law of 1921).

The women delegates should be elected at general meetings of the Shop workers, of the housewives and employees, according to a certain rate of representation fixed by the Party. The Women's Sections are obliged to carry on propaganda and agitation among the delegates, for which purpose special meetings of women delegates are to be arranged not less than twice a month. The delegates are requested to make reports of their activities either in the shops where they work, or at meetings arranged in the city districts. The delegates should be elected for a period of three months.

Another form of agitation among the women is the organisation of large non-party conferences of women workers and peasants. Representatives to conferences are to be elected at meetings held for women workers—at their place of work, and for peasant women—in the villages.

The Section for work amongst women is charged to call the conferences, as well as to supervise their work.

In order to make the best use of the experience that the women workers have secured by participating in the work and activities of the Party, the Branches and Committees carry on an elaborate campaign of propaganda by word of mouth and press. The Sections arrange meetings and discussions for the women workers at the shops and for

# LIBERATION

the housewives at the city clubs. They exercise control over the delegate meetings and carry on house to house agitation.

To train active workers among the women, and to widen their understanding of Communism, the party must organise with the help of the Sections, special courses for work among the women, at each Party school or school for Soviet work.

## IN CAPITALIST COUNTRIES.

The current tasks of the Committees or Sections for work among women are initiated by the circumstances of the period. On the one hand, the ruin of world economy, the rampant growth of unemployment, especially affecting the women workers and tending to increase prostitution, the high cost of living, the acute housing question, and the threats of new imperialistic wars; on the other hand, the unceasing strikes in all countries, repeated outbursts of armed uprisings of the proletariat, and the ever more violent civil war throughout the world, are the prologue to the inevitable world social revolution.

The women's committees must put forward the most important tasks of the proletariat, fight for the unabridged slogans of the Communist Party, of the Communists against the bourgeoisie and social-compromisers. The committees see to it that the women are not only registered as equal members of the Party, Trade Unions and other militant workers' organisations, which are waging the fight against all injustice or inequality of the women workers, but also that the women should be allowed to occupy responsible positions in the Party, Union or Co-operative on an equal basis with the men.

The Committees or Sections must facilitate the work of the wide masses of the women proletarians and peasant women in utilising their franchise in the interests of the Communist Parties during election to the parliament and to all the public institutions, explaining at the same time the limitations of those rights, in the sense of weakening the capitalist exploitation, promoting enfranchisement of women, and replacing parliamentarism by the Soviet system.

The Committees must also aid the women workers, employees and peasant women to take a most active part in the elections of revolutionary, economic and political soviets of workers' deputies, obtaining representation in them, awakening political activity of the housewives, and carrying on a propaganda of the Soviet idea among the peasant women. The special concern of the Committees must be the realisation of the principle of equal pay for equal work. It is the task of the Committee to start a campaign; drawing men and women workers into it, for free, universal education, aiding the women to become highly qualified in their work.

The Committees should see to it that women Communists take part in the legislative, municipal and other legislative organisations, in fact, wherever women have the right to vote.

While participating in the legislative, municipal and other organisations of bourgeois States, Communist women should strictly adhere to the tactics of the party, not concerning themselves so much with the realisation of reforms within the limits of the bourgeois world order, as taking advantage of every live question and demand of the working women, as watchwords by which to lead the women into the active mass struggle for these demands, through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Committees or Sections must explain the disadvantages and waste of the system of individual house-keeping, the bad bringing up and education of the children by the bourgeoisie, rallying the women workers to the struggle for practical improvement of the conditions of the working class, waged or supported by the Party.

The Committees must aid in recruiting the women to the Communist Party from the Trade Unions, for which purpose the Communist fraction of the Trade Unions appoints an organiser for work among the women, under the direction of the Party and the local branch. The entire work of the Committee must be carried on with one purpose in view: the development of the revolutionary activity of the masses and the hastening of the social revolution.

## IN ECONOMICALLY BACKWARD COUNTRIES (THE EAST).

Notice: The work among the Eastern women being of great importance, and at the same time representing a new problem for the Communist Parties, the Conference deems it necessary to add to

this thesis special instructions on the methods of Communist propaganda among the women of the Eastern countries, appropriate to their local habits and conditions.

In conjunction with the Communist Party the Women's Section should do everything possible to achieve in industrially weak countries, the recognition of the legal equality, the equality both of rights and obligations, of women in the Parties, Unions, and other organisations of the working class.

The Sections or Committees should carry on, in conjunction with the Party, a struggle against prejudice, religious customs and habits which maintain an oppressive hold upon the women; to achieve this it is also necessary to carry on propaganda amongst the men.

The Communist Party, together with the Sections or Commissions, should carry out the principle of the equality of women in matters of education of children, family relations and general social life.

The Sections should look for support in their work, first of all, amongst the large classes of women who are exploited by capitalism in the capacity of workers in home industries, as laborers on rice, cotton, and other plantations, and assist in the general establishment of communal workshops and home co-operatives; this applies especially to all Eastern peoples living within the borders of Soviet Russia; the Sections should also assist in the general organisation of all women engaged in plantation work with the working men united in Trade Unions.

The raising of the general educational level of the population is one of the best means of fighting the general stagnation of the country as well as religious prejudices. Committees or Sections should, therefore, assist in the opening of schools for grown-ups and children, such schools also to be accessible to the women. In bourgeois countries the Committees should carry on a direct agitation to counteract the influence of the bourgeois schools.

Wherever possible, Sections or Committees should carry the agitation into the homes of the women and utilise the field work of the women for purposes of agitation. They should also organise clubs for working women, doing everything to attract to these clubs the most backward section of the women. These clubs should represent cultural and educational centers and model institutions, illustrating what can be achieved by women for their emancipation, through such means of self-activity, as the organisation of creches, kindergartens, schools for adults, and so forth.

Special clubs should be organised for nomadic peoples.

In Soviet lands the Sections, together with the Party, should assist in the transformation of the existing pre-capitalist forms of production and economics into a communal form of production. They should be practically propagated, in a manner to convince the working women, that the former home-life and home production oppressed and exploited them, whilst communal labor will emancipate them.

With regard to the peoples of the East who live within the borders of Soviet Russia, the Sections should take care that Soviet legislation should equalise men and women, and that the interests of the women should be properly protected. For this purpose the Sections should assist in appointing women to the position of judges, and as members of juries in national Courts of law.

The Sections should also get the women to participate in Soviets, taking care that working and peasant women should be elected into the Soviets and Executive Committees. All work amongst the women proletariat of the East should be done on a class basis. It should be the task of the Sections to expose the powerlessness of the Moslem feminists in the solution of the question of the enfranchisement of women. For enlightening purposes in all the Soviet countries of the East, the intelligent feminine forces should be utilised, as, for instance, women teachers and sympathisers, avoiding all tactless and vulgar treatment of religious faiths and national traditions. The Sections or Committees working amongst the women of the East should definitely fight against nationalism and the hold of religion on the women's minds.

All the organisations of the workers should, in the East as well as in the West, be built not upon the basis of defending national interest, but upon the unity of the international proletariat of both sexes striving for the same class aims.

## PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION

In order to fulfill the principal tasks of the Sections, dealing with the Communist education of the large masses of the proletariat, and in order to reinforce this body of fighters, it is necessary that all Communist Parties of the West and of the East should realise that the principle of work among women is: "agitation and propaganda by deed."

Agitation by deed first of all signifies an ability to arouse a sense of independence in the working women, to eradicate the distrust in themselves and, by attracting them to the practical work of construction, to teach them by practical experience that every conquest of the Communist Party, that every action which is directed against capitalist exploitation, is one more step toward the improvement of the position of women. The method which the Communist Party and its Sections for work amongst women should use, can be expressed in the following words: "From experience and action, to a knowledge of the ideas of Communism and its theoretical principles."

In order that the Section should represent organs not of verbal propaganda alone, but also of activity, it is necessary that they should work in contact with the Communist Fractions of the various enterprises and workshops, for which purpose the latter should supply an organiser for the work amongst the women of the respective enterprise or workshop.

The Sections should come into contact with the Trade Unions through their representative or organisers, who are appointed for the purpose by that Trade Union fraction, and who should carry on work under the direction of Sections.

Propaganda, by deed, of Communist ideas in Soviet Russia, signifies that all the women workers, peasant women, housewives and employees in all spheres of Soviet Life, from the army and militia down to every enfranchised Oblast (district), should be drawn into the work of the organisation of Communal Housekeeping, of establishing the necessary number of institutions for Public Education, institutions for the Protection of Motherhood, and so forth. A special task is to draw the labour women into the bodies that control, etc., the production.

Active propaganda, by deeds, in the capitalist countries, means first of all the enlistment of the women workers to take part in strikes, demonstrations and other forms of the class struggle, fortifying and enlightening the revolutionary will and consciousness; the recruiting of women workers to all sorts of Party activity, their utilisation for purposes of illegal work, particularly in despatch service, the organisation of party "Saturdays" or "Sundays" at which all women sympathisers of communism, the wives of labouring and professional men, in this way learn to be useful to the Party. The principle of propaganda by acts and deeds is also aided by drawing the women into all political, economic or educational campaigns, from time to time carried on by the Communist Parties.

While organising the feminine forces for the Party the Sections must, first of all, leave deep and firm roots amongst the women workers, developing propaganda activity also among the housewives, employees and peasant women.

In order to carry out the work of propaganda by word of mouth, according to a plan, the Sections must arrange meetings in the factories and workshops, also open meetings for women workers and employees according to profession or location, as well as general public meetings of housewives. They must see to it that canvassers and organisers are elected by the Communist groups of the Trade Unions, co-operative and industrial councils in capitalist states, and that women members are elected in all the organising, controlling and administrative bodies of the Soviet institutions. In a word, the labour women must be elected to all organisations, which in capitalist countries must be used to revolutionise the exploited and oppressed masses, and assist them in their struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat; and in Soviet countries to such organisations as serve to defend and realise Communism.

The Sections must delegate experienced women Communists as workers or employees to enterprises where great numbers of women are employed. These comrades must settle down in large Proletarian districts and centres, as practiced with success in Soviet Russia. In the same way as the working women's organisations of the Communist Party in Soviet Russia organise meetings and conferences of delegates not belonging to any party, the Communist

Continued on page 6

continued from page 5

# BOLSHEVIKS ...

women's committees in the capitalist countries must convene public meetings of women workers, female employees of every kind, peasant women and housewives, to discuss various questions and needs of the day, and elect committees to serve as connecting links between their respective constituencies and the Communist women's organisations, and to attend to the questions raised. They should also send speakers representing their views to gatherings of opposing organisations. Public propaganda by means of meetings, etc., must be supplemented by constant and regular home propaganda.

Each Communist woman engaged in this work should have not more than ten women to visit at their homes, on whom she ought to call regularly at least once a week, and also on every occasion of importance to the Communist Party, or the Proletarian masses.

In order to promote agitation, organisation and education among the masses by written word, the women's Section of the Communist Parties are charged to work for the establishment: (1) of a central women's Communist journal in every country; (2) to secure the appearance of a woman's department in the Communist press, as also the printing of articles in the political and industrial papers. They must provide editors for such publications, and find adequate assistance for them in the ranks of professional and militant women. The Sections must publish and distribute simple, stimulating and adequate literature in pamphlets and leaflets. They must strive to make the best possible use of their members.

Women Communists should be sent to attend courses in Party schools in order to intensify their class consciousness and to prepare them for work among the masses of women. Special courses, lectures and discussions for women can be organised only in case of special conditions and urgent necessity.

In order to enhance the spirit of comradeship among male and female workers it is desirable not to organise separate courses of schools, but to establish, in the general Party schools, sections for courses for work among women. The Sections exercise a right to elect a certain number of their women members for attendance at the general Party courses.

Construction of the Sections or Committees of work Sections amongst the women must be organised by each Party Local Executive, District Executive and the Central Executive Committee of the Party.

Each country decides for itself the numbers of members in these Sections or Committees. The number of members of the Sections, who are paid by the Party, is also fixed by each party according to the possibilities.

The director or chairman of the local Committees or Sections must be a member of the local Party Committee. Where this is not the case, the Director of the Section is present at all meetings of the Party Committee, with the right of decisive vote on all questions of the women's Committees, and with a consultative vote on all other questions.

Besides the duties of the district Section or Committee above mentioned, the following tasks are also part of their work: to maintain connections between the Sections of one district with the Central Sections; to collect facts on the activity of the district Sections or Committees; to facilitate the exchange of material between the local branches; to supply the district with literature; distribute agitators among the districts; to mobilise the efficient party workers for work among women; to call district conferences of the women Communists, representatives of branches, with a representation of one or two from each Branch, at least twice a year; to call non-party conferences of women workers, peasant women and housewives of a particular district. The members of the Section or the Committee are approved by the provincial Committee or the county Committee on recommendation by the Director of the Section. The director, as well as the other members of the county Committees and province Committees, are elected at the conferences of the county.

Members of the district or local Sections or Committees are elected at a general city, county or district conference, or are appointed by the respective Sections in agreement with the Party Committee. If the director of the Section is not a member of the district Party Committee, he has the right to be present at all meetings of the party Committee with a decisive vote on all questions of the Branch, and with a consultative vote on all other questions.

Besides all the functions above mentioned, which are the duties of the district Sections, the Central Section must fulfil the following additional functions: instruct the Sections and their workers; investigate the work of the Section; take charge, in connection with the respective organs of the party, of the transfer of workers from one Section to another; observe the conditions and development of work, consider the changes in the legal or economic situation of the women, through its representatives or appointees; participate in Special Committees, solving the questions of bettering the conditions of existence of working class, protection of labour, protection of childhood, etc.; publish a central "page" and edit periodical journals for women; call conferences of the representatives of all the district Sections not less than once a year; organise agitational excursions of instructors on work among the women of the country; take charge of the recruiting of women and of the participation of all Sections in all sorts of political and economic campaigns and demonstrations of the Party; send delegates to the International Secretariat of Women Communists; take charge of the annual International Women's day.

If the Director of the Women's Section of the Executive Committee of the Party is not a member of the Executive Committee, he has the right to be present at all the meetings of the Executive Committee, with a decisive vote on all questions concerning the Sections, and with a consultative vote on all others. The director of the Section or the chairman of the Committee is appointed by the Central Executive Committee, or is elected at the general Party Congress. The decisions and resolutions of all Sections or Committees are subject to the final sanction of the respective Party Committee.

## WORK ON AN INTERNATIONAL BASIS

The direction of the work of the Communist Parties of all countries, uniting the women workers for the tasks set by the Comintern, and drawing the women of all countries and nations into the revolutionary struggle for the Soviet system and the dictatorship of the working class, on a world basis, is the task of the Women's Secretariat of the Comintern. ●

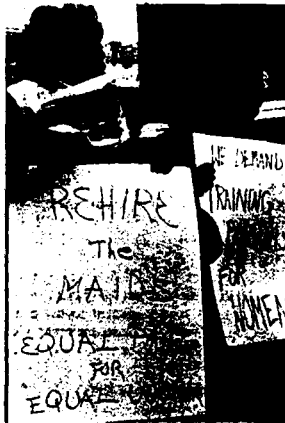
## PROGRAM OF WOMEN AND REVOLUTION

- 1 Free quality health care for all, including free abortion and birth control on demand. Free prenatal and postnatal maternity care. No forced sterilization.
- 2 Socialize household duties by making available, at the workplace and residential areas, dining rooms and laundry services paid for by the state.
- 3 Free quality 24-hour child-care facilities available to all, controlled by parents and staff, paid for by the state.
- 4 Free, immediate divorce on request of either partner. No alimony, with child support borne by the state.
- 5 No discrimination by employers or the state based on marital status. Equal legal rights for all - married or single. Abolish the legal classification of illegitimacy.
- 6 No laws or discrimination against homosexuals. No sex codes or discrimination against relations based on consent of those involved.
- 7 End the legal persecution of prostitutes.
- 8 For a state stipend available to all young people, enabling economic independence from the family. Lower the legal age of adulthood to sixteen.
- 9 Free and equal education - open admissions - with a state stipend. Worker-student-teacher control of schools.
- 10 End the falsification of history. Teach the history of the international class struggle, including the struggles of women and minorities.
- 11 End tracking in schools by class, race or sex. (Equal access to all types of academic and vocational training.)
- 12 Equal rights and benefits for part-time and temporary workers. Full pay, rights and benefits during training. Maternity and paternity leaves with full pay and no loss in job security.
- 13 Extend protective legislation to cover all workers.
- 14 Equal pay for equal work. Equal access to all job categories.
- 15 No job discrimination based on race, sex or age.
- 16 End unemployment at the capitalists' expense. For a shorter work-week with no loss in pay. (30 hours work for 40 hours pay sliding scale of hours and wages.)
- 17 For unlimited cost-of-living escalator clauses in all union contracts.
- 18 Organize the unorganized. Organization by unions of unemployed.
- 19 For union control of hiring and firing. No racial or sexual discrimination in the unions.
- 20 For rank and file control of the unions. Oust the labor bureaucrats by building militant caucuses based on a class struggle political program, that includes a fight for the needs of the specially oppressed. No exclusionism in the caucuses by race or sex.
- 21 No anti-labor laws. Government out of union affairs.
- 22 For the right of armed self-defense of the working class.
- 23 No confidence in capitalist politicians - male or female. Build a labor party based on the trade unions.
- 24 For labor political strikes against the wage freeze and the Indochinese war.
- 25 For the expropriation of industry without compensation, under workers' control.
- 26 For a workers' government.

continued from page 1

# FEMINISTS SELL OUT COLUMBIA U. MAIDS

lution and Revolutionary Communist Youth supporters introduced motions at several of the meetings to include men with voice and vote. The maids repeatedly voted for the motions and were repeatedly outvoted by the WAACers (along with members of the International Socialists (IS) and Socialist Workers Party (SWP).) Excluding the men from the struggle simply meant writing off an important source of support. The maids and janitors who kept their jobs and are now facing heavier workloads certainly desire the maids rehired. Equal pay for equal work not only means a pay raise for maids, but more job protection for janitors who face being replaced by maids as long as there is a wage differential (except when Columbia can get away with replacing thirty maids with six janitors).



Columbia maids picket against layoffs.

The WAAC repeatedly maintained that it was "not in its province to get involved in ordinary labor struggles" which in effect meant that it refused to organize any effective action against the layoffs. Their feminist ideology - "we are only concerned with discrimination against women" - completely blinds them to the fact that a fight against just such sexual discrimination involves a fight of all workers - both men and women. The only job action that was organized throughout the entire course of the struggle was an attempt at a "sick-in". The maids were asked to call in sick as a protest against the layoffs. The appeal was made only to those maids who had a sick day coming anyway and only for one day. It came off just as could have been expected - no one else went out. The total effect of the "sick-in" was that a few maids lost a day's pay.

The WAAC also explicitly opposed strike action on the part of the students in support of the maids during the current Columbia student strike against the recent renewal of bombings in Vietnam. At one of the mass meetings SDS proposed that the strike demands be expanded to include a demand against all layoffs, specifically the layoff of the maids. The proposal was voted down, partly because of the students' liberalism and bent toward single issues, but also because of the WAAC's opposition. The WAAC feared that the demand would endanger their legal suit which they are planning to continue into the summer, thought that such a demand would detract from their "respectability" and that the strike was a "lost cause" anyway.

### Court Suits or Strike Action?

Except for organizing a few picketings of the university administration building and some "mass rallies" the WAAC confined its strategy to court action against the university and the TWU and appealing to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. HEW is a branch of the capitalist government, which under the Nixon administration has been a champion of reactionary welfare and health laws (such as force-work programs for welfare mothers and cutbacks in Medicaid and Medicare). Judges are appointed by presidents and

governors, hardly noted as defenders of women's rights. The courts and government are as much capitalist weapons of exploitation and racial and sexual oppression as cops and napalm. Sometimes divisions break out among the capitalists and certain weapons of this class, such as the courts, can be used against a section of the capitalist class to the benefit of the oppressed. Though seldom productive, whatever can be wrung from the capitalist through their own institutions should be taken advantage of. But working through legal channels alone will be no more productive in ending sexual discrimination than it was in ending racial discrimination.

At the same time that the WAAC was refusing to appeal to any rank-and-file support from other campus workers it was working to destroy their organizations. Bringing suit against the TWU as well as the university is really calling on an institution of the capitalist class to put an institution of the working class under its control. The unions, no matter how reactionary, narrow, backward and selfish their leaderships, represent for the working class the first step in overcoming atomization and impotency at the hands of their employers. Such a suit is an attack on all union workers, men and women, black and white. The rotten union misleadership must be thrown out by the rank-and-file themselves, not by the courts. Such a struggle must be waged inside the union by a caucus of militant workers built on a class struggle program that pays scrupulous regard to the special oppression of women and blacks. Only through the struggle inside the unions to build a communist opposition will workers be broken from their misleaders and the collective power of the unions be brought to the service of women's liberation.

The WAAC's legalist maneuvers did manage to win a court injunction against the Columbia firings. But the injunction only serves as a temporary reprieve for the maids, who will in all likelihood lose their jobs in a few months' time. And the fact that the WAAC kept the whole struggle within a feminist framework - refusing to recognize the economic basis of the layoffs and looking at them only as an act of pure sexual discrimination - leaves Columbia a perfect out. Since the court action is only against "discriminatory layoffs", the administration can always get around it by firing an equal number of maids and janitors. And the WAAC won't defend them when that happens. Thus neither the maids nor the janitors have gained anything - they have the same job insecurity and are just as open to further attacks.

The roles played by other "left" groups in the Columbia struggle helped to feed the fires of the WAAC betrayal. The SWP kowtowed to the WAAC's feminism in its usual fashion. Throughout the course of the Columbia events the SWP'ers were practically indistinguishable from the WAAC, acting as though they were loyal WAAC members. They showed their usual predilection for "mass" rallies - rallies which of course didn't point out that the struggle for rehiring the maids was a class struggle. On the contrary, the last such "mass" rally featured as a speaker a representative from Bella Abzug's office - a member of the very capitalist class responsible for the oppression of women. A short article in the February 18 issue of the Militant contained no criticism whatsoever of the WAAC's policies. Progressive Labor/SDS at first spoke in favor of mobilizing other campus employees to support the maids' struggle but later dropped this in favor of confrontationist actions. PL/SDS and the Columbia Anti-Imperialist Movement (CAIM), a new-leftist group into which PL/SDS has made a deep and uncritical entry, proposed such "militant" adventurist actions as

storming the university library. The IS offered a simplistic analysis of the economic and political bases of the layoffs and called for united action by the two campus unions (while making no mention of the WAAC's suit against the TWU) but proposed no plan of action or political program for stopping the university's attack on campus employees. The NCLC made its standard utopian-reformist call for a city-wide united front against "austerity" and for taxing the banks - while ignoring the concrete betrayals taking place in the struggle.

Members and supporters of Women and Revolution consistently pointed out that the struggle would be doomed unless carried to the rest of the campus workers. We called for a campus-wide general strike of all workers, teachers and students to halt the layoffs. We also called for a unification of the artificially divided work-force by organizing all workers, black and white, men and women, into one campus-wide union and a struggle around such demands as 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay to end unemployment and strengthen the position of the class to fight against future attacks. At many of the meetings Women and Revolution was prevented from even raising its proposals by the WAAC's anti-communism, veiled as an appeal to "let the maids speak for themselves" (which didn't prevent any of the WAAC'ers from monopolizing the discussion) and the WAAC'ers predilection

**Subscribe!**

**\$1.00 YEARLY**

**INCLUDES SPARTACIST**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**WORKERS VANGUARD**

**BOX 1377 / G.P.O. / NEW YORK / N.Y. 10001**

against any political discussion at all - they preferred to limit their meetings to a series of testimonials against sex discrimination on the Columbia campus.

### For a Marxist Perspective!

The betrayal of the Columbia maids struggle stemmed from the inability to deal correctly with the question of special oppression. WAAC (as well as the SWP, PL-SDS, IS, NCLC and CAIM) failed to offer the maids any leadership that could conduct a victorious fight. The special oppression imposed on women must not be separated from the need to fight the oppression of the entire class. Feminism cannot lead the struggle for women's liberation as it has a false theory of capitalist society, seeing sex, rather than class as the primary division within society. Women, as just women, do not have the power to end their oppression which is a necessary consequence of the capitalist system of private property. Capitalists divide the class in order to maintain bourgeois rule. Marxists seek to unite the class in a strong and determined revolutionary movement! ●

WOMEN and REVOLUTION WORKSHOP ON

**A Revolutionary Working-Class**

**Perspective For Women's Liberation**

May 12, 1972 at 7:30 p.m.

Terrace Lounge Boston University



## Fight SWP/WONAAC Reformism

# FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL, FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND



The May 6th "Abortion" march, like the ones before it, is just another example of how a section of the women's liberation movement is being confined and sold out by the Socialist Workers Party leadership. At the last march in November of last year held in Washington, D.C., Women and Revolution and SL/RCY marched with the above banners and signs counterposing the need for a working class, revolutionary perspective to the middle class "safe" demand raised by the reformist Womens Abortion Action Coalition to "Repeal All Abortion Laws". WONAAC claims that abortion is "A Woman's right to choose" (see picture below, also taken at the march in Washington last year) and yet refuses to raise a demand that would enable all women the same right to choose - Free Health Care For All, Free Abortion on Demand. WONAAC and its SWP leadership argue that most women would not support the demand for free abortion and rather than isolate the Capitalist politicians and their liberal friends they choose to ignore the real issue.

Most women, members of the working class, are oppressed not only by the isolating and degrading role they are forced into through the main social bulwark of class society, the nuclear family, but face sexual discrimination in hiring, promotions and pay, as well as the overall oppression and exploitation of all those in the working class. As part of a huge pool of reserve labor, marginally employed, women in particular suffer from the oppressive measures the capitalists use to keep all workers in line, such as the wage freeze, and from the necessary status-quo of capitalism, the chronic unemployment of a large segment of the labor pool. Yet the only slogans of the demonstrations are limited to a single issue, as if all our problems would be solved if abortion laws were wiped off the books.

In its attempt to gain organizational, and therefore political hegemony over another "mass movement", the SWP has narrowed the focus of the women's liberation movement to the single, reform issue, and has carefully divided it from other social struggles, even those against other aspects of women's oppression, and has fostered continued confidence in liberal, bourgeois politicians who are willing to 'support' the women's movement if, and *only if* it is thus confined to a non-revolutionary, multi-class perspective. Under its present leadership, divided from the working class - the section of society which has the social power and the objective interest to liberate all oppressed sections of society - this women's liberation movement will be as unsuccessful as the SWP-led anti-war movement, after seven years of marches and a bourgeois pacifist ideology.

Many militants in the movement already recognize that the movement as it presently exists, is doomed to powerlessness, unless it can break out of middle class isolation and ally in struggle with

other oppressed sectors of society in a strong, unified, working class movement. To do this, the women's movement must have a working class orientation based on a program relating to all areas of women's oppression, both as women and as workers! The SWP, in adopting single issuism, denies a need for a program in favor of mindless "actions" such as this demonstration, which can never lead to real advances because they are undertaken with the perspective of pressuring the bourgeoisie for minimal democratic reforms. We in Women and Revolution believe that only clearly defined revolutionary perspectives, embodied in a program of transitional demands can build a mass, class conscious, women's liberation movement!

Free Abortion on Demand, Free Birth Control for Men and Women, No Forced Sterilization, as part of the demand for Free Health Care For All, must be fought for in the context of and along with these other demands:

1. Free, full time, quality child care centers, controlled by the parents and staff!
2. Equal pay for equal work - Equal access to all job categories - No job discrimination based on race or sex!
3. End the legal and social discrimination against homosexuals - No laws against any form of sexual activity between consenting individuals.
4. End the legal persecution of prostitutes!
5. Employment for all - 30 hours work for 40 hours pay!
6. For labor political strikes against the Indo-Chinese war and the Wage Freeze!
7. No confidence in bourgeois politicians, male or female - Break with the Capitalist Parties - For a Political Party of the working class!
8. Women's liberation through socialist revolution - Build a revolutionary women's liberation movement! ●



## ...CAPITULATION continued from page 3

from the opening session for protesting the presence of Bella Abzug's representative, attending the Convention to canvass support for Bella's legislation, UAG remained silent, both on the expulsion and on the co-optation of the movement. Throughout the convention, they remained publicly uncritical of the WONAAC leadership, and went so far as to suppress one of their own demands, for a non male-exclusionist movement, simply in order to avoid a confrontation with the feminists. But feminism is a major obstacle to women's liberation and in particular is a means of maintaining bourgeois control over the abortion movement - men are excluded but the capitalists are not. Here is a clear example of how in trying to avoid "alienating" groups to the right, in this case the feminists, UAG abandoned criticism of the bourgeoisie and abandoned any

sort of pretence to a working class line; for it is precisely feminist exclusion of men which leads the feminists to class-collaboration, imposing a false, "non-class" standard in support of bourgeois control. Confronted with the fact of the SWP's betrayal, PL/UAG can no longer claim to have it both ways; either it opposes the sell-out or objectively supports it. Consistent with the whole logic of its position, PL/UAG chose support.

This behavior contrasts sharply both with the basically correct opposition of PL (and UAG and SDS) to the exactly analogous role played by Vance Hartke in NPAC last July, and with PL's former condemnation of the very same Bella Abzug, for the *very same crime* - conscious misleadership of the women's liberation movement. To argue that it makes a difference whether Bella was there in

person, is an incredible self-deception.

In emphasizing the connection between sexism and racism, UAG wishes only to make the struggle against sexism an extension of PL's moralistic and reformist "campaign against racism". Certainly there is a connection - both are tools of the ruling class for dividing and oppressing the working class. But this is precisely the connection which UAG suppresses, *refusing* to link the struggle against both, to the *class struggle*. The fight for the liberation of both women and blacks is inseparable from the need to overthrow capitalism, and only the working class can remove it from the earth forever. PL/UAG's abandonment of the working class demonstrates once and for all its complete inability to provide revolutionary leadership. ●