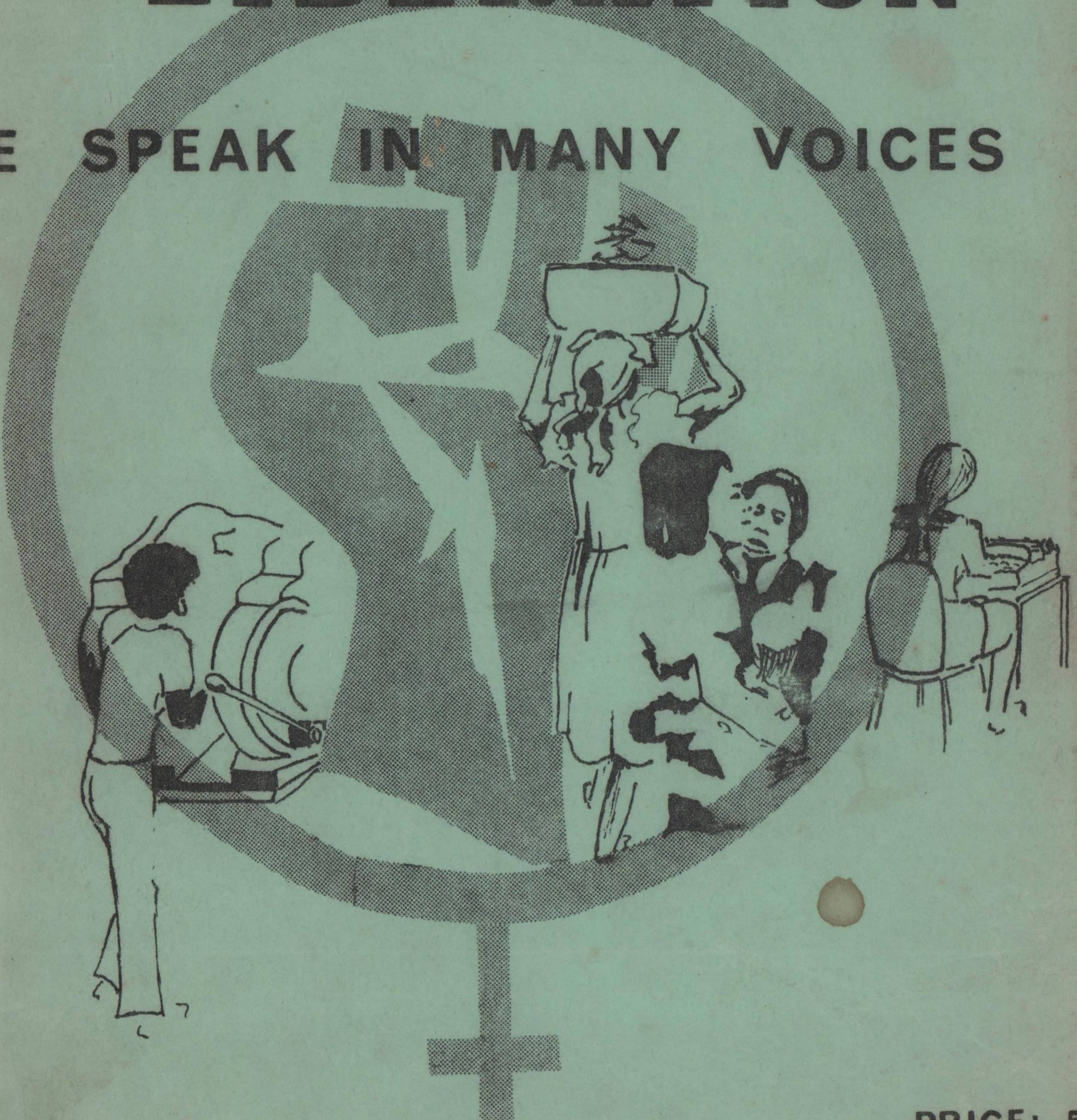


20354

REVIEW COPY

# NOTES ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION

WE SPEAK IN MANY VOICES



PRICE: 50¢

ISSUED BY NEWS & LETTERS

415 BRAINARD DETROIT



K A R L   M A R X   O N   W O M E N

Excerpts from:     "PRIVATE PROPERTY AND COMMUNISM"

"Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that any kind of object is ours only when we have it, i.e., when it exists for us as capital, or when we possess it directly -- eat it, drink it, wear it, live in it, etc. -- in short, use it...

\*           \*           \*

"The relation of private property remains the relation of the community to the world of things. Finally, this movement of counterposing universal private property to private property is expressed in the animal form that marriage (which, of course, is a form of exclusive private property) is counterposed to having women in common. Hence the woman becomes communal and common property. We might say that this idea of communal women expresses the secret of this quite vulgar and unthinking communism...

"The secret of the relationship of man to man finds its unambiguous, definitive, open, obvious expression in the relationship of man to woman, and in this way, the direct, natural relationship between the sexes. The direct natural necessary relationship of man to man is the relationship of man to woman."

\*           \*           \*

"Private property is only the sensuous expression of the fact that man at one and the same time becomes objective for himself, becomes an alien and inhuman object ... The positive transcendence of private property, i.e. the sensuous appropriation of human essence and living, of material things created by and for man is to be conceived not only in the sense of direct, one-sided enjoyment, nor only in the sense of possession, a sense of having. Man appropriates himself as an all-sided essence in an all-sided way: hence, as a whole man. Each of his human relations to the world -- seeing, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, thought, perception, experience, wishing activity, loving -- in short all organs of his individuality, like the organs which exist directly in the form of communal organs, are in their objective relation of in their relation to the object, the appropriation of it. The appropriation of human actuality, its relation to the object, is the affirmation of human actuality..."

-- From Marx's 1844 "Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts"



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

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



"WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL YOUR LIFE?"

Rachel Woods  
black hospital worker

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

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

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

The City has been cutting the budget. In the Health Department there has already been a big cut back, with no publicity at all about it. In two weeks time we have had ten people transferred from the special hospital where I work to the general hospital. Plus there are people being laid off--civil service employees. It's mostly affecting the registered nurses and the licensed practical nurses, which is very unusual. One whole psych floor in my hospital has been closed. We had two women nurses on our floor who were ordered to transfer to the general hospital emergency room--quite



a switch! The women took a demotion in rank, from licensed practical nurse to child care attendant, so they wouldn't have to go. There's about an eight hundred dollar difference in salary too.

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

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

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

When you have children, you can't keep yourself bottled in. You have to take care of the children, but you have to have outlets for yourself too. It's a little selfish also; I'm not doing this just to get work or go to school, but I feel I have to get on a better



financial basis. If the kids are going to go to college, if we're even going to get along, with inflation, I have to do this kind of fighting. And it kind of satisfies me, to have interaction with children besides my own, and my work in the church, etc. Also, it helps to know that there are others going through the same thing you are. I talk about it with the women in class who also have kids.

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

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

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

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



## WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND BLACK LIBERATION

Julie H.  
white student, New York

One of the most talked about but least understood topics that occupies the left today is the problem of women's liberation. Because the struggle for black liberation and the struggle for women's liberation have been historically linked in America, it may be helpful to compare the recent developments in these two movements.

Both blacks and women are faced with the same objective limitation on their action: they cannot become like the group that oppresses them and thus escape their position by giving up their identity and denying their history. Since the fact of sex or race cannot be changed, each group is forced by the objective mark of its oppression to challenge the roots of discrimination directly. The two movements start from similar conditions, but the black movement is older, and thus tendencies in the women's movement can be better understood when we compare them with similar tendencies in the black movement that are more fully developed.

Some of the tendencies in the women's struggle (the anti-men stance, the search for an identity beyond "women as sex objects"; middle class struggles to enter the upper levels of capitalistic society) are ridiculed. Yet all these tendencies have had (and still have) their counterparts in the black movement (reverse racism; cultural nationalism; black capitalism). The male chauvinism of the left, as well as of the larger society, is revealed when tendencies in the black movement are seen as understandable, even valid, reactions to white racism while identical tendencies in the women's movement are dismissed as "irrelevant" or "groundless." Many of the more extreme positions of women's groups are simply male supremacist attitudes turned upside down, thus mirroring the objective distortions in a society that denies women their right to be free. We must recognize both the contribution such attacks make to the growth of women's consciousness, and the point at which they must be transcended in order that the self-development of the movement can continue.

Just as whites select those voices of black liberation that they want to hear, so men select the voices of women's liberation they are willing to hear. But the voices of women's liberation do not only come from those groups that call themselves women's lib, they are heard wherever women speak out against the specific conditions of their oppression. The Welfare Rights movement is as much a voice of women as are those groups who protested at the American Beauty Pageant. When hospital workers in Charleston won the right to unionize, their victory was a victory of black women workers. To see their struggle as simply a part of the black movement, or the labor movement, and to deny that third 'category' of women is to see only part of what their fight represents.



Lolita H.  
White student, New York

Oppression is most effective when the oppressed believe the definition of themselves that the larger society forces on them. One of the most important jobs of the women's liberation movement is to free themselves from all the male chauvinist ideas about the proper "role of women", just as the black movement frees blacks from white definitions of the "Negro's place." Many women in the movement show their enslavement by male chauvinist attitudes when they see other struggles as "more important" and spend their energy fighting for other people's liberation, but never their own.

The movement now admits that discrimination against women is a fact. But male chauvinism again shows itself when the movement does not recognize, or doesn't quite believe, that the women's movement is an effective force for liberation. The contradiction between oppression and liberation is absolute. As long as a society, or an organization, retains within itself the means and mechanisms for the systematic oppression of any predetermined group, these means can always be turned against others and used to oppress them too. The importance of women's liberation for the movement as a whole is that our voices free other voices for freedom, and our actions reinforce the struggle for self-determination.



WOMEN: BLACK AND WHITE, YOUNG AND OLD

Ethel Dunbar  
black worker

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

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

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

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

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

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



Molly Jackson  
white working student

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

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

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

The Columbia University women had sparked an idea the year before, when they suddenly balked at being on the food committees during that occupation, and demanded that there be equal numbers of men and



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

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

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

The WRAP women took the lead in calling open mass meetings, coordinating organizing, and arranging demonstrations. Some good ideas



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

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

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



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

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

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



## HISTORY AND THE NEED FOR WOMEN THEORISTS

Barbara B.  
Women's Liberation, Detroit

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

The male theorists -- Marx, Proudhon, Fourier, etc. -- the Marxists, the Anarchists, all the way down the line, have not analyzed society in terms of woman's position in that society, but in terms of man's position in society. And women have never, ever, challenged this. The reason I say this is because the male theoreticians have dealt with an economy in which the male is the main producer. In other words, the capitalist economy in which the male is the main worker. This wasn't always true. In the beginning of capitalism, women and children were used as cheap labor. But the male theoreticians haven't dealt with the substructure of that society, the whole economy based on the sexual division of labor, the division of labor between men and women, which preceded capitalism, and which has remained the substructure, the foundation, of every economy which has ever existed. They have refused to deal with this economy as they have dealt with the male economy. The male economy, the male operated, male controlled economy, what I call the superstructure, depends on the substructure, the sexual division of labor. The main division of labor in the world is between male and female. The first division of labor in the world was between male and female. The first oppression was that of males over females.

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

Engels, in the "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," said that women's oppression originated with the origin of property, and that therefore the end of the property relationship would free women, and therefore that the class struggle would free women because it would end the property relation. I think that that explanation is questionable because it has not been determined that the oppression of women originated with the origin of property. I don't think it did; I think it originated before property. Marx and Engels take property as the key to women's oppression; therefore only the working class can do away with property, thus freeing women. This makes women's liberation merely an off-shoot of the class struggle. What I am questioning, what I think is a fallacy, is that women's oppression originated with private property.



In my reading in anthropology and psychology, I've come across something I think is really new and which, to my mind, explains the origin of the oppression of women. From the sources I've looked out (one is the Golden Bough by Frazer), it appears that the oppression of women occurred in non-property holding societies. I think the section by Frazer on "Totem and Taboo" explains this.

Although he didn't deal with it directly, but was concerned with magic and the ideology underlying magic, he does give evidence that, all over the world, there existed a blood taboo. Blood was considered to equal life. There were many different kinds of rituals centered on this blood=life concept. There was a great fear of blood, universally. It was from this fear of blood that the numerous taboos around women grew up. This was, of course, related to the female menstrual cycle. Religion evolved out of magic, and the taboos against women were incorporated into religion. The male fear of women likewise produced male-only social groups, which became political societies. It was from this form that property relations developed -- out of the totems and taboos against women. Marriage likewise evolved from this.

Practically all human institutions had their origin in the fear of women, and the rituals and taboos which men created to protect themselves from women: private property and war and all institutions. Property developed as property out of the marriage system, which itself developed out of the domination of women, out of men's fear of women. It was psychological question first, and then became economic.

Going back in history, through anthropology, can help women comprehend their own oppression, and open up new views of how it began. In terms of the Left, women's liberation comes about as a result of the end of the property relationship. But women must question this, they must attempt to discover the roots of their own oppression, and find out what really happened.



Ester Serrano  
young Mexican-American

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

There is one job for women in the whole place. One JOHN for 80 women, and some of the women in the plant use it too. There are 3 or 4 men's jobs. The boss is thinking of converting the women's job into a men's job, and using one of the men's jobs for the women -- because the women's job is "nicer" and they need a nice job for customers.

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

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

#### IN SCHOOL

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



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

At Home:

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

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

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



## ON THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT:

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

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

The Women's Liberation Movement has changed my thinking about a lot of things. I never thought about the freedom of women as a mass thing before. I thought that I could escape the oppression myself. I thought that I was never going to let anyone put a ring through my nose. I saw what happened to my ma. I saw the kind of hell she had to live with and told myself that it wasn't going to happen to me.

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



Judy M.  
white student, New York

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

The woman question is of singular importance to a revolutionary movement. In the class struggle we must be able to free the creative energies of all of our militants. But male chauvinism is no more a "woman's problem" for women to solve in isolation any more than racism is a "black problem". Anyone who is a revolutionary and concerned with creating a new society with truly human relations must realize the importance of the struggle against male domination. Clearly many men in the movement are reactionary on this point and still bound by bourgeois notions and so it is up to the women to take the lead. But it is a dangerous trend when women's groups continue to see their problems as isolated from the movement as a whole. Without a new society, no one can be free. How can we be "liberated" as women when we are exploited as workers and oppressed as human beings?

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

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

We can identify the groups of women who are primarily concerned



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

The primarily white "radical" womens groups that grew out of SDS and the student movement have to a large extent today fallen victim to the faction fights of the suicidal left. They were and are for the most part a lot of noise with little substance. The bra "burnings", the anti-beauty contest demonstrations, the Witch groups, created a scandal among the middle class which is fine for what it's worth. But these activities and the discussions of radical women that I have attended have the danger of implying that women's problems are "psychological", that their problems are the result of the "consumer society" that makes them buy junk to be what is called beautiful, and that women can be free if they free themselves of men's image of them. All these points have some validity but ultimately the problems of inter-personal relationships will remain as long as we live in an alienated, dehumanized society. Almost anything anyone can buy is junk. But to focus on consumption, on advertising and the like is not to hit at the heart of the problem at all. Boycott Revlon? A very superficial social critique.

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



A RESPONSE FROM A PARTICIPANT

Terry Moon  
Women's Liberation, Detroit

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

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

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

1. Beauty contests demonstrate clearly the value women have for this society. As sexual objects, period. Women can be last hired and first fired because we all, even women, know where our place is. Women will allow themselves to do shit work as long as they think they are shit.
2. Beauty pageants epitomize the roles we are all forced to play as women. The parade down the runway blares the metaphors of the 4-H Club country fair, where the nervous animals are judged for teeth, fleece, etc., and where the best specimen gets the blue ribbon. So are all women in our society forced daily to compete for male approval, enslaved by ludicrous "beauty standards" we ourselves are conditioned to take seriously.



3. Beauty Pageants are racist. Since its inception in 1921, the Miss America pageant has not had one black finalist, and this has not been for a lack of test-case contestants. There has never been a Puerto Rican, Alaskan, Hawaiian, or Mexican-American winner. Nor has there ever been a True Miss America - an American Indian.

4. The function of most pageant winners is to advertise something. Her body is being used so some capitalist can make more money. In other words, beauty pageant sponsors are pimps and make whores of all women.

5. The highlight of Miss America's reign each year is a cheerleader tour of American troops abroad. She personifies the "unstained patriotic American womanhood our boys are fighting for." The living bra and the Dead Soldier. Women are used as Mascots for Murder. Miss America sells war.

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

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

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

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

As for W.I.T.C.H., their main function is a media one. A way of operating that would raise issues, get coverage and not turn people off. A guerrilla theater tactic. They have never claimed to be anything else. One reason they chose the name W.I.T.C.H. is because witches were killed because of their politics. They were abortionists, they were independent, they lived alone or in communes with other women. W.I.T.C.H. claims that genocide (millions of women were killed) was committed against women because of their revolutionary politics.

I think that the implications that you have deduced from "long sessions of personal revelations" are not the same



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

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

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

One thing you wrote - "The greatness and originality of the new stirrings of W.Lib. is the fact that they don't want to wait till the day after the revolution to solve the problem." That is very interesting but I fail to see how we can do that. I'd love to be able to create a new society without first destroying the old, but unfortunately that's completely utopian and impossible. And without a new society no one will be free.

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



THE THEORETIC CHALLENGE OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Bonnie McF.  
white student

Dear Judy.

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

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

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

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

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

(from a letter to Meyer & Vogt, 1870)

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

This is history, but look at today. Right at this moment, the ramifications of the Vietnamese nationalist struggle (and it is that as well as more)



is wrecking absolute havoc in the bastion of western capitalism -- it has created a whole new generation of revolutionaries in the U.S. It has helped to bring about a near revolutionary situation here, although the New Left, as well as the Old, refuses to recognize the revolution at home, preferring to dump the whole responsibility for revolution on the Third World.

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

O.K. What does all this have to do with women? I believe the answer is a great deal. Women are a developing revolutionary force. And to understand that we must understand process. Like oppressed national groups, women comprise different classes, but at the same time, even the female "bouregoisie" are not truly bourgeois because they have virtually none of the control over the means of production that that term is used to signify. Historically, women were the first victims in the division of labor for value production -- the first slaves, the first human beings to be objectified into property, into commodities owned by their husbands, as both Marx and Lenin point out. The relation of man to woman is the deepest, most revealing form of the alienation of the whole human race, as Marx shows in "Private Property and Communism." Being the oldest form of oppression, the revolt of women today has tremendous significance for the revolutionary movement as a whole.

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

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

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



and I'm for that!"

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

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

What is important for our time, as Raya has pointed out, is the fact that women are becoming conscious of themselves as an oppressed group in a different way than ever before. Demanding "Freedom Now," and challenging the totality of relations under capitalism, is qualitatively different than previous women's movements. And that is what many voices of women's liberation are challenging -- and not only in capitalist society, but in the American Left itself. If there is one thing that characterizes the women's groups it is their adamant attack on elitism and authoritarianism. The very structure of most women's liberation groups is witness to this. They show the recognition both of the importance of self-development for the individual, and the necessity for true democracy within an organization. The small group structure has created some problems in communication between groups, between large numbers of women, but this is beginning to be worked out. There have been a growing number of groups who have set up "Coalition" councils where many women can come together, while still participating in the small groups. This has occurred here in Detroit recently. I've also been told that it has happened in Baltimore, Boston and New York.

I have done some re-thinking on the question of psychologizing vs. politicizing, etc., partly because of some re-thinking about what occurred at a conference on Women's Liberation which I attended here last Spring. A white woman worker was in my workshop on "Working Women." By and large, those in this workshop were New Left "Just discovered the working class" types, who were gung-ho to go out and "radicalize, raise the consciousness," etc., of working class women, with the typical New Left arrogance. What was almost amusing was that, though they distained the Women's Lib. groups as "too psychological," their ideas of "radicalizing" women was to talk about female psychology -- but only as an addenda to the really important stuff -- smashing imperialism, etc. In other words, they had no ideas at all about the concrete oppression that women are fighting -- considering wage and hours and working conditions "reformist stuff." Talk about abstract revolutionism!



But M. was a worker, a worker who had had some pretty awful experiences as a woman in the C.P. She said some really interesting things -- very concrete -- about women on the job. But she related them also to its effects on her at home, in her relationship to her family and to herself. She spoke of being unable to withstand the pressure of working and being a mother and housewife -- and how she tried to escape it personally. She saw these things as a totality -- the job, the house, the children and the husband, the concrete and the psychological. Right now she is in a women's caucus in her union; they are fighting for upgrading, and changes in the discriminatory job classification system.

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

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

Because the oppression of women has been so intimately connected with the question of all human relations, with the essential alienation of all individuals from themselves and others, the potential of a women's movement is incredibly great. The needs, demands, of women are beyond "economism," beyond "vulgar communism;" neither provides any answer for women. Basic to the oppression of women is the whole totality of human relations in capitalist society -- in any society in which people are not free to be self-determining, creative human beings. Thus, in China, as J. described it, women are "equal" in that they work at the same jobs as men, and get paid the same as men, and, up to the time of the commune movement, their status was improved. But, the commune movement has reduced the power of women to determine the conditions of their own labor and life. They have gone backward. (see article on China.) The return to the past is nowhere more evident than in the composition of the Chinese leadership -- there are only 2 women in leadership positions and they are the wives of Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao. Appointed by Mao, neither was an independent revolutionary in her own right. The same is true of Cuba and Russia. And the same is true of every revolutionary organization in this country, with the single exception of News & Letters. We are the only revolutionary organization in which the two most important leadership positions are held by women.



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

You say in your letter:

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

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

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

Is it possible that the absence of a self-conscious women's movement during these previous revolutions contributed to their betrayal? I remember a story that M. told about her experiences as a woman worker in the Communist Party in the forties. Anytime she tried to raise the question of the position of women in the Party -- which was pretty awful -- she was told that the "solution" to the woman question could only come after the revolution, and that women must subordinate their own "grievances" to work for the revolution. (M. was expelled from the Party for persisting with her own "grievances.") This is, by the way, exactly the same story the C.P. told its Black members. Wait until after the revolution, ladies and Blacks, and you shall get pie in the sky. It is no accident that the Progressive Labor Party's position on women today is exactly the same as its C.P. "parent." And the SDS Weathermen's "Ladies Auxiliary" theory is but a variation on this same theme. The danger of subordinating women's



liberation to "the real revolution" can be seen in the events of Chicago, where WRAP and SDS women were doing really important work with the hospital workers' strike there -- until the SDS women abandoned the struggle for "more important things", i.e., SDS faction fights.

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

Much of the discussion on the Left about women's liberation centers on the allegation that it is a "bourgeois" demand, that any struggle around the woman question will divide the struggle against imperialism; that women "can't be free until after the revolution," etc. Of course, this is an old and discredited excuse for the chauvinism that it is. But it is very dangerous. What we have to learn from history is that the greatest danger to the revolution itself is the attempt to subordinate, to put aside, any struggle for human liberation which is making itself felt in the world. (And, by the way, Luxemburg's attempt to stamp Polish national aspirations out of existence was one of the most important reasons for the failure of the Polish revolution.) To say that no individual, Black or white, male or female can be truly free until after the revolution is to divert the revolutionary movement entirely. It is to ignore the historic and contemporary evidence that many forces are necessary for revolution. Lenin made this quite explicit in his writings on the National question, in which he indicated the importance of alliances with the peasantry and the oppressed national groups for the success of the Russian revolution -- and this at a time when the peasantry was generally considered the "backwater of cretinism" by the Left.

To recognize that a truly self-conscious, independent women's movement may, in this period, be a necessity for a truly human society after revolution, may be crucial to the revolution. It is in the process of fighting for freedom



that people really develop, are called upon to exercise their creativity, their minds. If we don't recognize that, then we might just as well appoint the "maximum leader" and take off to the Catskills to form the red army!

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

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

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

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

Ultimately, the battles for women's liberation must be fought on the assembly lines, in the hospitals and restaurants and typing pools -- where women are brought together in great numbers, where the enemy is not individual



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

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

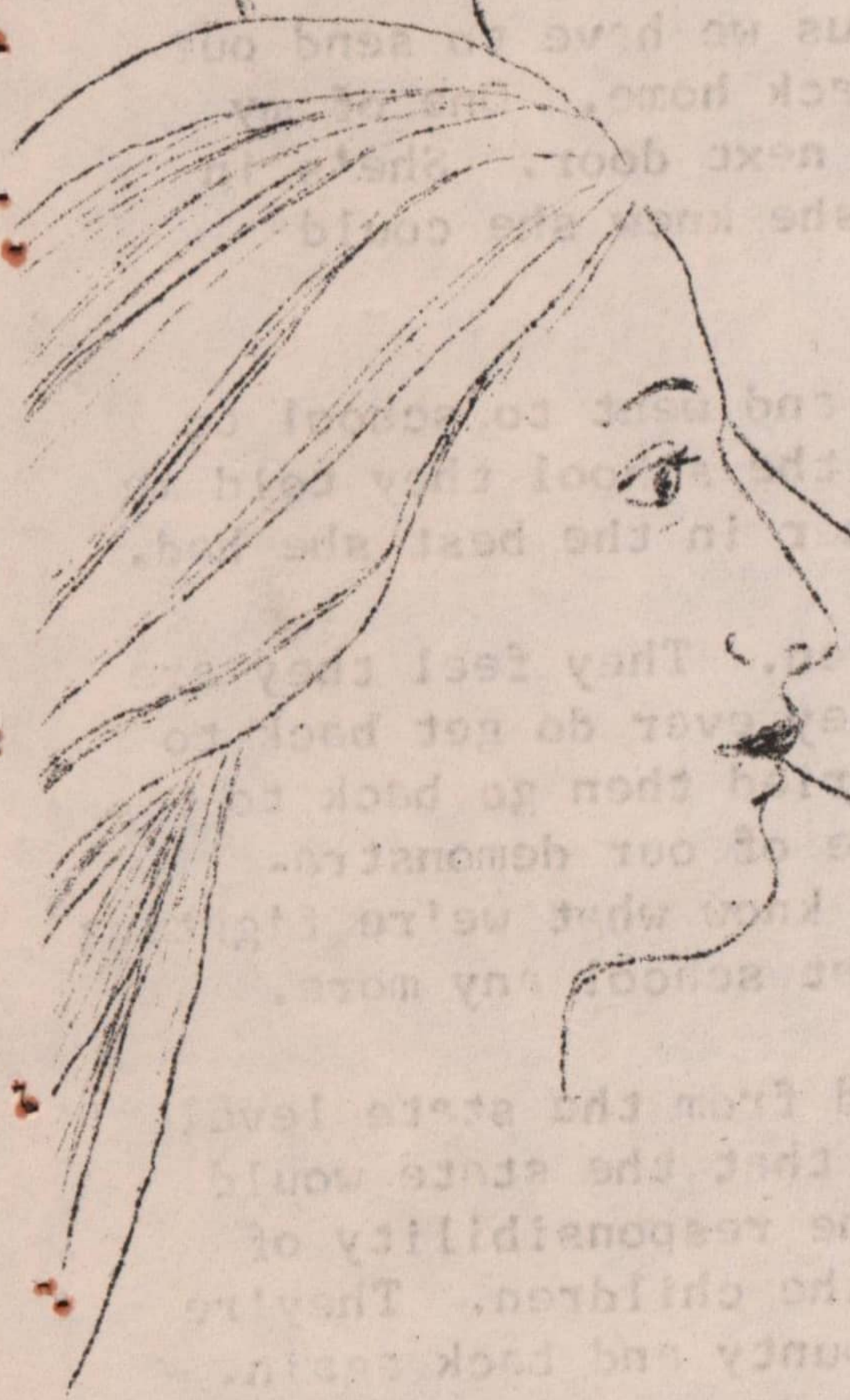
Women who work in unionized shops or industries, although they may frequently confront their union as well as the company, are in a far better position than the majority of women workers -- who are unorganized. And it is in the service industries, where the majority of women who work outside the home are employed, that there have been increasingly militant struggles for organization. One example is, of course, the massive local 1199 hospital workers' campaign in New York, which was primarily a struggle by women, and particularly Black women. The same is true of the Charleston strike. Here in Detroit, there is likewise agitation going on in the hospitals but, unfortunately, the unions involved seem to be hindering rather than helping.

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

Ultimately, the battles for women's liberation must be fought on the assembly lines, in the hospitals and restaurants and typing pools -- where women are brought together in great numbers, where the enemy is not individual



LIBERATION



SPEAK

IN

MANY

PART III

VOICES



"FREEDOM IS SOMETHING THAT ALL OF US NEED"

Mabel Hobson  
black ADC mother, Welfare Rights  
Organization, Detroit

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

But I can't because there are too many problems to overcome. You have to accept the role of being man and woman.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



WHAT IT'S LIKE IN A SHOP

Pam N.  
young white worker

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

During the two months that I worked in this plant. I was working with a Collective for women's rights. The Collective was made up of some liberal middle-class women who went into this factory to organize working women. They never got anywhere because they could not accept the factory women as they were. They couldn't work with them. Here, you're working with people that are prejudiced. You can't go in on top of them and try to preach revolution. without first understanding them, digging what their whole scene is about. I quit the Collective before I quit the factory.

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

The first thing and the only thing the collective has done so far is to put out a phamphlet, a great big phamphlet, supposedly on Vietnam. In it they ran down the Black question and prejudice in something less than 3 paragraphs. You can imagine how much that accomplished.

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

I've got to leave, but I want to say one thing about this meeting. Like this whole room is really explosive, I've been feeling it



Since the birth of 20th century man we Americans have achieved perhaps the most technologically complex and advanced society in the history of the

all night. I can feel about 3 or 4 different things that are going on here. There's the young radical women's groups here. Then there's this woman, a white worker. She came here tonight off the line. There's the black women, and there's News & Letters. I really think we must listen to each other, we must hear what each group has to offer to the whole. That's the most important thing right now.

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

Jobs also examine what happens when a woman goes out to look for a job. For example what criteria is used to judge her qualifications for an office job? Contrary to popular opinion she is not judged on her intelligence, skills, or past experience. All that is secondary to the main qualification: her sex appeal and appearance. If she passes that test then her skills are considered, not before, and even then if she looks good enough the qualifications are stretched. How many 130 pound ugly secretaries get hired no matter how fast they type and take shorthand? The employer would admit to you, and often not even to himself, that he hires this way but anyone who has ever worked in the personnel field knows this to be true.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



Nancy Homer

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

I'm walking on a street. I'd be very comfortable, if it weren't for other people. I've tried to decide whether people are staring at me, or whether I'm self-consciously uncomfortable around them. Maybe I walk around with a scowl on my face that attracts attention, or merely imagine what's happened to me. But I'm no daydreamer, and I have examples to prove that I haven't imagined this staring. Sometimes I look angry; I don't trust people on the street anymore than anyone else. Usually, though, I'm walking, thinking, or looking into store windows at buildings, or at the street. I'm self-conscious; I'm conscious that I'm comfortable in my clothes; I don't, however, feel embarrassed about my dress. After all, I'm not bizarre.

People have a right to look around, but I remember a few general rules: eye contact shouldn't last for more than a few seconds; you don't smile at it; you thought a person crazy; you don't talk about that person in front of her/him; you don't point; and you don't make obscene comments or gestures. But I find these reactions, are people bored or curious? Do they think I'm a hippy, fashion, or advocate of Unisex? Do they worry because I'm not a "lady"? When I walk down a street I'm stared at. It happens every day. People concentrate on my body instead of my face, and decide whether "it" is woman or man. It isn't food-related; they arrive on a sidewalk and walk on, or make a comment.

They complain to each other as if they were a personal affront. One says, "She's a man." Another, "What's she trying to prove?" Or "These kids... you can't tell one from the other these days." One brags complacently that she would not be a "lady." After standing in a bank line for twenty minutes, I shifted position and turned. An old "gentleman" blurted out, "Is you a baby?" and I answered to twenty people in the line, "No, not a lady. A woman." They react strangely because I don't fit into their feminine categories. My fashion type isn't Paris, Harper's Bazaar, or Vogue, secretary-office-career, traditionally feminine, or not especially tipsy. I



Nancy Homer

Women's Liberation, Detroit.

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

I've tried to decide whether people are staring at me, or whether I'm self-consciously uncomfortable around them. Maybe I walk around with a scowl on my face that attracts attention, or merely imagine what's happened to me. But I'm no daydreamer, and I have examples to prove that I haven't imagined this staring. Sometimes I look angry; I don't trust people on the street anymore than anyone else. Usually, though, I'm walking, thinking, or looking into store windows, at buildings, or at the street. I am self-conscious; I'm conscious that I'm comfortable in my clothes; I don't, however, feel embarrassed about my dress. After all, I'm not bizarre.

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

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

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

They react strongly because I don't fit into their feminine categories. My fashion type isn't Paris, Harper's Bazaar, or Vogue, secretary-office-career, traditionally feminine, or not especially hippie. I



THE FACTORY PUTS WOMEN AGAINST EACH OTHER

don't care about fashion. Even men are supposed to care, although they can pass with being neat and clean. So I have both men and women on my back. I should be fashionable, I've got to be recognized as some fashion type, and preferably as a nice girl, who wears comfortable clothes once in a while, but otherwise conforms to some feminine clothes pattern. They ask me to modify: "Please grow your hair long, straight, and wear hair ribbons, so we can recognize you as a girl who is caught wearing these clothes." Or "Please smile charmingly, so we can tell you're a charming little girl."

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

I have repeated too often "dressing the way I like," but it's the only answer for these critics. My clothes are part of a change in attitude: real friends accept my clothes and this change. Other friends can't get past the clothing. One observed, "I can always tell when you're angry; you go out and buy such ugly clothes." (He wanted me to wear low-cut blouses, slinky dresses, high-heels--my feet would die--and the rest.) He couldn't understand that I wasn't interested in that fashion pattern and slinky dresses didn't fit my personality. I do have a personality and I question whether or not it must be low-cut. I responded, "My clothes may be ugly, but they're not as ugly as yours." I also gave him a calm explanation about my clothes. They were not ugly and it was his own prejudices that kept him from realizing it.

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

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



## THE FACTORY PITS WOMEN AGAINST EACH OTHER

Joanna M. Jackson  
black cannery worker

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

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

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

A friend was telling me about the evening shift in her department. There is a stoolie girl on it who often takes the boss home. One night when there were six or seven sorting tables and only two working tables, this big stoolie boss girl, as the women call her, told her table when they finished sorting not to help the other table. Certain white women, when black women are sorting, have a way of putting all the food on their table and less where the table is all white, so naturally the black women work harder. The white women know this and try to get to the job early and get an all-white table, so sometimes this makes all the black women work at one table. That night, the table that had black women got twice as much to do as the table with only white women at it. So the first table decided to slow up and take their time. Well, this stoolie told the boss, and the next day they put everyone from that table on the evening shift for the next week too. All the women with less seniority were put on the day shift. Some of the women blew their tops.



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

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

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

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

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

\* \* \*

About the Liberation of Women--I have been hearing more and more about this on the radio, and someone I know whose husband works



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

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



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

Betty Thomas Mayen

white worker and union activist

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

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

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

Another young woman of more or less middle class origin, 28, divorced and the mother of a child, has been fighting with the company and the union (AFL-CIO, Local 1064, United Catering, Restaurant, Bar and Hotel Union) for a service person job, and she has been denied the job by the company and blocked by the union.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Women, one half of humanity, yet viciously oppressed, must also demand the right to define themselves. They are learning that to fight and struggle for better jobs, upgrading, and better pay, is not un-feminine. In many cases, they are fighting for their damned lives. They know that pulling an eight hour shift and going home to another five or more hours of house-hold drudgery is gut rending, mind killing, and that it must cease. They are given low pay for the first and no pay for the latter. They are learning that they are more than child-bearers and rearers, household drudges, and a piece of ass.

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



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

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

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

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

Yet, unhappily for all the "Canteens" and "W.S.U.'s" in the U.S., the customers are only the "displacement objects"--the real objects will soon be attacked. General work stoppages, sporadic violence, and demonstrations will perhaps, in the '70s, replace the "whirled spaghetti." The press may call the rebelling black working-class woman wild; Newsweek may forgive "her behavior" as being an "outgrowth of her white woman envy (it's the latest craze and may even replace her penis envy). Time and Moynihan will gleefully and hopefully call attention to her rebellion as further evidence of the "crumbling 'Negro' family structure." "Some" black domestics will privately reprimand her for spoiling a good thing. Yet, the older black women who can remember slaving for \$2 a week may finally experience a private sense of fulfillment.



WOMEN CAN'T BE FREE 'TIL ALL ARE FREE

Estelle E.  
white office worker

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

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

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

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



"WE SHALL NOT BE SOLD"

Anne Chapdelaine

white working student

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



HOW LONG MUST WE WAIT?

Mary Curry  
black hospital aide

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

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

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

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

The first union meeting I had a chance to attend, the union spokesman from Local 79 AFL-CIO sounded real good. He answered questions from the floor about employee grievances and conditions of work, and explained what the contract would offer the employees, especially in the line of pay-raises. Starting pay for aides would become \$1.75, housekeepers \$1.60, first and second cooks, \$1.95 and \$2.15. They also discussed holiday pay, double-shift work, time-and-a-half-pay when you are called in on your day off, and a 15 minute coffee break for the afternoon. As the union man answered the questions, it all sounded great. But nothing has changed yet.

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

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

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



PART

IIII

HISTORIC

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

AND

THE NEED

FOR

PHILOSOPHY

HOW LONG MUST WE WAIT?

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

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

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

We wondered what had happened. We thought maybe the employees had become afraid of losing their jobs. Some had been working at the hospital for years and were afraid they might not find other jobs after 10 or 15 years. If they lost their jobs, we knew that unless everyone voted together to get the union in, some employees would be thrown out as "troublemakers."

The first union meeting I had a chance to attend, the union spokesman from Local 70 AFL-CIO sounded real good. He answered questions from the floor about employees' grievances and conditions of work, and explained what the contract would offer the employees, especially in the line of pay-rises. Starting pay for aides would become \$1.75, housekeepers \$1.60, first and second cooks, \$1.95 and \$2.15. They also discussed holiday pay, double-shift work, time-and-a-half pay when you are called in on your day off, and a 15 minute coffee break in the afternoon. As the union man answered the questions, it all sounded great, but nothing has changed yet.

How long can we be expected to live off the low wages we are getting with the cost of living going up all the time? One worker said that in 1965 she was getting \$1.01 an hour. Now she is getting 97¢. All people are entitled to dignity and unity. We have to get together and demand it.

I felt bad to see the job and my check isn't much more than when I was at DC. I used to get \$12 every two weeks; at the hospital I get \$12 every two weeks after deductions. With three children and myself to take care of, that doesn't go very far.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The politicians thought all that was needed to reestablish the stability of the home was to give the women a few posts in the government, business, the army, and point with pride to the expanding American economy and all the gadgets



for the kitchen to make life easier for "The little woman."

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

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

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

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

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

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

This historic questions assumed that contemporary coloration because



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

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

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

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

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

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



## WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN CHINA

Jade

refugee from mainland China

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

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

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

The Nationalists and the Communists did not do much about this during the Civil War. The Nationalists definitely didn't care to do it; and the Communists at that time had begun the Long March escaping Chiang Kai-Shek's extermination campaign and couldn't do



anything. After the Communists took over the country, their slogan everywhere was the emancipation of poor men and the emancipation of women.

Another practice which the Communists helped to stop was that of concubinage. When the Communists took over property from the rich landowners, the rich were no longer able to support many concubines. But in the country, many old ways persisted, especially among the poor. Daughters-in-law are property, slaves of the family. The mother-in-law can make her do anything, she can be beaten at will, and cannot get away unless her own family will buy her back, to pay ransom for her.

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

At that time, the Communists had just taken over; they were not very deeply rooted in the country. They developed their connections to the country more during the period of the land reform and the women were very active in this movement. When the Communists started the land reform movement, they sent cadres into the country. They didn't know who was with them and who was against them. It took them 2 to 3 years to develop roots in the country.

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

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

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



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

Things were much, much better for women at this time, especially for the single women -- better than in Hong Kong and the U.S. probably. You were respected and protected by laws. At that time there were women on all the committees, in the city and the country. In the country, the peasant committees which had the power to take land from the rich landlords, had to be 1/5 to 1/4 women, by order of the Central Committee. But even 1/5 to 1/4 was hard to get. Most women were illiterate and they never spoke publicly. You had to induce the women to speak up. Many did not know what a meeting was. This is why it was so hard in the beginning.

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

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

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



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

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

During the 1957, "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" period, the Chinese Communists followed the Russian Communists in denouncing Stalin, in what was called "De-Stalinization". At this time the Chinese Communists asked the people to criticize the party. A woman student at the university became very famous at this time for her criticisms of the Communist Party. I was told by one of her professors that she was very able. She talked out, and attracted many followers. She had a huge following in Peking University. She criticized the government for being backward, feudal, and for not being democratic. The Communist Party became very frightened at the signs of discontent. And they attacked these people as rightists. They said this girl student was influenced by some intellectuals, and she was viciously attacked.

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

The other writer was very tough. She was the first to write about female psychology and sexuality. One of her books was in the form of a women's diary. There was a big scandal about it; all the men writers attacked her. Her husband was killed by the Nationalists and she was imprisoned by them. She was a Communist. She was also a very independent thinker, very tough. During the "Hundred Flowers Campaign" she dared to criticize the government. After that she was very much attacked. They even tried to make her husband denounce her, but he remained loyal. This was very rare.



When the Communists attacked a person, they always got your husband or your family to attack you. This has caused so many tragedies. If the family won't denounce the person, the entire family may be killed. Her husband was loyal and the Communists attacked them both. She was sent to a labor camp.

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

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



PAGES FROM A SHOP DIARY

Olga Domanski

Graduate, Fisher Body Assembly Line  
"Zig Zag Spring" Department

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

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

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

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

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



and comforted each other, and made confessions about going home at night and bawling. Each such confession would produce embarrassed grins, and more like confessions. The solidarity in misery was overwhelming....

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

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

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

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

The department, to begin with, was situated like a harem. The women were not scattered among men, doing jobs side by side with them. They were isolated in one corner of the shop, in one department. They



were treated as "creatures apart"--something very special--but special in a very negative way. The "specialness" of our department lay in the fact that the work we did had been recently reclassified by management from heavy work to light work; this is the way management distinguished "men's work" from "women's work." It was apparent that the designation had nothing whatever to do with heaviness or lightness, but only with rate of pay. The only reason the company had reclassified the work was to see whether women could handle it--at, of course, a lower wage rate than men had handled it in other shops, and as a matter of fact were handling it at the same time in other shops. It was a fact accepted by everyone (the girls, the men, and even management) that we were doing men's jobs and were treated like men in every respect--except our pay checks. The girls rubbed it in to the foreman, the union, the men up the line at every opportunity.

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

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

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

The girls would try to explain that they didn't have seniority and couldn't help the position they were in. But their reaction was contradictory. They knew the men were right and kicked themselves for



being used as race-horses by the company. But they couldn't help resent the men because they did less work and easier, lighter work and got paid more for it. And in addition, they frequently expressed pride in the knowledge that they could work harder than men, and faster than men. Their bitter philosophy was, "Oh well, everybody knows that the harder you work, the less you get paid in this life."

When a hapless male was shoved into a vacant spot on the line for a day, the girls would let him suffer for a while in grinning silence, and then smiling at one another would crack a joke with him and offer some bit of advice to make his job easier.

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

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

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

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

There was a state law prohibiting women from working over 54 hours a week, or ten hours in any one day. In our shop the men had to



quit when we did on account of the way the lines were set up. With the excessive and back-breaking overtime we got for months at a time, the men were very open about their gratitude for our presence in the shop and the overtime limits we therefore imposed on the company....

The girls exploited the "biological differences" angle to the fullest in their attempts to have their relief periods lengthened. In most shops a rest period is provided morning and afternoon, and a relief girl for emergencies in between these rests. Our first foreman expressed great surprise when asked about a rest period, said he had never heard of such a thing, and provided one relief girl for forty women. The union had advised the girls that if they really had to go, the company knew they would leave the line, relief girl or no relief girl, and their advice was to call for relief, wait a reasonable length of time (ten minutes or so) and then inform the foreman that you were going to leave the line if the relief girl didn't come immediately. A few brave souls used the routine. And when he found out it wasn't just a bluff, the foreman would rush over himself and take the job if he couldn't get a relief girl immediately. Of course, the normal elimination process was generally made much more difficult by the tension and excitement of such a fight every time you wanted relief, and in a year and a half there were over half a dozen operations for hemorrhoids in the department, all attributed by the girls (and undoubtedly correctly) to the inhuman control the company exercised over even our bowel movements. The girls eventually became quite calloused about having to discuss many of the most personal and intimate matters with the foreman, and often used the crudest language they knew in an attempt to embarrass him.... And in time the girls got more relief girls and longer relief periods, simply by taking them and explaining about those "certain days" if they were bawled out....

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



Excerpts from lecture presented to WRAP  
at University of Chicago, April, 1969  
by Raya Dunayevskaya

### THE NEED FOR A UNITY OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

I am glad to be able to speak to this specific Women's Liberation group because you have been involved in a sit-in which was related to the fact that academia treats its women members as second-class citizens -- it is truly amazing to read the actual statistics as to how few women are professors, the restrictions on promotion, and so on; and because you are presently involved in an actual class struggle, both with women hospital workers and a demand for a nursery for working women. This has distinguished you from other groups who have not made these essential distinctions as to class and immediate struggle, but have gone on to fight for such a fantastic thing as lengthening of hours of work so that career women should not be barred from executive jobs.

I want to begin very fundamentally, first with a Marxist-Humanist framework, and second with a historic framework -- and history not only as past, but as present. Marx had written, in the Early Humanist Essays\* that private property has made us so stupid that we think only of possessions. An object is ours if we eat it, or drink it, or consume it. We are constantly substituting a "to have" -- a possession, for a "to be" -- a development of man himself. Marx was speaking not only against capitalist private property, but against what he called vulgar communism, which, he said, negates the personality of man. ... Today, I would like to concentrate on the essay on the five senses, because when Marx was speaking about the reduction of all our senses to one single one, he stated that the most fundamental of all relations, that of man to woman, is the one that is the most degraded...

Marx had shown, through the senses, instead of just the relations of exploitation, and through the basic relation of man to woman, how degraded, alienated and frustrated this capitalist society is. It is reflected in literature, from the greatest on down. In our society, a woman is either a dumb blonde or a devil. She can't ever be seen as a human being. And the devils seem to have won out. There may have been a Joan of Arc, but she supposedly listened to spirits and therefore she wasn't really an individual, she was just supposed to be a dumb peasant girl. From the Greeks on -- and the Greeks are supposed to be the beginning of our Western civilization -- whether it is Medea or Electra or Clytemnestra; or whether it is Shakespeare's Lady MacBeth, or that horrible creature in Lear, Goneril; or for that matter even Eugene O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra" and Sartre's similar theme -- none could ever escape the picture of Electra and Medea whom the writers of each epoch updated to their present. And I don't know that "Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolff" is any improvement. There is a long list not only of exploitation, but of the myths it created that this is what woman is. Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex" is a very degrading book. Much of it is based on the fact that since the man does the entry, that's why women have always capitulated. Yet it ends up by saying that since men made women so bad, they will have to save us. ...

Instead of either the myth of pre-history, or its literature up to the present, if we return to actual history, we will see a very different development of woman, and her role in society. And if you think that the color black has become the determinant only now, with the revolution of the 60's in America, you are wrong. It arose in the Abolitionist movement. When the Sojourner

\* Excerpts from these Early Humanist Essays appear at the end of this bulletin.



Truths and the Harriet Tubmans came to the movement, the white women, whose hearts were in the right place, were still just cooking and making picnics and raising money -- which is necessary, but that isn't all that women can do. When they saw the black women standing up and speaking and acting as leaders of the Underground Railway, the white women said, Why aren't we doing something more than just cooking?

So that the first movement -- not the one that is famous in the late 19th century, the suffragettes, but the movement of the early 19th century during the 1830's and 1840's -- was the movement where the women said, since we are for the abolition of slavery, maybe we should also fight for our own freedom; we have absolutely no rights. It was not just a question of the right to vote. Just as the Negro woman was a catalyst for the white woman's liberation in America, the Negro man also showed a vanguard relationship to the movement.

For some peculiar reason, the very first convention of the women in 1848, which had already decided to fight for universal suffrage, still felt a man should be chairman. And even though the Abolitionist movement was by far the most advanced movement of the time, it nevertheless had many prejudices on the question of the women. All of the Abolitionists, who were giving their lives to end slavery, when asked to chair the meeting of the women, said this is where we stop -- there is a limit to how much freedom we are for. The only one who spoke up and said he would be their chairman was Frederick Douglass -- though it is true that in 1840 when the World Anti-Slavery Conference in England refused to seat the American women delegates, and forced them to sit in the balcony, Wm. Lloyd Garrison who was supposed to give the main speech to the Conference refused and sat in the gallery with the women as a protest.

Even though they were middle-class women, so long as they were related to both the black and the proletarian women, they went very far in fighting for more than just rights for themselves. But after the abolition of slavery, Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott and all the women from the petty-bourgeois class suffered from their separation along class lines. When they finally did get the vote, it was far removed from what the proletarian women needed and were doing. There were not many among the middle class women who worked for things like laws against child labor, lower hours, equal wages for women doing the same work. And this separation along class lines has continued to this day. We end up with degrading TV commercials that tell us, after all these years we have our freedom. What's the freedom? Wearing mini skirts and having our own cigarette....

Marx insisted that no matter how free we think we are, we shouldn't fool ourselves that the ideas of the ruling class aren't the ideas of society and no matter how hard we work, there will be certain taints that we carry with us. At least we should begin talking about them more and realizing what we are actually practicing.

There are some Women's Liberation groups so far removed from the working women that in Detroit they were trying to abolish some freedoms women had already won, to show they had "equality". The working women fought many hard and long



battles to get the reduction of the working day, and laws to prevent them from having to pick up heavy loads in the factory. For a woman to think that equality means you have to repeal these laws is absolutely fantastic. It takes a bourgeois mentality to think that you all have to do the same thing to be equal. The Russian and Chinese states have made everyone into hard laborers. I don't think that is freedom for the development of women.

We happen to have in Detroit one of the best women labor leaders in the country, Myra Wolfgang, the head of the waitresses union. She came out with a bitter statement against these women -- and it is ridiculous for college students to put her in the position of needing to fight them as "representatives" of what workers have always had to fight against. She said they must have never done a single day's work in their lives or they would never have come out with such demands. Did they realize how hard women had worked for that law? For these middle-class students to initiate this showed how far removed they were from the real problems of the world, of labor....

I want to return to history -- specifically the Paris Commune -- on two levels: in fact, and in theory. Because this is what I'm trying to show: that you must work on concrete fronts, but in struggling for concrete things, -- whether it is self-determination for the blacks, or better working conditions, or the youth movement itself -- that cannot be all that you do. If you cut yourself off from theory, you cut yourself off from the central point necessary at this point to make the preparation for actual revolution.

The Paris Commune was the greatest point of self-liberation reached during Marx's time. It was, in fact, the first workers' state, but because it lasted only two months, we know only the Russian Revolution as the "workers' state". How many know that the specific catalyst on the day the Paris Commune began, were the milkmaids in Paris? It was because they had to be out so blasted early, that they saw the preparations to move in the troops. How many know that the theory of Marx (which was the unity of theory and practice) meant that Capital was restructured on the basis of the Civil War in the U.S., and the Paris Commune?

Let me read you the section from Marxism and Freedom (p.95):

"On March 18 (1871), the soldiers were ordered by M. Thiers, the head of the reactionary government, to transport the cannon of Paris to Versailles. The milkmaids, who were on the streets before dawn, saw what was afoot and thwarted the treacherous plans of the reactionary government. They surrounded the soldiers and prevented them from carrying out Thiers' orders. Although the men had not yet come into the streets on this early morning, and although the women were not armed, they held their own. As in every real peoples' revolution, new strata of the population were awakened. This time it was the women, who were to act first. When reveille was sounded, all of Paris was in the streets. Thiers' spies barely escaped with the information that it was impossible to inform on who the leaders of the uprising were, since the entire population was involved." ...

If Marxism is the unity of theory and practice -- in both the theory and the actual actions -- because Marx did try to be a participant in all the revolutions of his day -- how does it happen that those who were Marxists and tried to follow the concept of freedom, found women being circumscribed as the "muscle" and not the "reason"? And most important, why did the women accept it?



There are countless women who have been active in the revolutionary movement. But what I want to take up is the woman in the revolutionary movement insofar as she didn't develop theory. Let us take, for example, Vera Zasulich. She, with Plekhanov and ahead of Lenin, was one of the first to found Marxism in Russia. Moreover, she was the only one who had direct correspondence with Marx himself. His letter to her was one of the last letters he wrote. It was on the most critical question that remains crucial for our day: what happens to a backward country (in that case, Russia) -- must it wait on the advanced country to have a revolution? Marx's answer was not if its revolution can be accomplished with, or inspire one in, an advanced country. Here we have a case of Marx predicting the possibility of a Russian Revolution ahead of both 1917 and 1905 and Leon Trotsky. What, however, did Zasulich do with this letter, other than use it in the fight with the Narodniks (Populists), who were saying that Russia would first have to go through capitalism, and capitalism wasn't coming to Russia, so they would have to have their revolution through the mir (the village commune, a relic of the past). In a word, Zasulich, like all the other great Russian revolutionaries -- and Russia is full of very brave revolutionaries, from Vera Figner (who got rid of Tsars through terrorism) on -- all were great on activism but not on theory, or even interest in it.

The only exception was Rosa Luxemburg. Unfortunately, on all theoretical questions she tackled, when they opposed Marx -- the theory of accumulation, the National Question -- she was wrong, and therefore, not really any "model". But she was great both as a revolutionary, and as an original thinker. And to realize that she, too, had to degrade herself to get along with the male revolutionaries has much to say about male chauvinism, a bourgeois trait, which has seeped into the movement as well.

She told the story of a certain Congress to which she was present in 1907. She was very active, and also very angry, because the Second International seemed so wrong on two questions especially. What is now called the 1905 revolution wasn't even put on the agenda of the 1907 Congress, but Luxemburg at least wanted two additions to the resolutions the Congress was passing. She wanted the International to be very specific on what they were for: against imperialist war and for revolution. Therefore, she said, should an imperialist war occur the International should call on workers to disobey their governments and turn their guns on their own officers. The other thing she wanted was the recognition of the general strike as an actual preliminary to revolution. The only ones who were with her were Lenin and Trotsky -- nobody from the German Party, and by that time everybody was aroused that she had dared to criticize the big leaders.

She was quite exhausted by the time the Congress was over, and wondered how she would ever get to the train -- and she decided she would have to take advantage of the fact that she was a woman in order to get all the men who had been speaking against her to "love" her because she was weak and needed somebody to carry her bags. Sure enough, after going through the whole rigamarole, all the men comrades asked to carry her bags. She wrote a letter to Louise Kautsky describing the whole incident. It is degrading to think that a woman would have to do such a thing....

She was the only woman revolutionary who was both activist and serious theoretician, though her theories were wrong. One thing she understood well was that if theory and reality don't jibe, there will be no successful revolution...



The greatest need of Women's Liberation, as I see it, is the greatest need of the movement as a whole -- the working out of a philosophy of revolution for our time, which means theoretical preparation. As an indication of where to look, let me cite two examples of "pure" theory: Hegel's statement that "self-determination in which alone the idea is is to hear itself speak"; and the Hegelian-Marxian concept of unity of theory and practice.

Hegel's statement about self-determination relative to ideas, on a level where it refers to self-determination of nations, revolutionaries seem to understand very well. But when it comes to women, whether it be the question of leadership roles in the movement itself, or women working out the theoretical foundation for their own movement, it is largely ignored. Yet that is where to begin.

The Hegelian-Marxian concept of unity of theory and practice, the decisive question for our whole epoch, whether it concerns the black revolution, the youth revolt, labor, women's groupings, any one country, or the whole world -- is what has to be worked out. I would like to invite you to read Marxism and Freedom because this form of unity of theory and practice and theory again for the future took up "women" without ever being concerned with the "Woman Question" as such. You have heard already the section on the milkmaids of Paris and the Paris Commune -- and will find a great deal on the role of the theoretician Rosa Luxemburg -- and the new, now going much, much further....