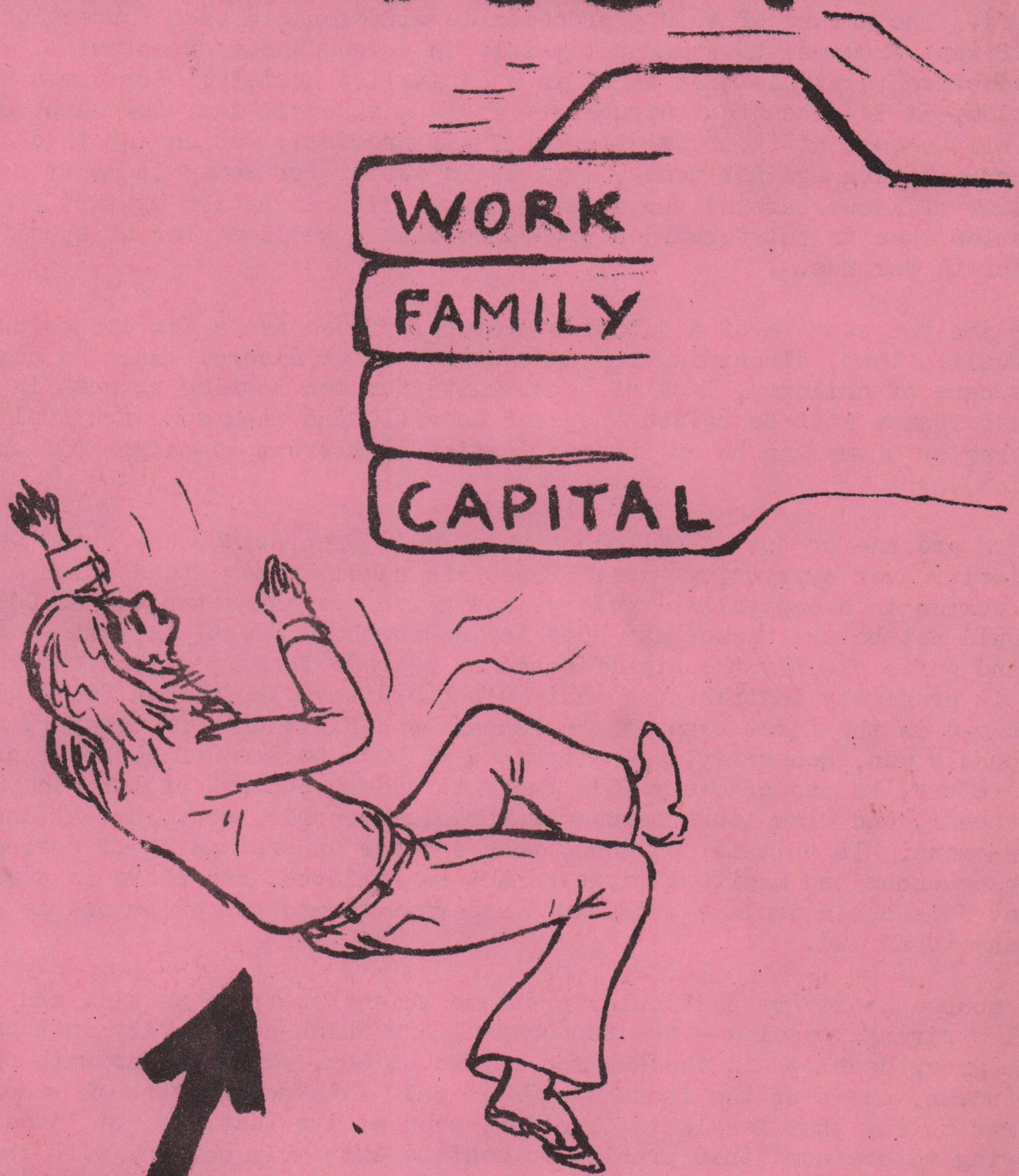


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MEN AGAINST



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"MEN AGAINST SEXISM"

Firstly, thanks for all contributions. Unlike previous Men's Journals, this one has been produced by Nottingham only in technique, with the hope that lots of material would be sent in by other Men's groups, to stimulate interaction between us, and provide some sort of common basis for communications.

Four of us took this on - Kev, Keith, Manuel and Franco, and any comments are welcome.

THE INDEX IS ON PAGE 27

The Fight Against Sexism

By means of the brutal forces of capitalism and its ideological superstructure, men and women are oppressed at work, in education, in the family, in groups, in couples, and even in an ontological sense (the way one relates to and sees oneself). The nature of this oppression is different in each subsection of society, different from men to women but mainly in consequences of material, economic and productive relations that exist in a capitalist society. For women who oppose sexism, it is a constant struggle - it is a struggle that they are confronted with in all aspects of their existence. It is precisely because of this generalised discrimination against women, that it is easier for women to mount campaigns on a number of issues around the area of sexual discrimination against them, and this enables them to put forward a programme with a whole series of specific and concrete demands.

For men the case is of a different nature. There are a few issues such as homosexuality laws, discrimination against men after divorce cases in connection with the care of children, lack of opportunity for men wanting to work in nurseries. These issues must be raised whenever possible and when some fruitful struggle can emerge or there can be an intensification of present campaigns (if and where they exist).

There are one or two other things which MG's are probing, and these seem to take priority over everything else. These are namely those areas which are a consequence of sexism in a capitalist society, and which are characterised as PERSONAL. It should not be the task of any MG's to ignore these questions, yet we should understand quite clearly the significance of what is loosely called the PERSONAL. But it is precisely in this area that MG's could have their most fruitful results - because in the first case, the personal by definition affects every one - and secondly men, generally, are attracted to MG's because of personal crises. It must therefore, be one of every MG's tasks to understand and explain the nature of the personal, and draw links between material, economic, sociological and psychological phenomena. If this is not done, then a clear understanding of sexism and its consequences and manifestations cannot be achieved, and there is a great danger that MG's could isolate themselves and view themselves as an end as opposed to a means to an end.

Of course there are particular problems which frustrate us all, and which we are all striving to solve - the fundamental one which necessarily influences the way the group develops is the way men relate to men. Comparisons with women relating to women, shows up the inadequacies in male interaction (though women would be the first to say that female interaction, even at its best, is not 'ideal'). Yet in trying to overcome this problem we must be extremely careful with the methods we adopt and try to understand why some of the qualities that women have cannot be implanted into MAN overnight, and of course, that some 'male qualities' like aggression are necessary for men and women at some times (you can't fight fascism by saying 'Love and peace, man'). Comparison of how Women's groups have developed would, of course be very useful for MG's to look into.

We find that more and more, although there is an autonomous nature to the development of MG's, we continually compare ourselves with the Women's Movement and necessarily support our sisters fighting against sexism on all socialist issues. It is absolutely essential to understand that the fight against sexism for men at the moment is a fight against sexual discrimination against women as well as against men, and therefore we, as MG's must give our support to all the campaigns that women's groups are waging against the ruling class, and we must mobilise our support for them on all issues such as Anti-SPUC, Contraception, Equal Pay, Women's Charter etc....and supply creches for them so that their political activity is facilitated. The most effective way of fighting sexism is through organised channels so that we can raise these issues in conjunction with and alongside ours, to gain support and bring about change NOW! If we don't organise ourselves to work through existing channels then we are leaving the fight to women.

Franco Ruggiero.

Report on Organising the Men Against Sexism Conference,
Leeds, April 6/7, 1974.

There were six of us in the group at the time and this proved to be rather a small number of people to cover the necessary work. We feel we should have made it a priority to involve more men in the arrangements but at the time we thought it would be unfair to subject new members to so much 'business'.

We did not assign specific areas of organisational responsibility early on, and this led to somewhat hasty last-minute decisions and an unequal distribution of the work load.

Also we didn't realise how much was involved during the conference and imagined it would more or less run itself. Registration, communications, food and drinks, etc., took up a lot of time, was also quite tiring, and resulted in us only being able to get to on average one workshop each.

1). Publicity This was done by several members of the group and we managed amongst other things to send out three different Leeds contact addresses, only at one of which was someone in over the weekend!

We put adverts in Spare Rib, Time Out, Libertarian Struggle, Socialist Worker, Peoples News Service etc., and sent a printed handbill to all contact addresses from the Birmingham Conference, and to all Womens Liberation groups on the Leeds list.

2). Catering One thing we were pleased about was provision of free tea and coffee throughout the conference, although nothing much was available for two hours in the morning while the water heated up. We also covered the cost of the food with the registration fee which simplified distribution. We hired a water boiler, tea-urn and insulated soup containers. This cost £8.50.

We provided soup and sandwiches for Sat. lunch and fruit and sandwiches for Sun. lunch.

To prepare the sandwiches, we arranged a butter-in on the Friday night which proved to be a good occasion, roping in some of the men who arrived early. Sunday sandwiches were made at the conference itself by volunteers, and was also not too arduous.

The food seemed adequate for 150 people, and cost approx. £50 :-	
60 large sliced loaves	28 lbs cheese
14 lbs butter	8 doz eggs
120 pints milk	5 lbs onions
1 crate apples	1 crate oranges
3 lbs instant coffee	20 lbs sugar
½ gal. mayonaise	½ gal. chutney
packet soup to make 8 gallons	

3). Social We had hoped to run our own disco, but had not tested the equipment in advance, and had to use an outside commercial one in the event. This could have been disastrous and nearly was. We feel now that the social should be closed and admittance should be by tickets issued at the time of registration.

4). Accommodation This is a very big job. We managed to find floor space in houses for everybody, more by luck than design, (the man with the list was still tramping Leeds on Friday to find more places) and if another 50 men had attended the conference they would have been subjected to the rigours of the Free School floor. Once again, being a small group has large disadvantages.

It is worth mentioning here that not all the men who attended

the conference were as good about the house as we would have liked to believe. We have received reports of washing up not done, beds not made, and tidying up, general housework, sharing in cooking etc., being somewhat rejected. Also not everyone who offers accommodation is prepared to be busted...

5). Creche One of the Leeds' women's groups offered to run the creche for us in return for our group having run the creche the previous Women's conference. But we decided that part of what our group was about was men taking responsibility for children, and decided to organise the creche ourselves, at least on this occasion.

We provided a rota, divided up into two-hour periods with spaces for five helpers for each session, and we hoped that sufficient men would volunteer themselves without any encouragement from us.

This did not really work, we had to remind people more than once and the rota was not completely filled.

It would seem worthwhile deciding in advance whether or not the creche is to be seen as a child-minding facility, or a place where the kids have a really good time. In the latter case much more thorough organisation than we provided is needed, which would probably mean a group of people definitely committed to the creche throughout the conference, i.e. men not attending the conference, who would provide a structure within which anyone at the conference who wished to help could fit.

6). Finances One person was finally landed with the job of treasurer at the last minute which led to a certain amount of confusion, and we made an appeal at the conference for extra funds, which later turned out to be unnecessary. The results of this mistake will be forwarded to the organisers of the next conference.

TOTAL RECEIPTS:

Registration, Disco, Sale of Milk and Biscuits	£ 118.02½
+ Additional Appeal	

TOTAL EXPENDITURE:

Food, Milk, Handbill, Stationary,	£ 94.26
Hire of Utensils, Disco Equipment and Hall	
	£ 23.76½

SUBSEQUENT EXPENDITURE:

Leeds group follow up to conference -	
stationary and duplicating	£ 2.00

Donation to Stoke Newington group for Newsletter	
expenses	£ 5.00
	£ 16.76½

* * * * *

In discussion after the conference we all felt much more thought should have been put into how workshops would be set up. We were influenced by the Birmingham conference at which small discussion groups had emerged quite naturally and we had hoped the friendliness and supportive atmosphere could be reproduced at Leeds by a similarly 'unstructured' start to the conference.

This didn't really work, a lot of men not knowing anybody found it hard to join the groups which did form and it was quite some time before workshops got underway.

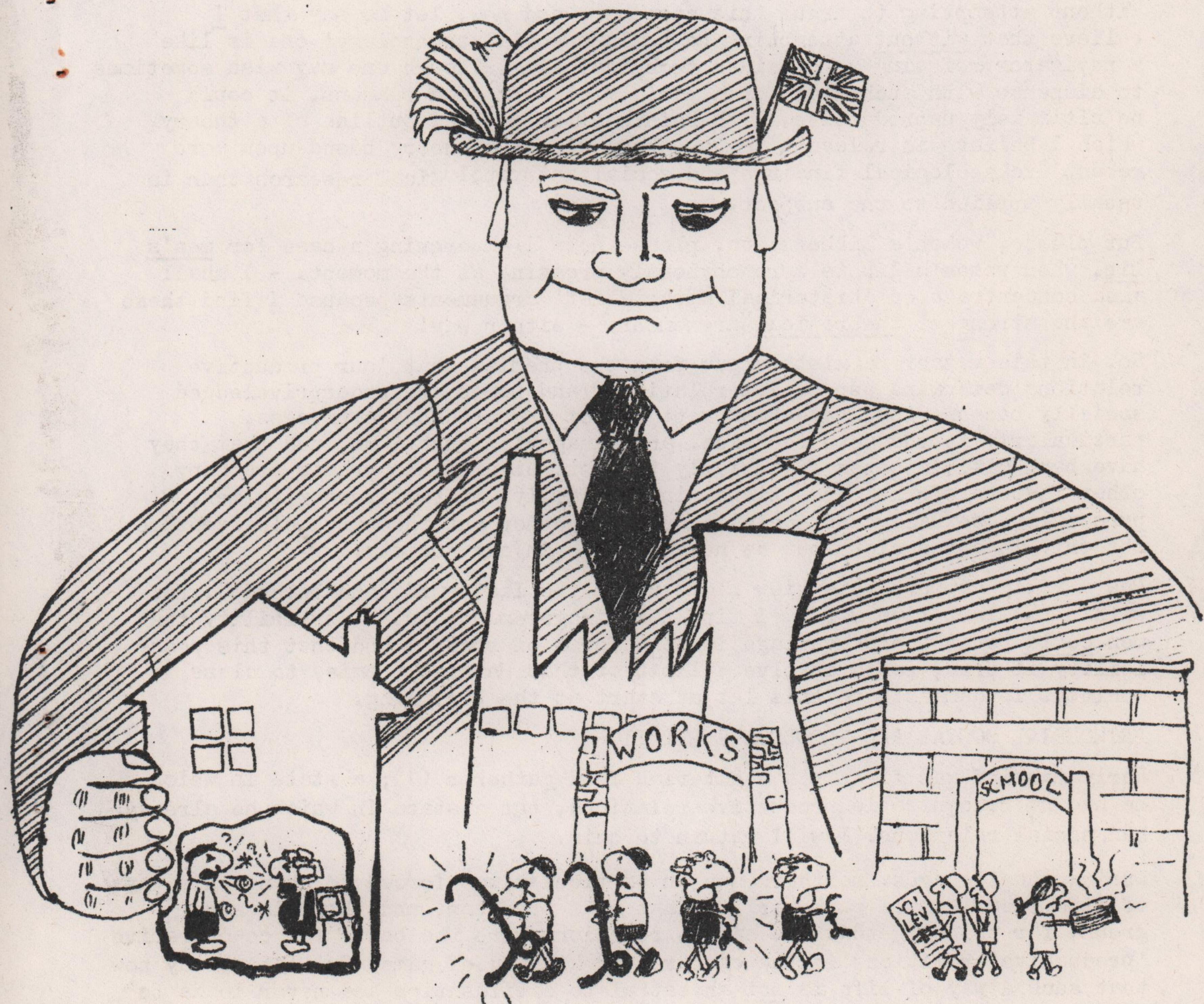
We provided a notice-board for suggestions, but could have made much better use of it if we had marked it out with the rooms available, indicated possible times of sessions and made clear to

everybody how it was to be used.

We have received several letters from individuals and groups who attended the conference, thanking us for organising it and saying it had been worthwhile. It was really good to receive those letters. We would like to say that although exhausting it was a rewarding experience for us and we look forward to seeing everyone again at future conferences.

ROBIN HARVEY, Leeds Mens Group.

SEXISM



DIVISION AT ALL LEVELS!!!

DO MEN NEED LIBERATING?

Following my last article in the last issue, on "Lib. or Sexism: present day factors" which was given fortuitous 'editorial comment' by a young women's libber, I have been in hot water from some men, too for so strongly advocating 'men's lib.' rather than 'men against sexism', and one woman's libber even refuses to discuss with me. She says life is too short.

Before I go any further let me make it clear that this is (or these are) one way antagonists', ie I have no quarrel with 'men against sexism' (and of course strongly support women's lib.); it is simply that some people in our men's and women's movement find my views very irksome.

I found this very strange until I could relate it to the more familiar official relationship between the Communist Party and the Labour Party - the former wanting friendship; the latter wanting distance. I believe that this is partly due to the one having a theoretical approach based (rightly or wrongly) on historical analysis, and the other believes it better to simply make the most expedient judgements they can, as members of our present society.

Without attempting to argue this case here and now, let me say that I believe that without attempting to build a 'social technology' one is like a navigator refusing to consider technical aids. Though one may wish sometimes to dispense with such aids for a variety of very good reasons, it could be ultimately unproductive. I therefore offer a brief outline of a theory which I believe is relevant to the above title; a theory based upon more recent archaeological findings and social anthropological research than is usually applied to the subject.

But please, women's libbers etc, please note I am arguing a case for men's lib. when women's lib is more obviously pressing at the moment. - I shall also concentrate on 'historical materialist' arguments because I find these are the strongest theoretical arguments - either way!

So, in this matter Marxists argue from the premise that 'our productive relations determine our social relations' and women are underprivileged socially because they have been kept out of the productive process, particularly in the more technical and managerial functions, and that they have been discriminated financially to boot. Within this premis are many other factors of their positions, in the family, in relations with men, personally, sexually and socially and altogether put them at a disadvantage not only in our society but as human beings in any society.

Now I fully support this view right up to the last word (and beyond!). But within the last five words, I find not disagreement, but a possibility that men could be at a disadvantage in some forms of society and that this possibility if true, would involve a limit of that Marxist premise to class society. To demonstrate this let me start at the beginning.

PRIMORDIAL SOCIAL AND PRODUCTIVE RELATIONS

Early mankind was firstly a vegetarian food gatherer (1); a state in which he had no recognisable productive relations, but a state in which he already had social relations. I will return to this.

During the ice ages, northern man in particular was forced to change his way of life from 'simple gatherer' to that of a predator, and there is some ground for thinking that his social relations were the basis for co-operative 'productive' relations in the capture and killing of game. But let me say now that such a way of life is not ancestral to civilisation and never leads to such because hunting disperses a population to maximum density of one person per square mile in the best circumstances (2). The most successful hunters exterminate themselves by overeating their food supply, and those most famous Magdalenian cave dwellers for instance became extinct about 4000 years - the most dismal evolutionary record. And these people were the modern homo sapiens.

So when the ice receded about 12,000 years ago, southern Europe was left comparatively empty of human life for several thousand years. (Mesolithic settlements appear mainly on lake and other shores and in some highland areas and their way of life might be described in some way degenerate in relation to that of the ice-age hunter. No Mesolithic sites have yet been found in the all-important Aegean.)

The people who next populated southern Europe were the Danubian type agrarian farmers, cultural descendants (3) of more southerly food gatherers (1) who had migrated northwards (as the ice receded) from south of the Mediterranean latitudes; people who since 14,000 years ago that we know of, had been slowly developing from groups of wandering food gatherers to settled communities of reapers who formed the first civil centres of Jericho, Jarmo etc - on the basis of agriculture. But let us return to those neolithic hunters that still existed in extreme northern latitudes of Siheia etc until about 3000 B.C.

It seems that even before this time some of their 'bretheren' had already gone from hunting to heard following to herd conservation, and were the basis of an apparently successful alternative way of life to that of the former. In fact their economic success was so great, and their herds so prolific, that their seasonal migrations had to be so long that their nomadic way of life not only positively prevented their settlement (4) but introduced severe hardship on the move. These people became the 'Barbaric' hordes of nomadic herdsman who are thus here clearly distinguished from the 'Civil' agricultural settler. Since both had an ancestry that depended upon the same factors of social cohesion to see if it is so malleable into barbaric or civil behaviour.

THE MATERNAL FACTOR

Without going further back into evolution, let us consider the fact that the human infant not only has the longest gestation period for our size and longevity, but also has the longest period of maternal dependency. This makes it necessary that no male sexual intervention breaks up the maternal relationship such as occurs in the rutting season with herbivorous animal herds, when the youngsters are driven off to an independent existence, thus breaking up group continuity.

So, as with some other higher mammals, the primordial human group would consist of females and offspring. With Elephants and Gorillas etc the mature males are often lone wanderers, and it is conceivable that primitive human society was less than matrilineal, and that the social relationships sprang from the long maternal dependency necessary for infant survival.

Reproduction preceded production and any early productive relationships whether hunting or agricultural, were based on the premise that social relationships already existed. Eg Toolmaking etc is an individual matter if no relationships exist for its cultural inheritance.

The mechanism of how such social relationships evolved from such long maternal dependency is a subject in itself - involving the creation of speech and the social nature of human consciousness (also pertinent to men's lib!) I hope I have a chance to write on this for the next issue. For the present argument let me say that Briffault (5) has shown that such is the matrilineal ancestry of all people's surviving today, and his work is now supported by philological researches. (6)

So here we have the societies that were prior to our civilisation, with their productive relationships dependent upon their prior social relationships - which seems to be contrary to the above premise as stated by Marx.

Let us see what caused Marx to state a different case.

PATRIARCHY

Marx and Engels in 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State', based their view on an examination of the existing evidence for the prehistoric Aegean.

According to this view (which recognises the primordial matrilineal social inheritance of the land etc) an internal process of development of the 'means

of production' occurred on the basis of a sexual division of labour whereby the husbandman introduced 'his' beast for the tilling of the land and so gave a strong claim for the use of, and therefore the inheritance of that land by the man's matrilineal group. (Exogamous sexual relations were universal (5), and decreed that co-habiting men belong to different groups to those of local women) Briefly, this change of inheritance, broke up the matrilineal type of cultural/economic inheritance; the monogamous type co-habitation had given a personal aspect to the man's use of the beast, and interclan conflict on inheritance was thus avoided by social rights giving way to the rights of private property in the male line. This not only socially dispossessed women but allowed private inheritance to accumulate productive wealth of some at the expense of others. Hence class society, and the state for its enforcement.

My point is however, that this concept was formed without the knowledge that the man who so introduced the beast, was from a different society altogether (7) - he was the barbaric invader from that society of nomadic herdsmen mentioned above. His behaviour was characterised by an unsocial disregard for others, particularly women. He was already patriarchal in his attitudes.

This descendent of the hunter still retained the anomalies of the predatory way of life. ie the more economic success of larger herds meant longer seasonal migrations and more hardship on the move - particularly women with infants, who had to be carried over 18 months and more, and who thus became incapable of the main social task of herding. She became a social drag who only bore those infant burdens, for men had learnt from their herd conservation of their part in herd fertility.

The children suffered from this maternal degradation. The female child had no option but to accept her lot "as a woman", with maternal propensity as her social continuum. The male child suffered - from a second weaning when he realised his maternal love world was despised, and yet he was still a child, unacceptable in the men's world for years to come - during which he was thus desocialised and learnt to value property (cattle) more than people; a basis for his barbaric behaviour. Such was the basis of patriarchy and barbarism: ie. Not in a sexual division of labour (9) in which men showed superiority, but in a total degeneration of society into a predatory pack.

When these herdsmen trekked so far as to overrun southern civil settlements in winter, they discovered the winter grain stores, for their immediate salvation. But to have it and keep it without destroying the producer was a problem.

Monogamous possession of the native woman was the answer, for it ensured that her sons were his sons, and who had the right by matrilineal custom, to partake of the social wealth of the producers. Thus were all the ancient civilisations enslaved and the producers subjected to class oppression by the barbaric settlers. Matrilineal social relations were broken up (as in animal herd by male sexual possession), and people subjected to the patriarchally imposed productive relations; the condition for Marx's analysis in which technological evolution and its changed productive relations became the cause of social changes henceforth (ie. in class society).

Present Sexist Shortcomings.

So if our socialising influence stemmed from maternal type relations, and our productive and economic relations stemmed from barbaric predation, we might usefully consider if such is still relevant, and what are its implications for women's lib. and maybe also for men's lib.

That we still have class society will hardly be questioned, but that monetary economic relations are in themselves barbaric or inhuman compared with communal type relations of 'each giving according to his ability and receiving according to his need', might also be accepted. And also in both capitalist and socialist societies it appears that social relations, including monogamous family relations, are still dependent upon ie. beholden to (now nationwide) productive relations - as in class society but not previously. So what, are we aiming at? I presume

most of us want some sort of universal human equality, but many of us believe in the need for some form of increase in community living (Communist or otherwise). So what is our society to be like? One in which productive and economic relations

still determine our lives? Is this not in itself somewhat barbaric? Or are we to aim at a society in which our social relations, maternal type ones of personalised loving care, etc determine our productive relations?

If we can choose the latter, what price our patriarchal productive culture .. versus a maternal culture? What priority for "men's gifts" compared with woman's in building that society? - From this point of view who needs liberating most from the forces that have perverted him or her from the most essential forms of human behaviour? To answer "men" is not to deny the necessary (maybe even the prior if not prime) expedient that woman must gain the productive expertise they have been denied, and the economic independence they need to lead the way. But what sort of independence is gained by becoming an essential and yet dependent member of that mega-monolithic productive machine? Will it be a barbarising influence upon women? The danger is clear that if we all became dependents on that "machine" whether private monopoly or state, and must bow to its technical demands, then no amount of democracy could overcome such a dependence since the power of its resources and expertise is an overawing influence that knows no personal bonds.

Why not instead of women joining in on "men's" productive machine, should not some of our productive resources (8) be decentralised into the hands of maternal type groups? and men learn to live and adjust themselves to this, rather than the reverse of woman learning to adjust to our patriarchal productive relations. This whole prospect seems to have a possible basis in the present, with various sorts of groups arising all over the place.

SEXIST OPPRESSION.

It seems to me that men are not barbaric bastards in a vacuum, but behave as they do because of many social pressures, - cultural, economic, and family, as well as productive relations, social requirements as soldiers, etc., - and including the pressure of those (non-women's libbers?) who take advantage of our interdependence to remedy their oppression at man's expense. (We can't blame them).

But it is an odd fact that so many "materialists" (ie. believers in cause and effect) forget materialism when it comes to personal behaviour, and they think they can radically change their own behaviour by taking conscious self-disciplinary measures. Of course this factor has its role to play in human behaviour, but becomes sheer unproductive maschism if the underlying causes of the behaviour are not removed.

If femininity is a social product, then so is masculinity. So can we as men survive our productive relations and then reverse our behaviour in the family? Our consciousness of our "family" role makes us feel guilty. Guilt is a particular hazard of men who have some awareness of this role. I believe this is a large factor in the position of those men who are antagonistic towards "men's lib." whilst supporting "men against sexism". Only the consciousness of that social determination (10) of our roles can relieve us (to a small but useful degree) of this guilt, in order that we can play a more realistic role in the matter.

It seems to me there are thus several reasons (above and in previous issues) why men too need liberating, and that unless we examine these to mere usefully work to change the causes of our behaviour, we are not doing service to the best interests of women's lib. let alone total human lib. from all forms of barbarism. All are interdependent.

One large gap in the above arguments has been on how human behaviour is socially determined via family and maternal relationships within that society. This question and the evolution of the human mind itself, with its conflicts (particularly as it affects the sexes) might be the subject of another article if the next publishing group permit.

Just in case, since the above arguments are an essential part of it, it may be

as well, for those interested, to keep this by.

J. WALTON

FOOTNOTES:-

1. Refer to literature* on the "Natufians", a people of Urak, etc. who might be said to be the first known peoples who are culturally ancestral to European civilisations. (See 3 below) *eg. "Earliest Civilisations of Near East" by J. Mellart.
2. "What Happened in History", Gordon Childs.
3. The important factor for social evolution is "cultural descent" rather than any racial or geographical continuity.
4. "The Royal Hordes", E.D. Phillips.
5. "The Mothers", R. Briffault, 1926.
6. "Aeschylus and Athens", G. Thomson.
7. ie. "Marx's" Aegean has not, as he implied, evolved from primordial conditions, but had already had several waves of such invaders and settlers. See eg. "Pelican History of Greece", A.R. Burn.
8. Biological recycling and solar energy are two examples of now desirable micro-use of modern technology, and use of intermediate technologies is both economic and instructive for young and others.
9. Sexual divisions of labour seem to be more caused by monogamy than are the cause of it.
10. This includes both the overall cultural factors and the individual "family" factors, and thus includes individual "consciousness raising" !
))..

SEXIST BOOGALOO

Can dancing be sexist? This article arose out of the workshop on 'dancing' at the Leeds Conference where sexist traits were discussed with particular reference to the mens disco which took place the night before.

Dancing is a bodily expression which can be used for communication, it's most refined form being ballet, or it can just be undirected personal expression. It is important to make the above distinction since people dance differently according to the situation, for instance at a normal 'slick' disco the aim is to communicate with the opposite sex, this obviously brings in many sexist connotations. At the other end of the scale people sometimes dance alone just for personal enjoyment, however, although this cannot have the same sexist pitfalls of a disco situation; it can still exhibit sexist influence. For example to dance a la Mick Jagger just reinforces the archetypal arrogant male attitude that Jagger epitomises, but even this is not necessarily negative since if one is aware of what is going on then it can be used to draw out the contradictions and ridicule the Jagger attitude as is in fact the action by many people I know. Therefore it is the motives behind dancing which is important and not necessarily the movements as seen.

The disco at the Mens Conference was almost all male and turned out to be a big sucess even though there were no women to pick-up. (as in the usual sexist disco situation). Due to this the communication in the dancing was not sexist and seemed to be saying "this is it everythings spot-on". However due to the situation of having a disco only supported by men against sexism there seemed to be an almost insidious, underlying "less sexist than thou" attitude this became apparent at the workshop the next day.

The main criticisms which came out appart from a few hassles with uninvited men, were that too many people were looking like Jagger and also the stomping of many feet in time with Zeppelin, Stones type music was seen as being a typical male reaction to an aggressive stimulus, in fact some of our more sensitive comrades were particularly 'freaked' by this (one wonders how the hell they survive at normal sexist disco's). The first criticism I have already dealt with, and although my friends and myself were amongst the Jagger crew it is wrong to direct outright criticism in this direction without examining motives. The secind point seems to follow along the all too common analysis of identifying a male trait and puritanically calling it sexist irrespective of context. O.K. so men are typically aggressive, but its not necessarily bad, it's a pity that women aren't more aggressive, what matters is how the agression is directed. At the conference disco the aggression (if that's what stomping feet in time with the music is) was non-directed and was possibly even positive since in many cases it could be seen as sublimating pent-up anger, frustrations, etc. The outcome of the workshop on dancing was for many of us a comedown, since it showed that some people were working on shaky pretexts to 'spot-the-sexist' rather than enjoying the experience. The only really valid criticism that I could see was that the men in black uniforms were very heavy when myself and other people removed articles of clothing due to the heat, but presumably such uncalled-for authoritarianism isn't important when we are only interested in the intricacies of sexist dancing.

Kev. Durkan

A WORD AND SOME QUESTIONS

WE have presented ourselves in the arena of public discussion because we aware in some measure, however minimal, of the unsatisfactoriness of our relationship with others. This situation is variously formulated. What is common ground is the experienced discrepancy between our relationships as they actually are and what we feel/think/imagine they should be. In other words, we have evaluated our present actual state vis-a-vis some theoretical construct whose actualisation lies, hopefully, in the future.

If we are concerned with relationship, then an inquiry into the nature of and meaning of relationship would seem to be a logical requirement. What do we normally mean by the word? Look: I am married, I go to the office 5 days a week and there, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. I pursue whatever it is I have to pursue. Meanwhile in the house, the wife is pre-occupied with the trivia of the house, the cooking, the cleaning, the laundering and meeting the needs of the children. Each of us is totally absorbed in his own egocentric interests and ambitions, living in a mind which is like a cage of chattering monkeys - full of ideas, theories, day-dreams, imaginary situations and conversations - you know all the nonsense that goes on. And then, after the evening meal, the children are put to bed. Perhaps there is TV, or the pub, or the club, or some meeting, or some book. Perhaps there is talk. (What form does this actually take?) And then there is bed - and SEX! the crowning glory of a day's exhilarating achievement - with the apocalyptic orgasm hopefully occurring on the next occasion.

If one actually observes all this, very closely, quite ruthlessly, without evaluating it, without any movement to or away from it; then where is relationship? Does relationship lie in mutual submission to the project - of "getting on in the world", of "getting married and settling down", of conclusively proving my 'virility' by propagating the species? In a word: does relationship arise from our subjection to the common-place, the received opinion, in our subservience to others' expectations? (Why do I have expectations, both with regard to myself and others? Why do I comply with the expectations of myself and others?)

Does relationship lie in a mutuality of feeling; in companionship; in sharing? But my feelings are as incommunicable as my toothache. They occur in an arena of privileged access. I may describe them. But the description is never the described. The arrival of feeling is largely fortuitous and may not be coincident with yours: "I am happy, you are sad..... I am interested, you are bored....."

Is companionship the essence of relationship? In companionship I take delight in the presence of the other, There is congruence of attitude, a mutuality of interest, a facility of speech, a warmth of feeling. But is it anything more than a conspiracy of complicity? (But why am I psychologically dependent upon the other when this very dependence becomes so stressful, mischievous, destructive? And why do I not present my pursuit of pleasure as problematic when it so manifestly results in the consequences of sorrow and callousness?)

Does relationship lie, then, in sharing? Apart from a 50p piece (which is not what we are talking about) I cannot 'share' with another anything other than understand.

ing - the mutual observation of truth, which is fact. Look: Suppose I am confronted with the blue-print for some sophisticated piece of electronic equipment. Now, I have never seen a blue-print before in my life. But I purpose to enquire into it's meaning. I come to you, who knows all about blue-prints. You identify the component parts, "This is condenser, this is solenoid, this is a transformer....." You tell me accurately and comprehensively how each part functions. You then narrate the inter-connections between the parts. Then the moment arrives when "the penny drops", "the lights come on" and I spontaneously exclaim, "Ah, I see! I understand!" I now share with you an observation of fact. Henceforth our communication is at a level of precision, comprehension and facility from which I was previously excluded because I did not see what you could see when I looked at that blue-print for the first time.

Now this anecdote is not analogical but illustrative of a psychological 'event', an 'enlightenment', which, in respect of one context or another, must be commonly experienced. In the arena of personal relationships are we not so many peripetetic, incarnated blue-prints ourselves? Isn't this precisely what is meant by 'conditioning' from which arises that 'oppression' invariably instanced in our various personal statements?

If any reader 'sees' the invitation implicit in this indifferent and difficult (?) contribution, then I, too, 'see' the possibility of relationship in understanding (NOT in knowledge; if you don't mind), a relationship of such an order and quality as to transport us into dimension of living of which, in all probability, we have not, hitherto, had even the faintest intimation.

Donald Harrison.

TO ABSENT FRIENDS

Why aren't I there at Lauriston Hall? I went to Leeds and found myself buoyed up as we were apparently among people of similar persuasions. I found this confidence gave me confidence and returning this confidence it was doubled. (The atmosphere of the disco was particularly free and easy.)

It was only at the eleventh hour when a general discussion developed out of an announcement about this very journal, that the rosy glow left. Nobody it seemed had any business taking control of the journal. No-one it seems is allowed to take initiatives at all. There is, however, a delicious freedom from structure. It allows everybody to have their say and leaves bags of room for good old spontaneity. Everybody is allowed to be spontaneous, that is, if they are spontaneous people and have a gift for 'thinking on their feet' (as they say in Industry).

When I arrived at the Leeds conference I was oppressed by the anonymous notices that just cropped up and confused me reading. 'The tyranny of Structurelessness' I was oppressed because I did not understand them. When I left I knew what 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' was and I was oppressed by it.

S HENNESSY

A WORD ON NOTTINGHAM MENS GROUP: all in the garden's not rosy

This is a brief personal statement, motivated partly by frustration at typing out other peoples stuff with which I strongly disagree. Before the Leeds conference the small mens meetings seemed to work OK (with their Chairman and regular minutes and general discussion) Just after Leeds there has really been very little of a MG. There have been arguments about structure. A lot of people have got really pissed off. Theres only two or three decent enjoyable useful discussions with a lot of aggro. So this journal has been a duty to the other groups rather than a development of our practice. There have even been arguments about if we should pay (and that would almost certainly mean exploiting a WOMAN) to get this journal done.

DONALD DUCK

A PERSONAL REFLECTION OF A CONFERENCE OF MEN

by Andy Friedman
Coventry Men's Group

NOTE: This is not a simple transcript of the conference. It is, in part, a fictional reconstruction of one of the workshops, and is intended as an impression and an argument.

'Children! Boys and girls,'
He springs to his feet after "children".

'are, are, are, are forced to learn, accept, play out, occupational roles!
Eleven, twelve, maybe thirteen years old. But, maybe three, or four, or five,
years for sexual roles. Studies have shown this, no doubt about it. And, so ...
so, it becomes very very important, you see, to break down these roles. But,
Think how? How much more difficult it is. Because. No doubt. That, that, ...
that's all I have to say at this moment.'

The agitated man slumps onto the wall and slides down, down to a low crouch in his corner of the room. He crumbles before our eyes and we must look away.

Someone else begins, trying to relate to what the cornered man has just said without answering or questioning him.

'I've worked with kids. Up to a certain age it's hard to tell the girls from the boys. There is a sort of communal empathy among them all. It is gone once they get to about eight. Then they start separating off. The boys wear shorts and the girls wear dresses. Their games become more specialised and organised and less spontaneous.'

'I think the clothes are really important.'

a guy in blue denim across the room states with that grave sort of expression that tells me he is about to say something he considers important. 'I've always thought it silly that I can't wear women's clothes. For a long time I've wondered what it would be like to wear a dress. Not because I want to attract other men or noe because I'd rather be a woman, although there are many primarily female qualities which I would consider preferable to the corresponding male ones, such as love and compassion. Anyway, I'd just like to try wearing a dress sometime.'

'I love people!' The voice comes from the corner. 'Right now I love four, no five people. Yes, all at once, simultaneously. It tears me apart sometimes. Yes I feel it now, part of me, here, this part...'

He grasps his left shoulder. He wrenches it forward and to the right in front of himself as a display for us.

'this part moves to one of them, and this part...'

His leg he lifted so high I am certain he is double jointed.

'runs off so fast I can't even follow it.'

Sprinkles of laughter glitter momentarily around the group. He is getting more agitated. He emotes the words he is about to say before he gets them out. The power of this emotion grips the words deep in his stomach and his mouth is forced open as though the words are irritatin his insides so badly he must vomit them out. His shoulders rise and he blasts.

'Orgasms are fine. Yeah man, three in one night, fantastic. Five in one bed, marvellous, excellent. Thirty, fourty, fifty, very wise and edept. But. But a hundred! Five hundred. And you're in a new dimension. You've reached a level only dimly comprehended in ordinary life. Yeah, yeh. Yeh. But wait! wait a minute! Wait! A! Minute'. How about holding on. Hold it!'

He shouts this. He looks around the room sternly. We are caught up in his drama. We are uncertain, straining, aroused.

'Don't spend your seed! That's the problem of the age. We're all getting it off too much. I know. Hang on so that you can achieve a higher level. Yeah. This orgasm stuff. We're all too caught up in it. So, so, so, do'nt. Don't spend your seed man. It's too easy. Yes it's too, too,...easy!'

His voice begins to falter. He disintegrates back into the corner. Back into that crouch position, staring down at the floor as though he's following a tiny tiny bug that's making a tiny tiny circle between his shoes.

There is a short silence. We are relieved his explosion was physically contained to that square foot in the corner of the room. A bit dissappointed too. We can't dismiss him or accept him. We can try to ignore him for a while. His

intensity is too strong to join. To join now would simply mean following his hot steam. We are all bothered by leaders.

Who is he? A fool? A prophet? A freaked out acid head? A freaked out acid head with hot truth bottled, churning up inside his green head? Why are we listening so patiently to his spewings? Is it because he has hot truth uncorking, because he may be a prophet? Is it because he is the fool? Perhaps not always listening, tolerating but certainly now we must listen. We must be seen to listen, we must see ourselves, listening, considering. After all, this is what the conference is all about? Isn't it?

I shift about on my space of table, suddenly sticky and self-conscious. For the moment, we are all creeping back to our corners, thinking, watching, waiting, wondering what the others are thinking, feeling.

The talk begins again. It must. There are too many of us. Our communality of purpose, our reasons for being here, are too diverse and uncertain to allow us to luxuriate in the possibilities behind conscious, explanatory, up-front, verbal communication, too crucial and compelling to allow us to miss this chance to test its content and its practice, explicitly, carefully.

'De-masculinizing men is not enough.' Someone who has not yet said anything begins to say what it seems he came here to say. 'To me it implies becoming less, losing something. Feminizing men means gaining something. It's really expressing, or allowing ourselves to express something that is already in all of us. We all know that we are all made up of male and female parts. The balance is different for different people, but the two elements are still there. Wearing drag, I mean I think your wanting to wear drag is a natural sort of thing. Wearing drag is a way of expressing the female side of us which is real. It ought to be acceptable.'

'Oh yeah, sure, it ought to be acceptable. But you just try going to work in a dress and see how acceptable it is..'

'Yes, I mean you try walking around in any public place in drag and you're not going to get acceptance. I didn't mean that it was already accepted. Shit, in most places its a sure ticket for a hassle.'

'Although I've wanted to wear a dress for a long time, I haen't had the courage to do it yet. I'm terrified of the reaction my friends might have to it.'

'Your friends are the least of your problems if you're wearing drag.'

'I've found that if I get people to really accept me as a person first. Then wearing drag around them is no real problem. It's walking down the High Street in Liverpool or Ledds or Manchester that's the problem, or riding in a bus.'

'Ah yes, the bus scene, A sure ticket to five!'

The people who have been talking for the past few minutes and a few others laugh. They laugh knowingly, ironically, communally, desperately.

'The thing about drag is that it confuses people's strict notions of the sex roles.'

'Yeh. It upsets them. Wham! It upsets them hard. And they let you know it. They've got all these neat little stereotypes in their little heads and here you come along and shake up all their security. They don't like that.'

'Look this is all true, but wearing drag isn't the only way of upsetting people's prejudices and getting their backs up.'

'It's a pretty effective way.'

'True, but wearing long hair and beads used to upset people. It probably still does for some. Also being black is a pretty good way.'

'Or being especially expressive in public, like natural street theatre.'

'Of course these things upset people's prejudices too. Let's face it people are pretty damn prejudiced about a hell of alot of things. But wearing drag upsets more people and it upsets them more violently. It challenges male dominance in the society. If a man can behave and look like a woman, then it becomes impossible to maintain a position of superiority on the basis of these visible differences. Wearing drag is a political act. In this society it is a revolutionary act.'

I think of the men I've seen in drag. Most of them look amazingly sexy in a hard playboy or prostitute way. They epitomize the most commercialized fashions in women's allure. The better they are at it, the more indistinguishable they are from this stereotype, the more I react to them in the same way as to the stereotype.

I see myself ambling down some trendy London street, Fulham Road. A couple of women are approaching. I stare at them until they look my way. One is wearing a

actually show solidarity. It doesn't do much good in a pub when there're huge blokes come up to you and say, "Aye, that mother over there that yous happen to be drinking with. Is ee queer mate?" And you say, "Well, ah, er, ah, well, actually, although I'm not gay myself, you understand, I do sympathize with them, ever so much."

Robust laughter.

'Showing solidarity with gay people is important in any public place. If two blokes are walking arm-in-arm in a supermarket, and one of them is gay and the other straight, if someone comes up to the straight one and asks if he is queer he should say yes.'

'But if they are holding hands people would assume that they are gay. Wouldn't it be better for the heterosexual to admit that he is not gay, but says he thinks that there is nothing wrong, or special, about two men holding hands in a supermarket. Wouldn't that be better for fighting against sexism?'

'No. Showing solidarity is the issue at stake when the gay is being threatened. It's fighting the sexism that doesn't allow people to show that they are gay.'

'Well then what should the person who is asked if he is gay say when he is one of two heterosexual people holding hands in the supermarket.'

'He should say that he is gay and show his solidarity if he believes gays should be allowed to hold hands in the supermarket as males and females do in heterosexual relationships.'

'If two man are holding hands in the supermarket, then who is to say they aren't gay anyway?' someone new asks.

'Well that depends on what you mean by gay. But I think that whatever society rejects as being gay is gay for the purpose of the struggle.'

'Look, let's not get hung up on definitions.'

'Alright. But I think you are accepting and reinforcing the category of "gay" as something special and out of "nature" by saying you are gay when you are not. The distinction itself is the sexism we must fight. People should be able to relate to others of either sex without special justification. That's what you are saying if you hold hands without the label.'

'That's all very well in some ideal world, but in this world if you happen to be bisexual, you are oppressed as being homosexual. If you are in that position you can't fight the oppression by ignoring it. It won't let you. If you are not in that position, but you sympathize, it's important not to piss around in the face of oppression. The world is divided into gays and straights by the oppressors and when it comes to the crunch you have to take sides.'

There is a question in my mind which I have been trying to suppress, unsuccessfully for the past half hour. I am continually wondering who in the group is gay and who is straight. Not roving around the room with my question into the appearance of each person there, but watching and listening carefully as each new person speaks, asking, "Is he gay? Is he gay?" I am uncomfortable in this preoccupation. Surely we are all brothers here. Surely we all want to be brothers here. We do feel more brotherhood now compared to when the group discussion began. That much is obvious. It is in the air. It is revealed in the honesty of the discussion. But the feeling that there is an "us" and a "them" within the group remains.

At first everyone was cagey, but soon the gay people, or at least many of them began to declare themselves gay. Their group identity from common oppression and struggle became obvious, enviable.

The clarity and immediacy of their position seem an attractive clarion compared with the muted and shadowy counterpoint out of which the men's movement is beginning, slowly, to emerge. We want to rally to its ringing. We want to ring for ourselves. Now, as the sound is strong in our ears, it seems to require courage to admit you are not gay.

'Your division of the world is too tight for me,' declares a new voice slowly measured out of a bearded face. 'You leave me no space. You squeeze me into the category I am now in, and out of the category I believe I am moving toward. My reaction to a challenge like that is to withdraw even though I don't want to. Let me tell you about how our men's group developed, to show how we reacted in a different way when we were presented with a very different approach.'

'During our first meetings, we discussed sexism in society in fairly general terms. Then, slowly, we began to open up to each other. We talked about personal experiences with sex roles. We grew to trust each other. Once we talked about the taboos in our society on men touching each other, except under peculiar justifying

deep cashmere sweater which reaches down to a few inches above her navel. A nineteen-twenties felt hat with a satin flower on it. Her complexion is a Christmas ornament of snowy white and deep rougey red. The look on her face is of someone who has been poleaxed, but is completely unaware of what hit her. She is wearing a black mini skirt with a slit up the left side. There are silvery glittering sequins lining the slit, on both sides. She is walking on the left and I pass her on that side. Just before I pass by, I stare at her left leg as she steps forward, left foot first. Now I can see her thighs to where her stockings are doubled in thickness and a deeper shade of black. I want to grab that leg. Run my hands up it, higher, higher, higher.

Suddenly I remember there was a shade of black lining the snowy chin.

It's a man!

Shit!

I try to forget it's a man. Yes that's it, concentrate on those legs, on that leg, the thigh, yes. The stocking top! The stocking top!!! Yes, I don't think about what lies above that stocking. It turns me on independently now. It represents sex so well it is sex. I can forget what might be between his legs and concentrate on that stocking top.

I don't know how I would react to touching that stocking top now. Maybe it wouldn't bother me.

Sure it upsets my sexual stereotypes. I don't normally react to man as sexual objects.

Harry, Harry, quite contrary,

How does your dialectic grow?

With trees for wood, and forms for good,

And thesis, antithesis, synthesis, all in a row.

'There are two ways of wearing drag,

I think and I react differently to people in drag depending on whether they are wearing long dresses or short dresses.' This statement comes from someone sitting on a table in the corner diagonally opposite the prophet's corner. The group who have been doing most of the talking for the past few minutes begin to laugh. Their laughter is a relieved reaction for the chance to withdraw from the stark personal reality they have exposed to people who they normally consider to be "the enemy", the straights. Their reaction of relief takes the form of laughter because there are several of them and because those who may not have been one of them have spoken admiringly of them, and earnestly. The man in the corner seems to take the laughter good-naturedly although I am bothered about this group feeling that is so quick to react hostilely against any response to them that is not a "right on brother".

'I suppose it sounds funny,' he continues, 'like saying that there are two ways of being gay. But I think that there is real difference between those people who wear drag in such a way that they will, if they are successful, fool people into thinking that they are really female, and those who wear clothes normally worn by females but don't try to disguise their sex. The people who I've seen of the first sort usually wear the most sexist clothes around. The second really fight sexism. They say there should not be separate roles for women and men, the first confuse the identity of the roles, they don't question the roles themselves.'

'Taht's all very neat and tidy, but I happen to have gone through my life feeling that I would rather have been born a woman. I don't wear dresses and make-up simply as a masquerade. It is the real me! I have a right, at least in my own mind, to be who I am. It's the male clothes that are a masquerade for me, and it's god-damn hard for me to drop that masquerade. It's god-damn hard for any of us who have tried it.'

'Right on.'

'Yeh.'

There is a silence for a while. Then someone is politic and tries a different tack. 'I've always been in a dilemma about the situation when someone comes up to you in a pub and asks you if the bloke in the corner is queer. I have had some close relationships with men, but I'm mainly heterosexual and I wouldn't normally describe myself as gay. But in this situation, which has happened to me more than once, I've decided that the best thing for me to say is something like, "Well I'm gay, so what!".'

'I think that's really great.'

'It's incredibly important that straight people who sympathize with gays

circumstances, such as when you are drunk or at a football match. In our group there were a couple of guys who were gay, they didn't push their gayness onto us but they seemed especially sensitive about interpersonal relations. Well, during one of our meetings we decided we should try to break down these taboos. At first we just shook hands, but instead of unclasping right away, we kept on shaking hands for a few minutes while we spoke. I felt a bit silly standing there with my hand held out in front of me at first, but by the second time we tried it I felt much more relaxed.'

He moved his hand out in front of us to see as he said this. He spoke slowly, softly, a bit haltingly and abashed. The pitch and timbre of the discussion was transformed three seconds after he began his narrative. Once strident and robust, now quelled and attentive. We bowed once again to the tone of the personal, a different person, a different tone. The emotional fluidity of the group was its bond.

'Later on, towards the end of a meeting, one of the gay people asked if we would all hold hands in a circle. So we all sat round in a circle on the floor and held hands. All the time we were holding hands I was wondering who would be the first one to let go. It was sort of tense thinking about that while we were holding hands, and I was relieved when the person who asked us to hold hands just dropped his hands after a few minutes and said "thank-you" to us. We discussed it during the next few meetings. Afterwards we decided that we should end our meetings with some sort of personal show of affection. So we decided to embrace at the end of each meeting. It was very difficult at first. We were so unused to embracing other men. So at the end of the meeting we all kind of lumbered up to each other and gave each other a sort of mauling bear hug.'

'Well in time we all began to really enjoy this custom and gradually we decided there was no reason not to kiss as well as embrace at the end of each meeting. So we did that. First a sort of peck on the cheek. We were all self-conscious about it. We made like we were like Frenchmen at some medal-giving ceremony, and laughed about it. After some time we kissed on the lips as well.'

'What I mean to say by telling all this is that if someone would have come up to me and asked me if I could even have imagined myself embracing and kissing men about a year ago, I would have said, "Oh no, not me". The important thing is that we were not forced to make any sharp decisions like that. What we did, we did gradually, and especially as a group.'

'That's really great,' says one of the men who has declared himself to be gay.

'Right on,' says another.

'Did any relationships develop between various members of your group?'

'Well, no unfortunately the group has since broken up. Several people moved away and now I'm in another group. But I think we were moving in that direction.'

'I think this business about men being afraid to touch each other is really important,' says a man who has not said anything yet after a suitable pause.

'One of the main problems is that men don't seem to be positioned right for touching, especially not for embracing. Have you ever noticed that? I mean you just go up to the average male and try to put your arms around him. Somehow it just doesn't work.'

Again the laughter is a relief.

'You're right. I used to work on the shop floor at Jaguar in Coventry. Once I tried to touch the men who I work with there. I don't remember exactly why, I think it was because somebody I knew told me to.'

Laughter.

'She said it would be good for me. I found that same problem. They were always not quite positioned for it. Maybe it's a biological problem.'

'Someone over to my right then reaches out his right hand and puts it on the head of the person sitting in front of him. There is nothing so special about touching another male,' he says. 'One of the main reasons for people's sexual hang-ups is that they are afraid to let themselves go with each other. It should be natural for me to touch the person in front of me as to ask him the time of day.'

'Suddenly there is an eruption, and sounds are spilling out from the prophet's corner. 'Oooo-ooo-ooo-ooow, my head is splitting! Watch out! Duck! Look Out! It's going to smash this room to bits.'

'At the first maniacal sounds from the corner about half the group turn to their other half, beside them, and smile, indulgently.'

'That hand!' he shriekes. 'Hand, hand, hand, ham hand, hand of self, hand of

authority, hand of love but not yet, so then it's a bad hand because it's too soon.
Look at this poor head. Just look at it!'

We lokk at the head which has recently had a hand on it. The head has an embarrassed face.

'The head is red!'

The laughter is uncontrollable.

'The hand is not red. Why? Beeause, because, the hand is cool man. Oh yeh man, it is cool. But. The head is red. Now the head is cool and the head is red because the hand knows what the fuck is coming off, or at least on, but the poor, poor, head doesn't. Neither do those poor, poor men at Jaguar.'

'Those poor , poor, workers,...'

Entranced and swaying from side to side. A look of consternation on his face. Except for his eyes. His eyes are wide open and fixed straight ahead so that you are certain that what he is staring at is really behaind his eyes.

'those poor, poor, workers,... those, poor, poor, workers,... like poor, poor, women,... poor, poor, women,...'

Swaying from side to side, punctuating the parts of his path where he slows down and changes direction with the words. So now we are swaying to his trip, tune, waiting for him to reach the end of his movement, to hear the words, right,... and left,... right,...and left.

'and poor, poor, queers, oh yeh, oh yeh, ... poor, poor, queers,...or,...how about,...blacks!...poor, poor, blacks,... oh yeh,...it's tough,...it's so tough man, ...when you're not,...black,...queer,...or a woman,...or a worker,...oh yeh, it's rough,...rough,.......'

'And so, and so, and SO!! What do we do about it!'

He stops swaying and begins talking louder, and loiuder, and louder. He is bobbing up and down now, and instead of the rhythmic pockets of words departing, he flings sounds out in a frenzy.

'Do we feel guilty? Oh yeh, guilt, guilt, guilt! Do we pretend we aren't really white and male and straight and middle class? Oh yeh man, dare ainn't no straight white fellas in here! No sireee. Not a one.'

Noone laughs.

'I'm gay man oh yeh lookit me I'm gay. And lookee here, I done got a dress on too! So I must be OK. But. But. Who are we going to fool?'

'You want to be a woman. And you w nt to wear a dress. Well OK then. That's just fine. Fine, fine. Ever so fine. You just go right on and do your thing. But! But! Don't tell me to wear a dress. Or say I'm gay. Or touch the first worker I see. That's no strategy man!'

'I love! I love lots! I love people. Maybe four, maybe five. People! Boys and Girls! That's what I'm fighting for. Oh yeh. Fight, fight, fight! And lookit. I know I can't fight with flowers. But you can't fight by pretending!'

And then someone asked the prophet what concrete strategy he thought we ought to pursue. But the prophet was already back in his corner, crouching low, and staring. And we never did find out the answer to that question. Not during the whole of the conference. But we sure had alot to think about, and we felt we weren't alone, asking and thinking.

"FEMALE" CHAUVINISM

When I was told that a "women's libber" had been allowed to make comments alongside my article on men's lib. last time, I (apprehensively) awaited to see what critical information might be forthcoming,

But alas I was disappointed that she even didn't appear to have read the title of the article ie. "Lib. or Sexism?", for nearly all her comments were about women's lib. which was not the subject in hand. I heartily agreed with nearly everything she said, but unfortunately it was irrelevant to the whole argument. Not only that but it appeared as though she angrily and spontaneously jotted down everything she felt in relation to any little phrase without first reading the whole paragraph to see the context and point of what I was saying. And where I described some sexist facet of our society she blamed me for having a sexist ideology!

I wish I could be allowed to have such a facility for making comments in women's lib. journals (!) but I hope I might be able to subscribe some relevant comments on any issue without assuming that a women's libber was simply a "female" chauvinist who knew or cared nothing of man's position.

Having said this, I realise there is still an area of misunderstanding that occurs between myself and some men as well as some members of the women's movement, and which is due to a different understanding of social and human values.

You see I believe that our present society is the result of an historical imposition of ancient barbaric economic and productive relations upon early civilisations whose social relations stemmed from its co-operative matrilineal relations of personal consideration. (See article in this issue). This imposition produced monogamy and class society and introduced sexism ie. the ultimate feminisation of women for the family, and the barbarisation of men for competitive production and war. I believe that this oppression however still left women with more of the maternal type caring attitudes that were the original basis of human society, and that these are the most precious gifts that we all need for the building of a better society; that it is men therefore who need to catch-up with women, and that it is necessary to examine the present economic, social and cultural factors that hold men back from becoming more human.

I believe that "men's liberation" therefore is at least a necessary factor in a whole dialectic of interchange of experiences between men and women if women too are not to become barbarised with the values of "productive" and "economic" necessity that override the human purpose of their liberation. This in no way denies the necessity of their gaining productive expertise and economic liberation, etc, etc. - But it does pose some questions relative to our ultimate goals, as described in my article in this issue.

The omission of names from articles in the last issue of our journal, combined with two mistakes in footnote references, left the reader without some of this sort of background to my argument. Even it is difficult to put into a few hundred words in a journal, that which needs a reappraisal of not only our present but our past, and even the essentials of the evolution of life itself. And if we cannot examine all these (including the present situation without fear or favour), we are reduced to expediencies within our overall cultural values. I will not bore anyone with details of what happened to my last article. I believe that any reader who cares to study the "typists" comments thereon will form his or her own opinion of the level of the attack. - yes - "attack" is another aspect of the commentator that she projected onto me.

She might usefully ask herself why she felt so incensed, rather than trying to understand what I was saying.

Is she prepared to meet me and discuss?

John Walton.

GREENWICH, MAY 1974, LATITUDE 51.28°, LONGITUDE 0.0°*

1.

Inasmuch as they tried to place themselves at the centre of the world, they made a mistake. It was impossible for them not to push each other off the meridian.

2.

In 1893 two hands were washed off the jib-boom of the Cutty Sark. Everything possible was done to save them. But because of the weather, and because she was under full rig, the ship had to make a 3-mile scope to return to the point where the men were believed to have disappeared. After a while the search was abandoned. There was no point in continuing, and the ship had her cargo to deliver.

"Where is the ship, my brother? The ship has gone, she will go on to Antwerp without us. We are alone in this sea. Christ have mercy on our souls!"

3.

The river seems sleepy today, trembles with the light.
Lovers stand clasped against the railings:
"Let me drown in the waters of your eyes!"

The water stirs against the sea. The tide is turning, soon the wharfs will echo with the sound of working craft.

A dead warehouse rat has been left by the ebb-tide on the shore.

4.

The Cutty Sark sailed the China tea-trade from 1880-1887. Her fastest speed to England was 107 days in 1871. In spite of the speed with which the clippers accomplished the journey, China and England remained exactly where they had always been.

We will make a bargain. I will exchange my mouth for your breasts. The contact will last as long as the moment in which it is made.

Our ship races between us. We are not on board the ship, though at times we may indulge in that illusion. The ship is merely a glance we exchange. It is a record we enjoy, an idea we examine, a joke we share, a meal we cook and eat.

When I come inside you it is our ship docking after its voyage. The ship loads up in your harbour, sets sail again, carrying new messages and goods. Your cargo is nearly delivered. The ship drops anchor in my port. You give out a cry.

Trade enriches both nations, when both nations are equal. When they are not equal, the rich grow fatter, the poor countries are despoiled.

"If you do not accept my terms, the next cargo I send you will consist of bullets and shells."

5.

I am a very romantic man.
This river, these lights, these passing boats -
I give them all to you.
I will do anything for you.
I will die for you, my little one.
How is it possible for you to be happy without me?

6.

In 1895 the Cutty Sark was sold to the Portuguese, renamed the Ferreira, and rigged as a barquentine.

Newsflash, Lisbon, May 28, 1974

Lisbon went without bread, buses and trams today as bakers and drivers struck for higher pay against a background of mounting concern over extreme left-wing disruption.

"Let us now realise the ill-use being made of the freedom offered to the people of Portugal in the past month. We are almost astonished by the ingratitude, the abuse of the offer made with such feeling and dignity!"

- General Carlos Galveo de Melo.

7.

There are many ways two people can stand on a straight line. They may stand face to face, back to back, one behind the other, side by side, facing to the left or to the right, side by side facing in different directions.

8.

We lie beneath your indian bed-spread, seperately together, along our particular meridian. Latitudes of darkness cross between us, like the sea.

- John Hoyland

ANNOUNCEMENTS

URGENT.....URGENT.....URGENT

The newsletter, which Stoke Newington has been producing, the one and only means of communication between all mens groups and individuals who oppose sexism is now OUT OF PRINT. The newsletter was essential! The newsletter is essential for any future development for any future development of any mens group if only because it supplies essential information about important coming events relevant to the fight against sexism and an up to date address list of mens groups.

THE ONLY REASON THAT IT IS NOT GOING TO BE CIRCULATED IS FINANCIAL. Stoke Newington will continue to publish the newsletter if groups send 50p to cover the cost. This is a small price to pay for such an essential service. RESPONSE is needed and needed NOW! It is in the interest of every group that this publication continues. Please send your contribution NOW!!

MORE BROTHERS No 3

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I find it important to me to recollect what I was like as a boy and a young bloke. One of the reasons for this is that I can't remember much about it. I'm sure that it is partly because I've repressed many of the things that happened out of fear and insecurity and unpleasantry.

I also find it useful not only to talk about what's happened and what is happening to me as a boy and male but also to write it down. It sorts some things out. I wrote this quite quickly as it came and felt to me.

I was brought up in a working class area, Paddington in London, in a Spanish family. As you can probably guess it was very male dominated. My Dad ruled and my Mum did her bit in the home and with the kids and later at work. I grew up in his image, even though, being the middle one of three boys, my Mum wanted me to be a girl. We did no housework, not even our own beds, no cooking, not even washing-up (my Dad's rota for us three to do it broke down within a week) or washing our own socks and pants. By the age of about 10, I had my first crush, on a girl, of course. I couldn't fancy blokes, I wasn't supposed to; no other men did around me, how could I? In my head, not only was it not natural but it just didn't come into my mind then, as a question, problem, issue, etc. I'm no queer, no Homo.. no poof - I had this ingrained in my head then. I was a male, arrogant, cocky, fanciable, a teaser with girls; I used to spend ages looking at myself in the mirror, combing my hair like Billy Fury's quiff style and a duck's arse behind. I remember my first shiny blue mohair made-to-measure suit from Burtons. I wore black winkle pickers, bright almost luminous pink, green and red socks and padded jackets. I should have worn glasses around the age of 13 or 14, but I was so conceited and concerned with my image that my arrogance wouldn't let me wear them and so hide my beautiful dark brown sexy eyes. It was all me as I recollect a girl (she lived on posh Bayswater Road) saying when I was about 17 or 18 that when I looked at girls It was as if I was stripping them. That made my day, week, life then. I even wrote it down on a piece of paper.

I knew she fancied me, but I kept her at arms length when I wanted to, pulled her, pushed her around, tortured her head, made her cry and have sleepless nights. I knew I could have screwed her, but I didn't have to. The game was that I ruled; I was the conqueror; I was her guru. Man, did you fuck her up!? Was I not cruel? I thought. Don't think like that Manuel, I'm it, I'm gods gift to women (well that's what they said), stop getting soft, you're a bloke, a male, a man, man, manuel. I snogged her when I wanted to, titted her when I wanted to; she was always there to do it to. For the life of me I can't remember her name. Something like Marcia, not really though. It wasn't important anyway, her name, my 17 year old memories say. She was only to be used, abused.

She invited me once to a party on a Saturday somewhere near White City - posh mate of hers who lived near Sid James's house. (She even took me to the London Palladium once to see Frank Ifield and Susan Maughan - ugh!) Their parents were out - going away. I didn't know whether to go or not. What for? There's nothing there for me, I'd think. She only invited me because she fancied me. Silly cow. I don't really fancy her. But I might as well go, nothing else to do. I'll go with my mate Joe. We got smoothed up to go, went by tube and bus. There weren't very many people there - big house, big garden, posh, what can we pinch? Can't pinch jackets, they'll know it's us. What can we get from this place? There was no thought about what we can give. We are the givers! - that's the assumption from which we start or do anything. What can we take from it? - money, tits, silver ash trays, kisses with open mouths and wagging tongues, records, one or two right-hand fingers up her fish-smelling cunt/prat/fanny/pussy/etc., snub fags on their posh carpet and leave them to burn or stain furniture, drink all their booze, walk over their flowers, break glasses and bottles - I couldn't care a fuck; it was fun, a laugh! We were takers! That's how I was then.

Marcia, or whatever her name was, wanted me to dance with her, snog her, she would have let me too - you know, touch her up and get in any of those big 'magical' bedrooms, on bouncy beds, getting on top of her, running my right hand over her cotton blouse, feeling those things that come out of her chest; under her blouse,

unclip bra with right hand using two fingers (don't tell anybody but it didn't always work - well, hardly ever. So fucking what? No other blokes knew that and that is what mattered- your mates, your hard, cool image). Fondle her tits - not too hard. Done that. Tell her she's nice - pep her up; almost like that she's lucky to be with me. Next get either leg between hers - got to get them apart - its important. She'd lie there on her back, passive, just kissing and perhaps putting her arms round me - on my back; that's it. That's all she can do anyway, as a girl. It's up to the bloke to do it - action comes from me. She'd just respond to my moves, tease a bit over titting her. "You're a quick starter", she'd say pushing my hands off her blouse, But I'd get them soon. I'd take them with me in my mind to brag and tell my mates, perhaps on Sunday at the youth club how I did it all. It was a game I was quite good at. Wasn't I. I was. Wasn't I. I was. Yes, course I was Manuel. Don't think you wern't Manuel. You bloody well know that once you think you may not know, you've lost the game. Come on, I was good, cool, a bragger, sexy, quick; course I was,

Get her legs apart with one leg; to do it with both is difficult -not necessary anyway. You've done the main thing. Run my right hand over her skirt, up her nyloned leg, perhaps unzip her skirt - no it's too complicated. I get quite hot and so does she. Oh!

I forgot, while all this is happening, I got the hard on. I did really forget as I write this. I got the hard on really fast, even before we get on the bed; lump of hard thing down there. So that it doesn't show (I hope - got to look cool - can't look aroused) I move it with my hand in one of my pockets, up. It's more comfortable like that. I don't feel any association with it then - Prick, tool, etc. It is like some weapon apart from me. I remember mates at Beethoven secondary modern school (dump) slapping theirs on desks before a woman teacher came in. Mick, of course got spotted once - supposed to have been reading "King Soloman's Mines"; she pretended she had not seen it. Arrogant, disturbed behaviour, display - funny at the time, of course. I had to find it funny otherwise my mates might exclude me or think I'm odd. We were disturbed even though we didn't do it. I remember my personal and the general feeling of anxiety and fear in the showers with tools displayed. Some arrogantly displaying, some hiding it with trunks, hands, positions, towels. Big ones associated with good, masculine, virile; little ones with meakness, no good to do it with, almost shame. It was terrible.

My body had no association with my penis. It was simply something to piss out of, to rub up and down sometimes, to play pocket-billiards with, and sometimes if you were lucky, and one of the lads, to insert it into a hole - vagina. That's all I thought about organs. It was all about conquering anot about loving and caring. It was all about bragging, saying that you'd had it when you really had not. But then, it was as if we had had it. The question of not having had it did not arise. You were one of the lads remember.

It pains me now to think of the deceitful, cunning, repressed person I was and How I'd treated girls. It pains me now to think that lads still go on doing it.

Back to the girl and it's right hand clumsily under her knickers, feel around, hairs, hole, finger her, etc. It makes me want to puke. More often than not it didn't go on to an actual screw (what a horrible word). There is very little satisfaction on either part.

During the party she was after me, trying to catch her man; I played it cool and distant. My mate Joe started on her and she simply reluctantly accepted it. This sort of thing with girls happenened time and time again, in the bomb sites behind Stowe boys club, near the Cut. with the easy ones, on the grass in Hyde Park, beneath their porches after taking her home if not before (It was always tactically better to try to do it before you got near to her place); up against the walls, etc. And was I shit scared? Of course I was. I didn't know what love meant in action, what caring was, what kindness was to girls. I feel perhaps that there must have been some goodness in me - it's pointless smashing that.

I must have really feared sex, intimacy and openness. It was always, "block that and do this" to them. Play the swarthy, cool, arrogant bloke. They must have really hated me. I don't blame them, even though they must have been playing their side of the game.

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MALIENATION

My mother taught me to remember her love
My father taught me how to forget
And then Society taught me No money No love
And I haven't got over that yet

MA - A - ALIENATION...Hits you where it hurts most.

Wish I could find me a man to love
Make my life a little more gay
But I never cared much for my fellow men
They ain't much fun anyway

MA - A - ALIENATION...Under plain wrapper by post.

All men have to follow their particular bent
Sadists of the world unite!
Chauvinists fight for your right to be men!
The effeminists are coming rut tonight

MA - A - ALIENATION...Mine's the next round said mine
host.

Thank you big brother for what you did to me
When you were five and I was only three
Now you're half dead and I'm just coming alive
And you don't know what it means to be free

MA - A - ALIENATION...Gets you girls too so don't boast.

Sam Beckett's an absence of words in the mouth
David Bowie lies there wanking on the floor
John Cage is too fond of the sound of his silence
They ain't got the power any more

MA - A - ALIENATION...Father Son and Holy Ghost.

Politicians nuclear bombs and systems of thought
Starvation and trips to the moon
Prisons and police and industrial pollution
There won't be many men left soon

MA - A - ALIENATION...Hits you where it hurts most.

Walk cool, talk cool, dance flash, charm, chat, hair, looks, clothes, competitive sports and with girls (like table tennis - I was good at that), knock about with the lads, youth clubs, look hard - Edgware road and Harrow road mobs, Portob. road, shouting, breaking fag and milk machines, throwing bottles, bunking in the pictures, 'beating up the spades' (image) or trying to in reality; ugly spotty tough Bonsy, the feared over a large area having a really good looking girl; Holland Park school, in the grounds at lunch time.

I remember another girl (can't remember her name either); somebody told me she fancied me. I was 16 then. Arranged to meet her outside Lancaster Gate tube station. I went to a church youth club, playing table tennis and didn't expect her to be there. She was. I didn't know what to do, what to say - I was caught unawares. I lost the mold for a moment. Got it back quick and went into Hyde Park. On the grass, nothing to say to each other - embarrassing silences. On the grass in summer takes that all away.

After I had a piss against a tree. I was amazed by my penis. It was really hard and it wouldn't go down. I was sort of worried and even shy about it, but at the same time there was a he-man thrill - a feat achieved.

When I was about 17 I really got involved with Christine - the first I got involved in. She was kind, nice to talk to, I didn't feel I had to act and play games as much. Her stopping me from touching her up a lot made me like and respect her more somehow. My mate Ron decided to have a party on a Saturday night at his place - his parents were away for the week end. We thought we'd get a few couples in - about 8 of us in all. I suppose it sounds like a terrible pre-marriage situation. But I enjoyed it then. Chris could stay the night and I had calculatedly bought some johnnies. After the dancing, laughing, and talking, couples went home or sorted themselves out some space to sleep. Chris and I were to sleep in the kitchen. We got the 'bed' ready on the floor. I was feeling tense and excited.

But everything was happening differently. There seemed to be some conscious thought about it all, some joint thought, idea of a game, as it usually was with a girl; the first girl who had stayed out all night with me, etc. With butterflies in my guts we took some of our clothes off, leaving my pants and her knickers, bra and full petticoat on. I didn't have to wade through clothes and zips. We lay down and kissed and cuddled and took more clothes off. (I'm slightly excited now as I recall it all those 12 years ago). Then somehow, so quickly, without struggles and teasing and arrogance, which was all it used to be like, we reached the possibility of us actually making love. It had not been like this before.

I asked and she hesitantly said yes, but that I should use a durex. I'd never used one before. They looked so clumsy. That she'd said yes, however, completely threw me. This was so unlike anything I'd experienced before. Where was the competition, the conquering, the struggle? It was not there - or very little anyway. Somehow I could not cope with all this unpredictability and spontaneity. For some reason I went to the bog in the next room, partly I think to have a piss but mainly to put the johnny on. My penis wasn't so hard now and it was a bit difficult to put the bloody thing on. I didn't like all this somehow, I began to be worried. Why wasn't the bloody thing hard?

I went back into the kitchen. Chris had taken the rest of her clothes off - I think. We started loving again. But I just couldn't get the hard on again. Everything in me fell in - collapsed. Where was the masculinity now! Where was the active lover now! I felt a part of my insides had been ripped out, I willed it with all my mind to rise, but no chance. I felt awkward, uncomfortable, upset, ashamed, useless, a failure. I just couldn't make it.

She was such a nice girl; I was so fond of her, like no one before, but I couldn't give. I was such a mixed up, repressed, distorted and broken in pieces bloke, that I couldn't get myself together enough to GIVE! I so much wanted to give to her, even, I suppose in a twisted way, through a fuck, but I couldn't. My image was exposed, and I felt the cracks in it. We rubbed and continued, but I was never the same again.

Manuel Moreno.