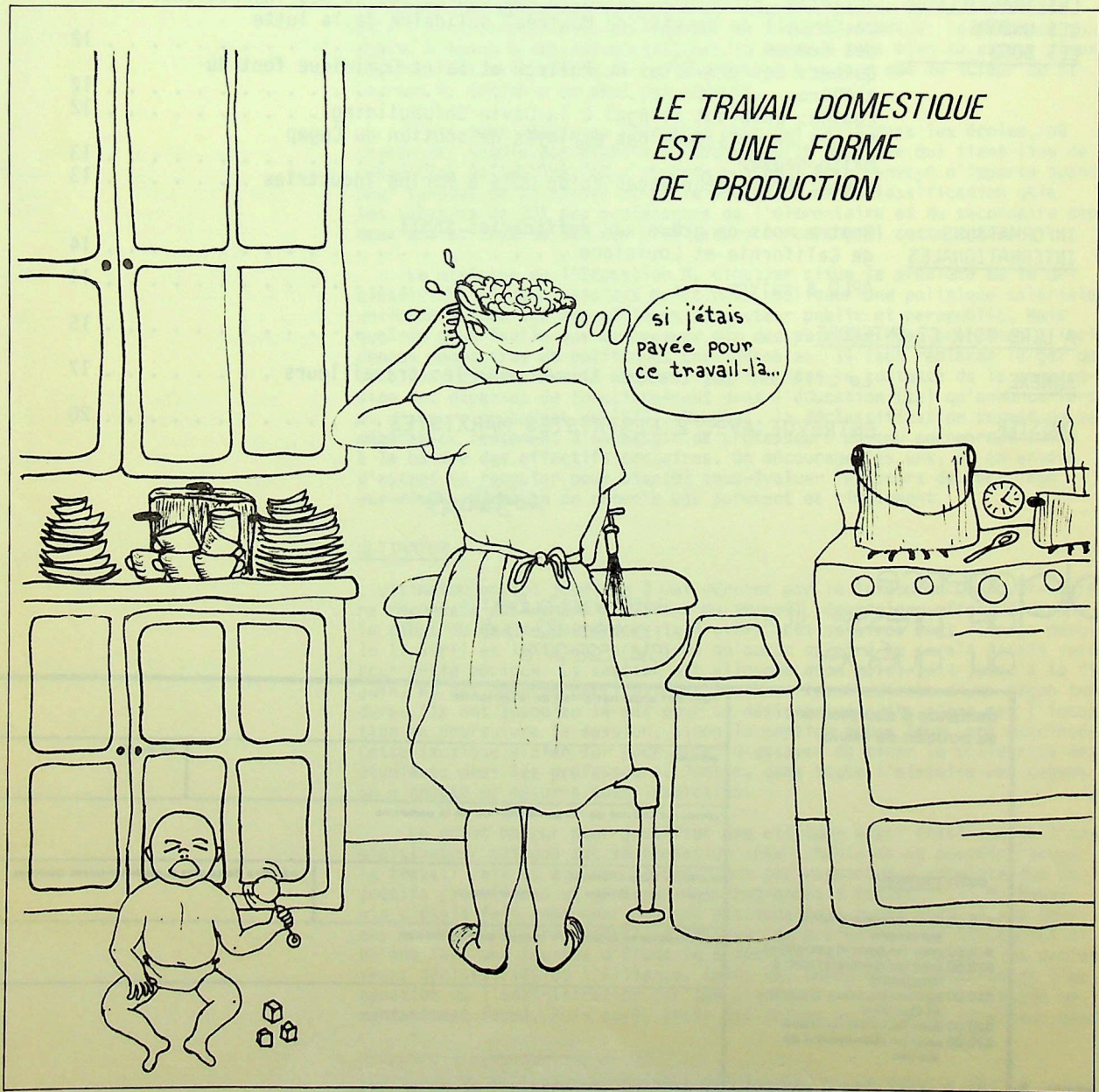


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DECLASSIFICATION - NON A  
L'ULTIMATUM ET ORGANISATION DE  
LA RESISTANCE ACTIVE

Les étudiants défilent un à un au bureau; pour chacun il faut reprendre les explications, repréciser le sens du travail attendu, les lignes majeures du plan de cours, l'orientation de la recherche; chaque problème particulier nécessite des explications complémentaires. Les étudiants voient leurs professeurs presque quotidiennement et se retrouvent avec de longs travaux à rédiger. C'est la dure assumption d'une prise en charge du processus d'apprentissage au Collège St-Laurent.

Pourquoi ces nouvelles méthodes, plus exigeantes en fait que les cours magistraux traditionnels? Inventorier de nouveaux modes d'apprentissage, se passer des cours magistraux, c'est aussi se passer du seul contrôle qu'a l'administration du collège sur le travail effectué: la présence aux cours. Prouver à des administrateurs qu'on peut très bien se passer d'eux, c'est encore pire que de faire la grève et c'est ça que le tuteur de St-Laurent, M. Benjamin ne peut pas endurer.

C'est pour réagir au climat de peur qui sévit dans les écoles, où chacun est soumis aux diktats du décret du 15 décembre qui tient lieu de convention collective, où n'importe qui peut être renvoyé n'importe quand pour surplus de personnel et où le processus de déclassification gèle les salaires de 20% des professeurs de l'élémentaire et du secondaire depuis deux ans et ceux de 38% des professeurs du collégial cette année.

Le ministre de l'Education, M. Cloutier situe le problème de la déclassification au niveau des principes: appliquer une politique salariale uniforme à tous les travailleurs du secteur public et parapublic. Mais quoi de plus facile que de masquer par des principes des problèmes à incidences monétaires et politiques considérables. Il faut replacer le gel des salaires résultant de la déclassification dans le contexte de la compression des dépenses de fonctionnement dans l'éducation (tel qu'annoncé lors du discours du budget de 1972). De plus, la déclassification permet de se débarrasser lentement d'un bassin de professeurs devenu encombrant suite à la baisse des effectifs scolaires. On décourage les uns, on en envoie d'autres se recycler pour bientôt sous-évaluer les cours de recyclage eux-mêmes, quand on ne renvoie pas purement et simplement.

#### ULTIMATUM

L'ultimatum envoyé jeudi le 3 mai dernier par le tuteur du Cégep St-Laurent ne reconnaît aucunement la valeur du travail pédagogique effectué depuis le début du gel de cours soit le 4 avril. Les salaires sont retenus depuis le 11 avril et le tuteur a affirmé qu'aucun salaire ne serait jamais versé pour cette période. La session est allongée d'un mois, soit jusqu'à la fin juin, et des mesures particulières touchent les étudiants d'une façon très dure: ils ont jusqu'au 14 mai pour se désinscrire s'ils n'ont pas l'intention de poursuivre la session, sinon la mention échec leur sera attribuée. Cette tactique a bien sûr pour effet d'essayer de miner la solidarité des étudiants pour les professeurs. Jamais, dans toute l'histoire des cégeps, on a adopté de mesures aussi radicales.

Le point majeur pour justifier une attitude aussi drastique de l'administrateur délégué est la sensation insupportable de ne pouvoir "jauger le travail fait et évaluer le rendement par rapport à l'atteinte des objectifs spécifiques et généraux des programmes d'études". (1) M. Benjamin s'était fait remarquer par une attitude tout aussi dure il y a deux ans comme secrétaire général, alors que les professeurs de St-Laurent avaient fait une journée d'étude le 5 février 1971 pour appuyer les professeurs déclassifiés de l'Alliance. Après des coupures de salaires et l'occupation de l'administration par les étudiants, le collège avait été momentanément fermé. Puis après avoir été refusé au poste de directeur géné-

(1) Texte de l'ultimatum, Collège St-Laurent, 3 mai 1973, p. 6.



ral du collège, M. Benjamin avait démissionné et était parti travailler pour la Régionale de Chambly dont le directeur Robert Bélisle était aussi tuteur de St-Laurent à ce moment. Suite de coïncidences?

Actuellement, malgré l'avis officiel des directeurs de départements qui reconnaissent comme valide l'enseignement dispensé, et sans avoir consulté la commission pédagogique qui n'est pas en tutelle, M. Benjamin décrète unilatéralement les conditions de poursuite de la session.

### REACTIONS

La première réaction spontanée de plusieurs professeurs a été de dire que leur programme de cours était presque terminé, tous leurs étudiants rejoints et qu'ils n'avaient rien à faire pendant la période de prolongation. L'assemblée des professeurs a rejeté l'ultimatum à 141 voix contre 40 et a décidé de continuer le travail entrepris.

L'assemblée des étudiants a également rejeté l'ultimatum à la quasi majorité (2,300 voix contre 2) et a décidé de finir la session le 1er juin tel que prévu. Ils ont demandé la démission de Cloutier, ministre de l'Education, de Benjamin et de Germain Carreau, le directeur des services pédagogiques. Enfin, un comité doit s'occuper de la mise sur pied éventuelle d'un cegep parallèle, si St-Laurent était victime d'un lock-out ou d'une injonction. Les étudiants se préparent actuellement à soumettre en cour des cas-types sur le travail académique pour chaque concentration: plan de cours, travaux etc.; ils comptent ainsi faire valider juridiquement la présente session. Il faut noter que le syndicat étudiant est le premier à avoir fait une demande d'affiliation à la CSN, signifiant par là que les étudiants se considèrent comme apprentis-travailleurs.

### AILLEURS

Dans les autres collèges sous tutelle, la situation est bien différente. Il faut dire que ces collèges sont anglophones. A Vanier, tout est calme et les relations entre le tuteur et les enseignants très amicales. Le gel de cours n'ayant pas été signifié par écrit, les salaires continuent à être versés. C'est en fait un appui tacite à la situation des déclassifiés qui touche dans les collèges anglophones 70% des enseignants. En fait, le salaire est versé à la satisfaction des professeurs sous la forme de deux chèques: un selon la classification du ministère et un autre chèque "d'avance" correspondant à la différence avec la classification du collège. Une telle souplesse contraste étrangement avec la répression dont souffrent les collèges francophones.

A Dawson, une grève de 24 heures en appui aux professeurs et aux étudiants de St-Laurent a eu lieu mardi le 8 mai. Les professeurs réservent \$5.00 de leur paie hebdomadaire pour aider ceux de St-Laurent. Enfin, ils ont assuré les étudiants de St-Laurent que ceux-ci pourront utiliser les laboratoires de Dawson advenant un lock-out à leur collège.

A Lionel Groulx, le quatrième collège à avoir décidé de payer les professeurs selon la norme la plus avantageuse, il n'y a pas de tutelle mais la situation est extrêmement tendue. Le gel de cours continue et les professeurs demandent la démission du directeur général qui a brisé de sa propre autorité la décision du conseil d'administration de payer les professeurs. Les salaires y sont également coupés.

Une manifestation de 1,000 personnes a eu lieu mardi le 8 mai regroupant principalement des professeurs et étudiants des cegeps sous tutelle: Vanier, Dawson et St-Laurent.

Ailleurs dans la province, environ 8 collèges subissent le gel des cours mais il semble y avoir une transformation de ce mode d'action au profit du gel des notes ce qui règle momentanément le problème des coupures de salaires. 20 collèges ont annoncé la retenue des notes par les professeurs. Enfin, la FNEQ doit recommander aux syndicats locaux de voter un appui financier à St-Laurent de \$2.50 par semaine par professeur.

### NEGOCIATIONS

Les positions des syndicats de professeurs représentés par la Fédération nationale des enseignants (FNEQ-CSN) et par la Fédération des enseignants de cegep (FEC-CEQ) se sont beaucoup assouplies. Exigeant d'abord le gel du Manuel de classification jusqu'en juin 1974 et la reconnaissance du classement local comme définitif, les syndicats sont actuellement prêts à accepter le Manuel à condition que des mécanismes d'arbitrage soient mis sur pied comme c'était possible avant le décret. Ils demandent également la garantie que les classifications locales des collèges soient



reconnues et qu'il n'y ait aucune représaille contre les enseignants, en particulier ceux de St-Laurent.

Malgré cet assouplissement et des séances de négociations intenses durant la fin de semaine et jusqu'à lundi, la situation n'a guère progressé. Cloutier déclare à qui mieux mieux, le jour même de l'ultimatum, que la situation est pratiquement réglée; il nie l'ampleur du problème dans tous les collèges, le limitant au cas de St-Laurent. Il n'y a rien de pire dans un conflit de travail que lorsque l'employeur refuse de constater les faits et parcellarise le conflit. S'il faut comprendre ces déclarations comme un durcissement de la position du gouvernement, il faut s'attendre à ce que la crise prenne de l'ampleur.

## IRON WORKERS - "A QUAND LA DEMOCRATIE DANS NOS UNIONS?"

C'est le 12 avril dernier que les 4,500 "gars de fer", ou Iron Workers, refusaient majoritairement les offres de Desjardins, directeur du Conseil provincial des métiers de la construction (FTQ), pour le renouvellement de la convention collective des travailleurs de la construction. A date, les Iron Workers forment le seul groupe, des 21 unions américaines, qui ait refusé les offres de Desjardins.

### UN COMITE D'ACTION POLITIQUE

Il faut dire que, depuis 2 ans, les Iron Workers se sont dotés d'un instrument capable de prendre du recul face à leur direction syndicale: ils ont formé un comité d'action politique, complètement indépendant de la direction syndicale (local 711) et financé par les gars eux-mêmes.

Pourquoi un tel comité, s'il y a un syndicat? "Nous avons formé ce comité pour faire respecter et revendiquer les droits élémentaires des travailleurs; on est tanné de se faire fourrer par des gars qui prennent des décisions à notre place. En fait, on veut prendre nos propres décisions."

Fin janvier, le CAP des travailleurs en fer (Iron Workers) élabore un projet de convention collective pour remplacer le décret de la construction; le projet fut présenté en assemblée générale du syndicat et accepté unanimement. Plusieurs travailleurs du CAP ne cachent pas les raisons qui les ont poussés à rédiger leur projet de convention: "Nous ne nous faisons pas d'illusions: nous savons que nos représentants syndicaux sont des collaborateurs avec l'ennemi de classe, les patrons et l'Etat; d'ailleurs les intimidations, le chantage et la brutalité sur les chantiers, d'un côté, et, de l'autre, la collaboration de nos dirigeants syndicaux avec le ministre du Travail en sont des preuves. En ce sens, on ne peut faire confiance au Conseil provincial des métiers de la construction."

### LES REVENDICATIONS DES IRON WORKERS

Pas surprenant que les gars de fer aient refusé les offres du Conseil provincial. Leurs quatre principales demandes pour signer la convention sont: l'autonomie de négociation du syndicat, une augmentation de \$5.00 l'heure répartie sur trois ans, la réduction des heures de travail et le droit pour le délégué syndical d'arrêter les travaux en cas de danger. Aucune de ces demandes n'a été retenue par le Conseil des métiers.

On sait que sur un chantier de construction, les accidents de travail ne sont pas rares. Et parmi les différentes catégories de travailleurs, ce sont les gars de fer qui connaissent le plus haut taux d'accidents mortels. 50% des Iron Workers ont connu au moins un accident grave sur les chantiers. De là leur insistance à signer une convention où "il nous sera permis de ne plus verser notre sang pour l'argent des patrons", en permettant au délégué syndical d'arrêter les travaux en cas de danger.

"Quand tu travailles sur le fer comme nous, quand t'as 45 ans, t'es fini; et seulement 10% d'entre nous peuvent se placer après tellement on est brûlé. On travaille seulement 3 à 4 jours par semaine en moyenne et on travaille toujours dans des conditions dangereuses. Nos conditions de travail sont pires en 1973 qu'elles ne l'étaient en 1968; c'est pas un miracle si on a pas signé l'entente à Desjardins: il n'y a rien là-dedans qui nous aide à améliorer nos conditions de travail", soulignent les travailleurs du CAP.

Une des revendications les plus importantes, la négociation autonome du syndicat, est nécessitée par le fait que le Conseil des métiers contrôle toutes les décisions. Plusieurs diront que c'est une proposition corporatiste, mais si on regarde de plus près, on voit qu'on peut obtenir de meilleures conditions si on est pas tous brassés dans le melting pot



du Conseil des métiers. Si on obtient des gains, les autres camarades pourront bénéficier de nos luttes pour en arriver aux mêmes gains."

#### LE REFUS DE LA NOUVELLE CONVENTION

"Jamais au cours des prétendues négociations de Desjardins, on a été mis au courant; on ne peut pas signer une affaire à laquelle on a pas participé", telle est une des raisons principales qui a motivé le refus des Iron Workers. La deuxième: "il n'y a rien dans l'entente à Desjardins qui réponde à ce qu'on voulait avoir; rien de satisfaisant sur les augmentations, ni sur la réduction des heures de travail et rien sur la sécurité."

On sait que dans la nouvelle entente prévue par Desjardins, \$0.50 d'augmentation de l'heure ira au fonds de pension. C'est-à-dire que chaque travailleur payera \$1,400 par année au chapitre fonds de pension. En comparant ce montant à celui payé par année à la Régie des rentes (\$88.20 en moyenne par année), on se rend compte que l'entente à Desjardins compte 15 plans du type Régie des rentes. Avec la Régie des rentes et le fonds de pension fédéral, les travailleurs de la construction se retrouveront donc avec 17 fonds de pension. De quoi agrémenter leurs vieux jours quoi.

Sur ce que plusieurs travailleurs ont appelé un cadeau de Desjardins au gouvernement, le CAP des Iron Workers ne cache pas son désarroi devant l'entente sur les fonds de pension: "De Attila à Charlemagne, de Napoléon à Hitler, jamais dans l'histoire de l'humanité, dictateur n'a osé imposer à sa classe ouvrière respective un tel vol, de \$0.50 de l'heure, pour renflouer les chacals et les vampires capitalistes à travers les marionnettes dégénérées du gouvernement provincial et de leur acolyte André Desjardins."

#### QUE FAIRE?

Même si les Iron Workers ont refusé la nouvelle entente, ils n'ont pas perdu la bataille. Leur prochaine étape: revendiquer des augmentations de salaire, mais sans payer de fonds de pension, ni les autres frais prévus dans l'entente. C'est en effet sous cet aspect que se révèlent les points faibles de l'entente négociée par le Conseil des métiers; si tous les travailleurs de la construction se rendent compte que 17 fonds de pension, c'est un peu trop, surtout à la veille du revenu minimum garanti, plusieurs risquent de demander à leurs dirigeants de garder dans leurs poches la totalité des augmentations obtenues.

"Nous cessons d'être les cobayes du ministre du travail pour alimenter la Caisse de Dépôts et de Placements avec nos fonds de pension. Si le gouvernement veut financer la Baie James, qu'il le fasse avec d'autre argent que nos augmentations de salaire. Le CAP du 711 va continuer à lutter avec intransigeance contre tous les procédés de manipulations utilisés, non seulement pour la trahison récente de l'entente Cournoyer-Desjardins, mais aussi contre toutes celles qui sont en préparation."

#### LA CRISE SYNDICALE - "LES STRUCTURES SYNDICALES SONT DEVENUES NEFASTES"

"La crise syndicale est un ouvrage dont l'objectif est de mettre à l'ordre du jour la réévaluation des actions et des structures du mouvement syndical à la lumière des nécessités des travailleurs, modifiées par l'évolution du capitalisme moderne", ainsi s'exprime Henri Gagnon, président du Comité d'action politique du Conseil du Travail de Montréal.

Le livre, la crise syndicale, a été réalisé sous l'égide d'un cours présenté par le CTM et où Henri Gagnon jouait le rôle d'animateur. Le texte définitif a été rédigé, une fois discuté avec les militants syndicaux qui participaient à ces sessions d'étude. Il s'agit du cinquième ouvrage publié par Gagnon.

#### DES STRUCTURES SYNDICALES DEPASSEES...

"Le syndicalisme s'est développé à l'intérieur de la société capitaliste et avec l'accroissement de l'industrialisation. Mais le développement de la technologie, donc l'entrée du capitalisme dans la phase de la super-industrialisation, a apporté des modifications importantes autant sur la main-d'oeuvre du secteur primaire que sur la formation d'un groupe d'assistés sociaux et de chômeurs,...etc. Dans ces conditions, le syndicalisme, dont les concepts de travail ont été forgés à partir de la structure industrielle du début du siècle, est dépassé, c'est à dire que sa méthode de lutte ne correspond plus à la réalité", telle est une des constatations majeures de Gagnon sur le syndicalisme tant québécois qu'américain et européen.



Mais il faut comprendre, et Gagnon insiste longuement dans son ouvrage, que la crise syndicale actuelle ne dépend pas de la valeur des hommes qui gouvernent le monde syndical. "Ce sont les structures qui déterminent et qui ont déterminé l'évolution du syndicalisme." C'est pourquoi les syndicats, après avoir échappé au sort que leur réservait la bourgeoisie, c'est-à-dire la disparition, n'ont pu résister à la deuxième attaque de la classe dominante: l'intégration du syndicalisme et sa domestication à l'Etat capitaliste.

#### UNE STRUCTURE PYRAMIDALE

D'ailleurs pour Gagnon, même si les syndicalistes font l'apologie de leur institution en la décrivant comme la plus démocratique, il ne faut pas oublier que l'absence de décision et de participation active des membres aux hautes instances syndicales constituent un frein important à la transformation du syndicalisme. La crise qu'a connue la CSN l'an dernier en est une preuve.

Toutes les décisions importantes sont prises par l'exécutif. Les membres, quand ils ont eu la chance d'être informés, n'ont qu'à respecter ces décisions provenant du sommet. Les négociations collectives sont confiées à des experts qui ne sont pas élus; ce sont eux qui en dernière analyse contrôlent toute l'information. Le seul pouvoir du syndiqué reste son vote...

"Au début du siècle, les activités syndicales et leur lutte contre le capitalisme se résumaient à des augmentations de salaire: c'était une façon de lutter contre le profit. Mais aujourd'hui, les grandes entreprises, les oligopoles et les monopoles peuvent se permettre de payer de fortes augmentations de salaire sans compromettre pour autant l'évolution du capitalisme. C'est pourquoi il faut songer à d'autres formes d'action que la stricte revendication des augmentations salariales."

"Le plus grand problème du syndicalisme, l'aspect fondamental de la crise du syndicalisme, c'est que le mouvement est incapable de faire le procès du capitalisme moderne; la stratégie de lutte utilisée correspond à une époque révolue du capitalisme; nous sommes en quelque sorte prisonniers de nos vieux concepts."

#### SUBIR UNE SITUATION OU LA CHANGER?

Même si Gagnon parle longtemps de la situation syndicale, peu de place a été accordée à la stratégie à suivre pour faire un pas en avant: "Ce sont les travailleurs aux prises avec ces problèmes qui seront les premiers à s'organiser afin de transformer ces structures," souligne-t-il.

Une des solutions qui pourrait être apportée est le syndicalisme parallèle. "Par exemple, dans quelques pays, les travailleurs désabusés de leurs vieilles structures syndicales se sont formés de nouvelles formes d'organisation et de lutte, en marge du syndicalisme d'affaires traditionnel. C'est peut-être une voie que les travailleurs du Québec emprunteront."

C'est évidemment dans les syndicats locaux et sur les milieux de travail que la question suivra son cours. En attendant, on peut se procurer le livre d'Henri Gagnon à l'APLQ au prix de \$1.00.

#### OUTAOUAIS - LES CITOYENS DE MASHAM REFUSENT L'IMPLANTATION FEDERALE

Les citoyens de Masham, près de Hull ont décidé de passer à l'action pour empêcher que l'échange de terrains projeté par la CCN-Commission de la capitale nationale - et le gouvernement du Québec n'ait lieu. Cette transaction de 12,500 acres de forêt québécoise contre 250 acres de la CCN est l'aboutissement d'un échange similaire, prévu en octobre 63, en vue d'agrandir la Cité des Jeunes de Hull. Ce projet qui avait été autorisé par l'arrêté en conseil 1837 fut interrompu en mai 67 quand Daniel Johnson décida de suspendre indéfiniment la mise en vigueur de l'arrêté en conseil. Profitant du fait que la plupart des gens du secteur n'étaient pas au courant d'un échange éventuel de terrains entre la CCN et le Québec, des spéculateurs ont acheté, durant ces dix ans d'attente, sur la partie du territoire visée par l'échange, des terrains boisés à des prix dérisoires. Si les deux parties ratifient le projet d'échange, les spéculateurs vont obtenir un gros prix de la Commission de la capitale nationale.

L'Association pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine québécois (ASPQ), formée de citoyens de Hull et de Masham, veut donner une dimension nationale au problème de Masham; c'est ainsi qu'une pétition dénonçant l'aliénation du territoire québécois au bénéfice des autorités fédérales et demandant



instamment au gouvernement du Québec de mettre fin à la liquidation graduelle du patrimoine québécois a commencé à circuler dans l'Outaouais et devrait être bientôt distribuée à travers la province.

L'an dernier, le Conseil régional de développement de l'Outaouais (CRDO) rendait publique une étude sur l'avenir des Québécois du district fédéral dans laquelle il était clairement mentionné que la Commission de la capitale nationale imposait, de plus en plus, dans les faits, la réalité d'un district fédéral. D'après ce rapport, le gouvernement fédéral décide pratiquement de la politique d'aménagement de la région. Sur le plan économique, le rapport indique que l'implantation définitive du gouvernement fédéral dans Hull - et le territoire environnant - entraînerait des activités dans les secteurs tertiaire et secondaire, créant une dépendance de plus en plus étroite face au fédéral. L'Outaouais, d'après le rapport, se trouve coincé entre deux mouvements politiques en pleine croissance: l'indépendance du Québec et la constitution d'un district fédéral juridique. (Voir bul. no 60).

Face à cette situation complexe, l'auteur du rapport préconisait une stratégie de résistance active contre l'implantation fédérale. L'ASPQ, qui veut empêcher le grossier échange de terrains entre la CCN et le Québec, semble s'insérer dans cette démarche. Ce sera à vérifier.

MONT-WRIGHT - DES PETITS FAITS  
SANS IMPORTANCE...

L'enquête du coroner sur l'accident du Mont Wright a pris fin jeudi dernier, le 3 mai. Les deux dernières journées de l'enquête ont apporté des éléments nouveaux très intéressants.

Jean-Luc Boudreau, délégué syndical des électriciens au Mont-Wright, a décrit la situation de la sécurité sur le chantier comme absolument désastreuse. "Il y avait tellement de choses contre la sécurité, a-t-il déclaré, que ça aurait pris un plancher pour tout écrire." C'était la première fois qu'un témoin dénonçait aussi ouvertement la compagnie Mannix. Le délégué Boudreau a également déclaré qu'il n'était pas à l'aise pour faire son travail car le surintendant général, Wallace, et le surintendant Roger Guay le suivaient partout, même dans les toilettes.

Le même Wallace a d'ailleurs été impliqué dans un incident, peu après la fin de la première enquête du coroner, le 20 février. Des délégués de chantier avaient alors saisi son camion et l'avaient reconduit hors du chantier. On voulait ainsi lui faire comprendre qu'on ne voulait plus le voir. Evidemment, on n'avait jamais entendu dire que la situation était aussi tendue entre les ouvriers et les boss du chantier. Au contraire, à croire la compagnie Mannix, tout allait pour le mieux dans les relations patronales-ouvrières.

Incidemment, le soir de l'accident qui a coûté la vie à 7 ouvriers, la situation était très tendue sur le chantier et on est passé très près d'une mise à sac en règle des bureaux de Mannix. Ça non plus, on en n'avait jamais entendu parler, la version officielle de l'accident laissant entendre que les travailleurs n'avaient pas réagi outre mesure à la mort de leurs compagnons. Maintenant, on sait ce qu'a été cette réaction, on connaît l'attitude de la compagnie sur la sécurité et les piètres relations des boss avec les délégués de chantier.

Le prononcé du verdict aura lieu le 29 juin prochain, au Palais de Justice de Sept-Iles, après que les deux parties auront remis leurs plaidoyers écrits au juge Roch Lefrançois. Tout est en place pour que la compagnie Mannix soit trouvée criminellement responsable.

LIBERATION DES CHEFS - LA  
MAUVAISE FOI ET SES  
MENSONGES

Avant la manifestation du premier mai, le premier ministre Bourassa proclamait bien haut que les chefs syndicaux seraient libérés "d'ici quelques jours". Trente mille personnes sont descendues dans la rue. Le 2 mai, le ministre de la Justice, Choquette, disait que "les demandes de libération seront étudiées à leur mérite et conformément à la loi qui permet de telles absences temporaires" lorsque le tiers de la sentence a été purgé." Bourassa se rallia alors à la position legaliste et hargneuse de Choquette.

On serait maintenant tenté de dire que l'homme que l'on a qualifié tour à tour de "serin des Sîpard", de marionnette, de valet de l'impérialisme, de petit comptable et d'autres qualificatifs tous plus méprisants les uns que les autres fait son grand possible pour les mériter de plein droit et correspondre à l'image la plus insignifiante, la plus vulgaire, la plus basse que l'on peut se faire d'un ministre de démocratie bourgeoise. Cette opinion commence d'ailleurs à se propager largement. Le secrétaire-général



de la FTQ parlait de Bourassa de la façon suivante, vendredi dernier, à Québec: "D'un événement à l'autre, ce politicien de faible envergure semble vouloir nous convaincre que toutes les caricatures qu'on a faites de lui sont des copies conformes de son personnage."

C'est encore faible pour qualifier cet homme, compte tenu du fait que les mensonges qu'il fait ("on libérera les chefs", "les sentences seront réduites", etc.) ne sont que de grossières manoeuvres destinées à tromper les travailleurs sur les véritables opinions du gouvernement. Les chefs syndicaux seront-ils libérés vers le 15 mai comme la loi le permet? Quelles conditions leur posera-t-on? Les chefs emprisonnés ont clairement dit qu'ils n'accepteraient pas de se voir privés de leurs droits démocratiques de parole et d'activités: cette exigence risque de les faire moisir en prison encore quelque temps car la stratégie du régime Bourassa pour rétablir la "paix sociale" se résume rapidement au mot "répression".

## DES CONGEDIEMENTS ARBITRAIRES ET INJUSTIFIES UN PEU PARTOUT AU QUEBEC

Parce qu'au mois d'avril, la déclassification aura retenu les énergies des enseignants et l'attention des media, de nombreux congédiements arbitraires et injustifiés de professeurs seront passés inaperçus aux yeux du public de même que les interventions syndicales relatives à ces congédiements se seront généralement limitées à des mesures légales (arbitrage, etc.) dont on est loin de voir le résultat.

Plusieurs points au niveau des façons de procéder et des motifs invoqués sont communs à ces congédiements: congédiements ratifiés rapidement par des commissaires soumis aux directives des administrateurs scolaires, insignifiance et imprécision des motifs officiels de renvois et de non-renouvellement de contrats. En voici un aperçu.

### NORD-OUEST

Val-d'Or: Le 26 mars, M. Jean-Pierre Scant est suspendu de ses fonctions par la Commission scolaire régionale La Vérendrye de Val-d'Or. Le 17 avril, les commissaires prennent 10 minutes, à huis clos, pour statuer sur le cas Scant. Les raisons du congédiement sont les suivantes: retards nombreux, accepte des étudiants d'autres classes dans son cours et en laisse sortir d'autres alors qu'ils sont marqués présents, insubordination. Le 18 avril, J.P. Scant entreprend une grève de la faim pour sensibiliser la population à ce geste des commissaires "qui s'attachent plus à l'ordre et au règlement qu'à l'épanouissement des élèves". Plus d'une centaine d'étudiants ont fait parvenir des témoignages d'appui à J.P. Scant.

Position du syndicat des travailleurs de l'enseignement du Nord-Ouest québécois (STENOQ): Le syndicat n'admet pas que les motifs invoqués par la commission scolaire justifient une telle sévérité à l'égard de J.P. Scant. Les vrais motifs du congédiement n'ont pas été dévoilés. Il s'agit d'un coup monté pour faire peur aux enseignants qui voudraient transformer radicalement l'apédagogie actuelle dans les écoles. Les commissaires ont pris une décision arbitraire, orientée et dictée par les administrateurs.

Mont-Laurier: Le 18 avril, Alain Thibault et Lucienne Thomas, professeurs à temps plein à l'Education permanente voyaient leurs contrats non-renouvelés, sur une décision prise par les commissaires en moins de 5 minutes. Les motifs donnés aux commissaires, ce soir-là, diffèrent sensiblement des motifs qui ont été donnés à A. Thibault et L. Thomas en privé. Publiquement, on a parlé d'insuffisance de périodes de cours pour des engagements à plein temps; dans les coulisses, on a invoqué la désobéissance à l'autorité et le fait que ces professeurs veuillent trop discuter des objectifs de l'E.P. Et puis qu'il fallait faire taire ces collaborateurs du journal populaire Nord-Hebdo.

### MONTREAL

Université de Montréal: Charles Prévost et Roger Morazain, professeurs en bio-chimie à la Faculté de Médecine, doivent être congédiés dans quelques semaines. Les raisons officielles invoquées par l'administration sont un enseignement qui laisse à désirer, une incapacité de mener à bien leurs projets de recherches et la faiblesse de leur rayonnement à l'intérieur de l'université. Prévost et Morazain ont une toute autre version des faits: "Si l'Université de Montréal a décidé de ne pas renouveler nos contrats, c'est essentiellement en raison de nos activités syndicales et parce que nous avons tenu à appliquer une conception du rôle de l'université qui diffère de celle de l'administration." Le congédiement des 2 professeurs deviendra effectif le 31 mai prochain à moins que le Comité des différends, le dernier recours sur lequel ils puissent compter, n'émette un avis contraire d'ici là.



Verdun: A leur session du 17 avril, les commissaires de la Commission des Ecoles catholiques de Verdun ont congédié, en deux (2) minutes, 48 enseignants sans même poser de questions aux administrateurs sur les raisons de ces congédiements. L'Alliance des professeurs de Montréal a dénoncé l'attitude méprisante de ces "serviteurs muets d'une bureaucratie encrassée et incompétente". Elle revise actuellement les dossiers des enseignants congédiés et prendra les mesures légales qui s'imposent; elle suggère aussi d'utiliser les surplus de personne à une "reconstruction" de la pédagogie dans les écoles de Verdun sous-développées pédagogiquement.

Montréal: 127 enseignants seront licenciés pour surplus de personnel à la CECM. L'Alliance, qui a dénoncé le fait que ces mises à pied n'affectent que le secteur francophone, a suggéré à la CECM de désigner ces enseignants à des programmes spéciaux, particulièrement dans les quartiers défavorisés où il faudrait augmenter le nombre d'enseignants.

Cegep Vieux-Montréal: 42 professeurs plein-temps non-permanents et 12 permanents voient leurs contrats non-renouvelés et sont mis en disponibilité pour enseigner possiblement à temps partiel ou à la leçon. Ces mises à pied sont, selon le syndicat, faites de façon arbitraire et injustifiée, étant donné qu'il n'y aura, en 73-74, que 300 étudiants de moins qu'en 72-73 et qu'il faut ajouter les dispositions du décret concernant les déagements des chefs de département; concrètement, cela signifie que le collège aura droit en 73-74 aux mêmes 420 postes qu'en 72-73.

Parce que les professeurs à la leçon sont payés moins cher, parce qu'ils ne se syndiquent généralement pas et qu'ils ne sont pas impliqués directement dans les conflits des enseignants avec la partie patronale, on peut voir quels sont les véritables intérêts des administrateurs dans ces mises en disponibilité. L'argument que certains professeurs à la leçon sont plus compétents ne joue que dans très peu de cas (ex: professeur de théâtre). Selon le syndicat, plus de 50 charges plein temps seront remplies l'an prochain par au moins 80 professeurs à la leçon. Si on considère que parmi les 54 professeurs non-réengagés, deux (2) viennent d'être réengagés, on constate qu'il en reste 52 qui correspondent aux "plus de 50 charges plein-temps qui seront remplies l'an prochain par 80 professeurs à la leçon". Comme manoeuvre et comme stratégie de remplacement, ce n'est pas très subtil.

#### L'ASSOCIATION QUEBEC PALESTINE POURSUIT LA LUTTE MALGRE LA REPRESSION

Depuis sa fondation, en novembre 1972, l'Association Québec Palestine occupe un très petit local prêté par le Conseil central des syndicats nationaux de Montréal. Le service des permis et inspections de la Ville de Montréal vient de refuser à l'Association un permis d'occupation à la suite d'un rapport de la police indiquant que l'AQP avait négligé de se présenter pour identification.

Malgré cette mesure répressive, l'AQP poursuit sa lutte, surtout par l'information, pour développer la solidarité entre les peuples québécois et palestinien. Mardi, le 8 mai, quinze membres de l'Association se sont rendus au consulat du Liban à Montréal pour transmettre un message à l'intention du gouvernement libanais, dénonçant la complicité active entre, d'une part, les responsables politiques et militaires libanais et d'autre part, les dirigeants sionistes et la CIA américaine, à l'occasion du raid israélien à Beyrouth et des attaques libanaises contre les forces de la résistance palestinienne. Le consul du Liban a rencontré les manifestants sur le trottoir mais il a refusé de prendre connaissance des documents de l'AQP, sous prétexte qu'il n'était qu'un fonctionnaire et qu'il ne s'occupait pas de politique. Il a aussi déclaré: "Je ne vois pas pourquoi les Québécois se mêlent de cela; laissez-nous nous entendre entre frères arabes."

Par ailleurs, samedi le 12 mai, à 13h.30, l'AQP, appuyée par 13 organisations de Montréal, organise une marche de solidarité avec le peuple palestinien, dans le but de condamner l'existence illégale d'Israël depuis 25 ans. Alors que la presse bourgeoise est presque unanime dans ses louanges envers Israël, l'appui des forces progressistes doit se montrer de plus en plus actif en faveur de la lutte palestinienne.

#### QU'EST-CE QUE "L'ECOLE INTEGREE, A LA VIE URBAINE"?

C'est avec les slogans de "l'école dans la rue" que le président du conseil d'administration du Cegep Lionel-Groulx, campus de St-Jérôme, M. Hotte, a annoncé le début des travaux d'agrandissement du collège. Ces travaux, à coup de \$10 millions, s'échelonnent d'ici juin 1975 grâce à une première subvention de \$8 millions du ministère de l'Éducation.



Cet investissement vient s'ajouter à la liste des dépenses d'immobilisation effectuées par le ministère pour l'agrandissement ou la construction d'écoles; un des gros morceaux de ce budget est le \$70 millions pour la construction du prochain campus de l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

Il est assez curieux de voir tant d'argent dépensé pour la construction de bâtisses quand les statistiques annoncent pour la première fois l'an prochain une baisse des inscriptions scolaires totales de la maternelle à l'université (1). Cette baisse est évidemment plus prononcée à l'élémentaire étant donné la chute de la natalité depuis 1966 mais atteindra bientôt le secondaire. Dans ce secteur, un second phénomène accentue la baisse des effectifs: le drop out. En effet seulement à la régionale des Mille Îles, plus d'un cinquième des étudiants ont lâché l'école depuis le début de l'année au campus secondaire de St-Eustache, soit 960 étudiants sur 5,000. Ce phénomène est toutefois étouffé par les autorités de la commission scolaire et par le ministère lui-même. Celui-ci a interrompu les travaux d'un comité d'étude sur la question créé en 1972 seulement quelques mois après le début sans donner aucune explication.

Quant au collégial, si la population d'âge scolaire n'a pas encore baissé, une sélection intense remplace le phénomène naturel de la réduction des effectifs. Il suffit de se rappeler les chiffres extraits des statistiques officielles du collège Edouard-Montpetit qui peuvent donner une idée de l'ampleur du problème; dans le secteur technique ou professionnel en 1971, 30.5% des étudiants ayant fait une demande d'admission ont été refusés. De ceux qui sont acceptés, 77.5% sont éliminés en cours de route pendant les 3 ans d'études:

L'annonce de ces dépenses du ministère est particulièrement provocante à ce moment-ci, en pleine crise de déclassification des professeurs de cégep. Tout en subventionnant largement l'entreprise privée par le biais des contrats de construction, le ministère comprime les dépenses relatives au fonctionnement c'est-à-dire les salaires des professeurs: on déclassifie, on "met en disponibilité" des professeurs superflus et on engage tant qu'on peut des professeurs à la leçon, moins bien payés il va sans dire que les professeurs à temps plein.

Il faut donc voir derrière ces mots de "l'école dans la rue" comme "vitrine offrant aux gens du milieu le phénomène de l'éducation" (Hotte) ce qui se passe réellement derrière ces murs, comment le système scolaire alimente l'entreprise privée au détriment des étudiants évincés du circuit scolaire ainsi que des enseignants.

(1) Statistiques présentées le 1er mai devant la Commission parlementaire de l'Éducation.

#### JOLIETTE ET ST-HYACINTHE - LES OUVRIERS SE BATTENT A LA FOIS CONTRE LA SEMAINE DE 7 JOURS ET CONTRE UNE PUISSANTE COMPAGNIE MULTINATIONALE

Les 81 travailleurs de la Consolidated Textile de Joliette, sous le coup d'un lock-out depuis le 29 mars dernier et les 142 ouvriers de St-Hyacinthe, en grève depuis plus d'un mois, viennent de recevoir l'appui de la Fédération canadienne des travailleurs du textile, réunie en fin de semaine dernière en congrès. Cette dernière s'est prononcée à forte majorité contre la semaine de 7 jours que la compagnie Consolidated Textile tente d'imposer aux travailleurs et elle doit inviter ses 8,900 membres à contribuer volontairement au fonds spécial pour les grévistes de ces usines qui ne reçoivent actuellement que \$20 (célibataire) et \$30 (marié) par semaine. De plus, la Fédération doit entreprendre une vaste campagne d'information contre la norme des 7 jours dans toutes les usines affiliées.

Selon cette nouvelle formule, appelée aussi semaine continentale, les ouvriers travailleraient 2 jours pendant 12 heures, auraient 3 jours de congé et reprendraient le travail pour 3 jours. A l'usine de Montmagny, où l'on a déjà adopté ce régime, 65% des travailleurs sont sous les soins des médecins et prennent des médicaments, leur vie sociale, personnelle et familiale est complètement perturbée et la compagnie épargne le surtemps qu'elle devait payer au préalable pour le travail du dimanche.

En plus de la norme de 7 jours, ces travailleurs de la CSD se battent pour augmenter leur salaire actuel (\$2.22) de \$0.40 de plus, ce qui les hisserait à peine au seuil des autres compagnies et maintiendrait l'écart qui les sépare des autres usines de ce secteur.

#### QUI SONT LES VRAIS PROPRIETAIRES DE CETTE COMPAGNIE

Depuis le début du conflit, la compagnie menace les travailleurs de fermer ses portes et de déménager ses installations à l'usine de Montmagny. Or, selon nos informations, l'usine de Montmagny serait récemment



passée aux mains d'une compagnie américaine. Carrington Viyella semble experte en matière de transaction. Ainsi, quand elle fit l'acquisition de Consolidated Textile en 1972, en achetant 41% de ses actions, elle fit acheter par cette dernière compagnie l'usine de Dominion Dying and Printing de Drummondville qui appartenait justement à Carrington Viyella! Se racheter sa propre usine voilà une façon sûre et efficace de faire à peu de frais beaucoup d'argent. Mais comme Carrington Viyella est une filiale de l'Imperial Chemical, l'une des plus grosses compagnies au monde dans le secteur des produits chimiques et des armements et l'une des plus grosses d'Angleterre dans le secteur textile, il n'y a rien d'étonnant à ce genre de manoeuvre. Mentionnons aussi que Carrington Viyella est proche parent de CIL (reconnue pour ses armements pour la guerre du Viet Nam) qui est aussi une filiale de Imperial Chemical.

En plus de ses usines de Joliette et de St-Hyacinthe, Carrington Viyella est propriétaire indirect de Dominion Dying and Printing, possède une usine de tissus synthétiques à Alexandria en Ontario, vient d'ouvrir en janvier dernier une filiale de distribution aux Etats-Unis et son siège social est à Montréal.

En 1972, Consolidated Textile enregistrait un chiffre d'affaire de \$30,293,000 soit une augmentation de 29% par rapport à l'année précédente et réalisait des profits nets de \$932,000.

## aplq en bref

### EN LUTTE!

Nous faisons parvenir aux abonnés de l'APLQ l'avant-premier numéro du journal EN LUTTE!, paru le 1er mai. A l'heure actuelle, l'importance d'EN LUTTE! tient surtout au fait que le journal représente la tendance politique exprimée dans la brochure "Pour le parti prolétarien". Cette brochure a souvent servi de point de référence pour déterminer les tâches politiques prioritaires au Québec. L'Equipe du journal EN LUTTE! privilégie actuellement le travail de lutte idéologique, spécialement par l'intervention au niveau d'un journal de propagande large.

Certains militants ont pu percevoir le journal EN LUTTE! et le bulletin populaire de l'APLQ comme deux concurrents; poser la question uniquement en termes de "mise en marché" laisse à l'écart les questions fondamentales, à savoir: quels rôles doivent jouer les instruments de lutte idéologique et quels objectifs doivent-ils se donner, en fonction de l'ensemble des tâches politiques à réaliser?

Il y a encore de nombreux militants qui n'ont pas pris clairement position sur ces questions et nous considérons qu'il est très important de le faire le plus rigoureusement possible. Comme ces questions déterminent la pratique actuelle et future des militants de l'APLQ, nous les avons longuement étudiées, pour en arriver à considérer que ce n'est pas prioritairement par la lutte idéologique - et en particulier par un journal - que la classe ouvrière en arrive à construire un parti prolétarien. La lutte idéologique n'est qu'une composante et même un corollaire à l'action des groupes d'organisation et d'implantation sur les lieux de travail.

Les points de divergences qui existent entre l'EDJ et l'APLQ peuvent donc être identifiés comme suit:

- 1- Sur les tâches politiques prioritaires à l'heure actuelle dans le mouvement ouvrier:



- pour l'EDJ: la lutte idéologique au sein du prolétariat dans son ensemble.
  - pour l'APLQ: le travail d'organisation pour former les bases militantes essentielles aux luttes sur tous les fronts: politique, économique, idéologique.
- 2- Sur le rôle de la propagande comme facteur déterminant de la lutte à l'heure actuelle:
- en surévaluant la situation politique de façon à conclure que les larges masses n'attendent que la révolution, on pourrait avancer, de façon erronée, que la propagande large est actuellement le facteur déterminant de la lutte.
  - cependant, la propagande se développant selon les objectifs de chacun des groupes politiques, selon chacune des interventions dans les luttes, elle ne deviendra vraiment déterminante que lorsqu'elle sera élaborée et assumée par le parti révolutionnaire. C'est pour cette raison que l'APLQ formule son projet de bulletin populaire en parlant d'information militante, d'information de classe, alors que l'EDJ parle strictement d'un journal de propagande.

Pour ce qui est de l'avant-premier numéro d'EN LUTTE!, nous en avons fait une présentation critique dans le bulletin no 109; répétons simplement que ce numéro s'avère nettement un journal pour militants plutôt qu'un journal de masse.



## les travailleurs, les unions, les boss.

### JOLIETTE - FIRESTONE: LA FOLIE DES POURSUITES ET DES INJONCTIONS

Contrairement à ce qu'ils avaient d'abord prétendu, les boss de la Firestone ont décidé de porter plainte contre les quelque 30 grévistes qui ont visité leur usine le 25 avril dernier. Au cours des grèves précédentes, les travailleurs avaient le droit d'entrer à l'usine afin de vérifier l'achat de toute nouvelle machinerie et de s'assurer qu'il n'y ait aucune production. Cette année cependant, les patrons leur ont défendu de se prévaloir de ce droit et ils veulent maintenant les accuser d'avoir refusé d'obéir aux ordres des policiers qui lors de cette mini-occupation ont dû littéralement les "traîner" hors de l'usine. Les grévistes seront vraisemblablement accusés de délits mineurs et passibles d'une légère amende ou d'un jour de prison.

Dans sa riposte, la compagnie a aussi obtenu le 5 mai dernier une injonction provisoire de 10 jours. Cette injonction émise par le juge Langois interdit aux travailleurs d'employer la force physique ou morale contre les boss, de les troubler, de les insulter ou même de leur parler à l'usine ou chez-eux. En plus, les grévistes doivent enlever la roulotte de grève du terrain de la compagnie, doivent laisser entrer le personnel de bureau, contracteurs et camionneurs et doivent limiter le nombre de piqueteurs à quatre à chacune des 4 entrées et en se tenant à une distance de 30 pieds. La compagnie voulait même pousser le ridicule de cette injonction jusqu'à demander qu'aucun des 30 occupants ne puisse approcher à moins de 2,000 pieds de l'usine; certains n'auraient alors pu coucher chez eux!

En plus des poursuites et des injonctions, la compagnie continue sa guerre épistolaire et elle en est rendu à sa troisième lettre aux grévistes. Cette fois, elle a tenté de les convaincre qu'aucun travailleur ne serait congédié à la suite des changements technologiques. Or le syndicat ne se fie pas aux promesses verbales de la compagnie; il exige qu'il n'y ait aucune mise à pied et que les travailleurs touchés par des changements technologiques soient recyclés. Déjà, cette année, de 10 à 12 travailleurs ont vu leur semaine de travail passer de 40 heures à 25 ou 30 et certains travailleurs surnuméraires ont été congédiés.

Cette clause sur les changements technologiques prend une importance particulière actuellement puisque la compagnie a prévu un programme d'expansion évalué selon les plans fédéraux à près de \$40 millions et selon les plans provinciaux à près de \$25 millions.



Les deux points majeurs sur lesquels achoppent les négociations sont d'une part, le travail à la pièce que la compagnie tente d'imposer à tous les travailleurs de l'usine, et d'autre part, le "pattern" régissant les augmentations de salaires de tous les travailleurs des 5 grandes compagnies de caoutchouc (Goodyear, Firestone...) et maintenant les disparités de salaires existant entre les diverses usines, disparités que les travailleurs veulent briser.

Malgré la guerre d'injonction, de menaces et de poursuites de la compagnie, les syndiqués de la Firestone, affiliés à l'Union des ouvriers unis du caoutchouc, liège, linoléum et plastique d'Amérique (local 790 FTQ) semblent décidés à aller jusqu'au bout.

LE CONSEIL DU TRAVAIL DE  
MONTREAL SOLIDAIRE DE LA  
LUTTE DES FEMMES

Le Conseil du travail de Montréal (FTQ-CTC) au cours de son assemblée du 3 mai dernier s'est prononcé en faveur de l'avortement libre et gratuit et a demandé le retrait des accusations portées contre le Dr. Morgentaler.

Considérant que les lois actuelles défavorisent les femmes à revenu modeste qui ne peuvent se payer les coûts d'avortements légaux à l'étranger ou illégaux au Québec, les membres ont insisté sur la nécessité de toucher les vraies causes du problème de l'avortement. Il faudrait selon eux plus d'information sur la planification familiale et la sexualité et la mise sur pied de cliniques de planification et d'avortement sous le régime de l'assurance-maladie.

Une telle position de la part d'un regroupement de syndiqués est un pas de plus dans la sensibilisation aux problèmes que rencontrent quotidiennement des milliers de travailleuses et de ménagères. C'est un précédent dans les positions syndicales de se pencher ainsi sur les problèmes des femmes, précédent qui mérite d'être souligné.

QUEBEC - LES GREVISTES DE POLLACK  
ET SAINT-DOMINIQUE FONT DU  
THEATRE

Les grévistes de Pollack et du Pavillon Saint-Dominique qui sont en grève depuis de longs mois sont toujours réunis et décidés de poursuivre la lutte jusqu'à la victoire malgré le mutisme complet des parties patronales et du gouvernement.

Le 8 mai dernier, avec la collaboration du Comité régional de libération, les grévistes ont organisé une petite soirée théâtrale. Des trois oeuvres présentées, deux avaient été composées par les travailleurs et elles se faisaient le reflet des conditions de travail ainsi que de l'exploitation économique et l'humiliation dont sont victimes les travailleurs. L'assistance composée de travailleurs de différents secteurs a assisté à une attaque systématique contre le système capitaliste légalisé par les différents gouvernements.

Quant à la troisième pièce, elle avait été préparée par le Théâtre... Euh!, troupe de Québec qui soutient les luttes ouvrières; la pièce consistait en une vigoureuse dénonciation de l'impérialisme américain appuyé par les marionnettes canadiennes et québécoises.

LAUZON - LOCK-OUT ILLEGAL A LA  
DAVIE SHIPBUILDING

Le 3 mai, la Davie Shipbuilding a mis les clés dans les portes de son chantier de Lauzon (en face de Québec) et a "lockouté" ses 2,300 employés. Un premier lock-out avait eu lieu du 19 au 23 avril. Cette fois-ci, les arguments de la compagnie pour fermer son chantier sont "l'escalade démesurée des actes de violence" et les menaces à l'endroit de certains contremaîtres. En fait, tout ce qui s'est passé, c'est que 3 contremaîtres ont été "invités" à quitter le chantier par des ouvriers à cause de leur attitude envers les travailleurs et 5 autres ont quitté d'eux-mêmes, sans attendre d'être "invités".

Alors que la Davie Ship avait décroché une injonction contre les travailleurs à cause de leur grève spontanée du 19 avril, le syndicat a décidé de ne pas poursuivre en justice la compagnie "parce que ce n'est pas à coup d'injonctions qu'on règle un conflit". L'attitude est très logique: on ne peut faire appel à un appareil judiciaire dont les intérêts sont anti-travailleurs pour défendre les intérêts de ces mêmes travailleurs.

Réunis en assemblée générale le 4 mai, les 2,000 ouvriers présents ont rejeté à l'unanimité les dernières offres de la compagnie. Le 9 mai, le lock-out se poursuivait toujours et les négociations étaient arrêtées. Détail en passant: les "troupes" de la Sûreté du Québec sont cantonnées à l'aréna de Lauzon, prêtes à réprimer tout mouvement de contestation un peu "chaud": la prévention du crime, c'est ça.



RENOI DU PRESIDENT DES EMPLOYES  
DE SOUTIEN DU CEGEP MAISONNEUVE

Le Front commun des employés de soutien, des professeurs et des étudiants du Cegep de Maisonneuve dénonçait mercredi le 9 mai dernier une situation explosive dans ce collège qui oppose l'administration du collège à chacun de ces trois groupes.

Le président du syndicat des employés de soutien a été congédié et malgré l'impossibilité d'avoir des éclaircissements sur les motifs de ce congédiement, celui-ci a toutes les allures d'un renvoi pour activités syndicales. L'administration a également coupé les salaires des professeurs pratiquant le gel des cours depuis trois semaines dans le cadre de la lutte contre la déclassification des professeurs. Enfin, elle refuse de reconnaître le travail des étudiants pendant ce gel des cours et menace de déqualifier leur diplôme. Dans tous les cas, l'administration refuse de s'expliquer publiquement et a refusé de se rendre à une rencontre organisée par le Front commun mercredi le 9 mai.

La question du renvoi du président des employés, M. Delbast, date de la parution malencontreuse d'un article accusant celui-ci de vol dans le journal étudiant du collège; cet article était signé par un ex-employé qui en voulait personnellement à M. Delbast et qui s'est fait passer pour étudiant pour pouvoir faire paraître son article. L'administration s'est aussitôt servie de ce prétexte pour effectuer le renvoi de cet employé qui avait largement contribué à la formation du syndicat accrédité le 7 avril 1972. Malgré sa jeunesse, ce syndicat s'est affirmé dans ses premières luttes comme très combatif et l'administration ne pouvait le voir que d'un très mauvais oeil.

Le Front commun est donc décidé à imposer à l'administration du collège la réintégration du président des employés de soutien "pour contrer l'escalade de la répression à Maisonneuve et faire sentir à l'administration leur force réelle".

SOREL - TROIS DEBRAYAGES EN UN  
MOIS A MARINE INDUSTRIES

Les 2,700 travailleurs de Marine Industries, à Sorel, ont accepté de retourner au travail lundi dernier, le 7 mai, mais depuis un mois ils sont sortis en grève sauvage à trois reprises. Vendredi dernier, les travailleurs, membres du Syndicat des chantiers maritimes de Sorel, ont quitté leurs postes au cours de l'après-midi pour protester contre la suspension d'un délégué syndical. Ce délégué fut sorti de l'usine par des policiers, sous le prétexte d'insubordination, après que son contremaître lui eut refusé une libération pour activité syndicale, comme le prévoit la convention collective.

Lors de l'assemblée tenue le lendemain matin, les travailleurs ont décidé de retourner au travail lundi mais ils ont aussi résolu de ne pas signer la prochaine convention collective aussi longtemps que le délégué syndical n'aura pas repris son emploi sans aucune sanction ni perte de salaire. La convention présentement en vigueur est échue depuis le 31 décembre; en février, un accord de principe avait été rejeté à 95% par les travailleurs qui peu après ont élu un exécutif syndical plus combatif. Une rencontre est prévue le 9 mai en présence du conciliateur gouvernemental.

A l'occasion du 1er mai, les travailleurs de Marine Industrie avaient également débrayé, pour participer à la fête internationale des travailleurs, alors que le 6 avril, les 300 soudeurs étaient sortis en grève sauvage, arrêtant complètement la production pendant trois heures. Ce premier arrêt de travail avait pour but de protester contre la lenteur des négociations. Rappelons que Marine Industrie est une entreprise dont les propriétaires sont la Société générale de financement et la famille Simard.



QUATRE MOIS DE GREVE AUX  
RAFFINERIES SHELL DE CALIFORNIE  
ET LOUISIANE

Il y aura bientôt quatre mois que les 5,000 travailleurs de cinq raffineries et de deux usines de produits chimiques sont en grève et ont entrepris le boycottage contre la compagnie Shell Oil. La grève a commencé à la fin de janvier dans des usines situées en Californie et en Louisiane; les principales revendications portent sur des questions de santé, de sécurité et la caisse de retraite. Les travailleurs sont membres du "Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union" et Shell refuse toujours d'entreprendre des négociations sérieuses.

Dans les villes où les usines sont en grève, les policiers accentuent la répression contre les grévistes. Au fur et à mesure que l'intransigeance de Shell devient de plus en plus apparente, le besoin d'une action militante se fait sentir davantage chez les grévistes. Des arrestations ont été effectuées à proximité des usines de la Nouvelle-Orléans et de Martinez, en Californie, alors que les grévistes tentaient d'empêcher les scabs d'entrer au travail. Quatorze femmes ont été arrêtées, le 12 avril, à Martinez, alors qu'elles étaient assises devant l'entrée de la raffinerie; elles ont été accusées d'avoir causé du désordre en public. Douze des femmes étaient des épouses de grévistes et les deux autres étaient militantes dans un comité de soutien à la grève. Auparavant, plusieurs douzaines de femmes avaient fait du piquetage devant les portes de la raffinerie pour protester contre l'utilisation des scabs fournis par la compagnie C. Norman Peterson. Les femmes ont retenu les scabs pendant près d'une heure, avant l'arrivée de la police.

A l'occasion de cette grève, c'est la première fois qu'une union internationale mène résolument la bataille sur les questions de santé et de sécurité dans les conditions de travail. Toutefois, Shell espère pouvoir casser le syndicat plutôt que d'accorder des bonnes conditions de sécurité et de santé. A la Nouvelle-Orléans, la compagnie a même eu recours à des étudiants ingénieurs de l'Université de Tulane à qui on a fait effectuer des tâches de techniciens, libérant ainsi les ingénieurs de la compagnie pour qu'ils puissent accomplir toutes les tâches nécessaires au fonctionnement de l'usine.

Le syndicat et les comités de soutien à la grève mènent actuellement une vaste campagne de boycottage de tous les produits Shell. Toutefois, même si le militantisme est devenu très actif chez les grévistes et chez les femmes qui les appuient, on commence à réaliser que le boycottage n'est pas, à lui seul, suffisant pour abattre la quatrième plus grande corporation au monde.

apla à suivre...

- Samedi le 12 mai, à 13h.30, marche de solidarité avec le peuple palestinien; départ au Carré Dominion, pour passer devant les consulats d'Israël et des Etats-Unis et se rendre ensuite à l'Université McGill.
- Congrès du CCSNM (10 au 13 mai), au Cegep de Rosemont; thème: la solidarité.
- Congrès du CTM (11 au 13 mai), à la Polyvalente Emile-Nelligan.
- A proscrire: semaine de la police au Canada, du 13 au 19 mai; exposition de la Sûreté du Québec, au quartier général, rue Parthenais.



# apla à lire, voir et entendre.

## LES GENS DU QUEBEC: PETITE BOURGOGNE

Publié par les Editions québécoises, le cahier Petite Bourgogne est le deuxième d'une série qui s'annonce abondante. Le premier, sur St-Henri, paraissait en novembre dernier.

Construit de façon similaire au premier ouvrage, le cahier Petite Bourgogne ramasse plusieurs informations utiles: une présentation sommaire du quartier, une histoire brève des gens du quartier, des témoignages des anciens sur les luttes menées par les citoyens de la paroisse, les principales luttes ouvrières menées par les syndicats et les travailleurs du quartier et le survol des initiatives prises par divers groupes (Projet d'organisation populaire, les avocats populaires, etc...) avec un bottin des services communautaires du quartier.

Même si on peut reprocher à l'ouvrage de manquer d'informations sur le développement économique du quartier, le rappel des principales luttes ouvrières et la description de certaines politiques municipales dans le quartier nous soulignent bien que les luttes d'aujourd'hui ont des fondements qui remontent au début du siècle.

## LA PROPAGANDE ANTI-OUVRIERE AU CINEMA

Le fonctionnement des syndicats n'est pas parfait et les travailleurs syndiqués le savent bien. C'est la raison pour laquelle ils s'efforcent constamment d'en améliorer l'efficacité et la démocratie.

Le film MOI Y EN A VOULOIR DES SOUS, qui a pris l'affiche à Montréal et en province, prétend faire rire des comportements syndicaux et des conflits qui opposent les travailleurs aux capitalistes. Disons tout de suite que la France pourrait garder ses ordures chez elle...

Au fait, le film de Jean Yanne se termine par la phrase suivante: le monde est composé d'une majorité d'idiots qui luttent contre une poignée de demeures pour protéger une société pourrie. Autrement dit, selon le réalisateur - comédien Jean Yanne, NOUS SOMMES TOUS DES IMBECILES, sauf lui bien sûr qui a trouvé le moyen de faire de "gros sous" en nous le faisant savoir!

LE MEPRIS QU'AFFICHE CE FILM A L'EGARD DU PUBLIC EN GENERAL VISE PLUS PARTICULIEREMENT LES OUVRIERS. Ils nous sont présentés comme un troupeau de moutons, manipulés complètement par des Centrales syndicales corrompues, et ils semblent tous trop bêtes pour désirer autre chose qu'obéir aux gentils patrons qui leur donnent de si bons salaires! Cette caricature, sous le masque d'un humour facile, fausse totalement la réalité des conditions de travail de la vaste majorité des ouvriers et camoufle jusqu'au plus petit signe de conflit d'intérêts entre eux et les patrons. Sous le couvert de situations invraisemblables, le réalisateur tend à nous faire croire que tous les travailleurs sont bien heureux de céder à leurs "bons boss" les soucis d'administrer l'économie, la politique, etc. Après tout, il y a une classe de surhommes doués pour s'occuper des choses sérieuses, à quoi bon les remplacer... D'ailleurs, peut-on croire qu'il existe un conflit d'intérêts entre les capitalistes et les ouvriers d'une usine qui ressemble à une discothèque et dont les secrétaires-waitress ont toutes l'allure de putains de luxe!

Il serait trop long d'énumérer les exemples de situations où les ouvriers font figure de pauvres types. Mais il faut souligner que tout au long du film, les idées de réformes et les projets de changements sociaux présentés par les groupes de pression populaires et les syndicats sont ridiculisés, parfois de façon ignoble. Tout au contraire, les idées des patrons sont généralement très bien défendues par Jean Yanne lui-même, qui tient le rôle d'un jeune administrateur capitaliste, sympathique (à qui?) et compréhensif... En proposant de combattre le capitalisme par le capitalisme (If you can't beat them, join them!) et en suggérant que de simples



travailleurs ne peuvent aspirer par eux-mêmes à de réelles transformations sociales, le film MOI Y EN A VOULOIR DES SOUS vient épauler la classe capitaliste de France et du Québec. Par le biais de "l'humour", il s'agit de démobiliser le spectateur, qu'il soit ouvrier ou partisan de réformes sociales: la farce est si grossière qu'il devient gênant de critiquer le film. De peur de passer pour quelqu'un qui ne sait pas prendre les farces, on se tait.

Or, c'est exactement ce que souhaitent Yanne et ses pareils: pendant ce temps, les indifférents et les anti-syndicaux rient grassement, comme pour les "jokes" de Claude Blanchard. Et encore! Le film n'est pas vraiment comique. Il est si mal construit, et les allusions à des situations françaises sont tellement fréquentes, que le public "en perd de long bouts".

Ce n'est pas un hasard si le film MOI Y EN A VOULOIR DES SOUS circule au Québec précisément à l'époque présente. Le distributeur Michael Costom (Société Nouvelle Cinématographique (?)) avait même prévu organiser un lancement le jour du 1er mai, Fête mondiale des travailleurs... Il ne faut pas s'étonner de cette manœuvre puisque, en France, le film a pris l'affiche une semaine avant les élections, en mars dernier. Comme il tourne en dérision les revendications et certains projets du programme commun de l'opposition, ce film venait apporter de l'eau au moulin de la propagande anti-ouvrière du gouvernement français. Ces deux derniers renseignements nous permettent de voir l'intérêt des capitalistes à faire voir le film de Jean Yanne et l'importance qu'il y a de dénoncer sa sortie au Québec, en tout temps mais surtout dans la conjoncture présente. Les chefs syndicaux sont en prison. Les travailleurs sont soumis à une répression anti-syndicale de plus en plus dure. L'ensemble de la population du Québec et du Canada doit subir des hausses scandaleuses du prix des aliments, du loyer des logements et de la plupart des biens essentiels. Tout cela risque de donner raison à ceux qui pensent que la société d'exploitation capitaliste nous conduit à l'appauvrissement et à l'insécurité; et qu'il faut songer à changer cette société, de fond en comble.

Le cinéma apparaît comme un divertissement inoffensif et les films se succèdent à l'affiche en nous proposant des héros qui, bien entendu, ne sont jamais des ouvriers en lutte contre l'exploitation des capitalistes et de leurs gouvernements.

A l'occasion de la sortie du film de Jean Yanne, nous pouvons comprendre que les capitalistes qui financent la production et la distribution des films ne sont pas différents de ceux qui possèdent les usines, les compagnies de finance et les chaînes d'alimentation. Ils ont tous ensemble le même intérêt: faire le maximum de profit en exploitant la population et les ouvriers, chacun dans son domaine et chacun à sa manière.

Nous ne sommes plus aveugles, le mépris n'aura qu'un temps.

Ce texte a été rédigé en consultation avec des individus du milieu du cinéma et de quelques militants syndicaux et de groupes populaires. Ceux-ci envisagent donner suite à leur première réaction en organisant dans les jours qui viennent une forme concrète de dénonciation - non publicitaire toutefois.

#### ON PEUT VOIR AUSSI...

ON ACHEVE BIEN LES CHEVAUX de Sidney Pollack (USA 1969). Un marathon de danse des années 30 qui est en même temps un miroir à peine grossissant de la société capitaliste au lendemain de la dépression. (AU OUTREMONT, samedi 12 mai à 19h. et dimanche 13 à 19h.).

ROME VILLE OUVERTE de Roberto Rossellini (Italie 1944-46). L'Italie de l'immédiate après-guerre. Le cinéma abandonne les studios et essaie de descendre dans la rue pour témoigner de la réalité. (A la CINEMATHEQUE QUEBECOISE, mercredi 16 mai à 19h.30).

LE CHAT DANS LE SAC de Gille Groulx (Québec 1964). Une époque sans doute bien terminée de l'histoire du Québec mais qu'il n'est pas inutile de revoir pour s'apercevoir qu'on a fait du chemin. L'histoire d'un jeune Québécois en train de devenir un intellectuel petit-bourgeois et qui cherche des solutions individualistes aux problèmes politiques d'ici. (A la CINEMATHEQUE QUEBECOISE, le mercredi 16, à 21h.30).

SUR LES QUAIS d'Elia Kazan (USA 1954). Dans le port de New York, les débardeurs se battent contre le syndicat qui leur tient lieu de second patron. La mauvaise conscience d'un cinéaste "libéral" travaillé par l'humanisme. (Au OUTREMONT, le mercredi 16 à 19h.).

Collaboration spéciale du Comité d'information politique.





# ANNEXE

## LE BILL 89: LES TRAVAUX FORCÉS POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

*C'est au printemps dernier que le cabinet Bourassa, à la suite des débrayages massifs et de la loi spéciale 19, a eu l'idée de présenter une loi générale dont l'objectif serait d'éliminer à toutes fins pratiques le droit de grève. Ni plus ni moins.*

*Jean Cournoyer, ministre du Travail, a préparé le projet de loi. Il a eu la bonne idée de l'intituler "Loi visant à assurer le bien-être de la population en cas de conflit de travail". Le ministre a commencé à parler du bill 89 en décembre 72, la décrivant comme une "loi dont la fonction serait de ne pas avoir à recourir tout le temps à des lois spéciales" (sic). Il a donc décidé de présenter une loi qui sauverait du travail au député; si le bill 89 était accepté, les travailleurs n'auraient plus besoin de loi spéciale, ils n'auraient plus le droit de faire la grève.*

*Les trois centrales syndicales se sont opposées au projet de loi. Toutefois, Cournoyer n'a pas abandonné l'idée de cette loi qui supprime 100 ans de luttes syndicales et il a laissé entendre qu'il la présentera à l'Assemblée Nationale l'automne prochain.*

*Mais au-delà de l'attaque concertée du régime Bourassa contre la classe ouvrière, il faut voir, dans la pratique, les implications du bill 89 s'il était adopté. Nous présentons donc un texte préparé par le Comité des Sciences juridiques de l'UQAM qui fait suite à celui présenté au mois de janvier (voir bul. no. 95). On s'aperçoit rapidement à la lecture de ce texte que le bill 89 vise à instaurer les travaux forcés pour les travailleurs.*

Le bill 89 ça veut dire quoi? Ca veut dire:

Finis le droit de grève, dans le secteur public, dans le secteur parapublic, et dans le secteur privé! Le gouvernement peut quand il le veut, sur simple décret, empêcher toute grève, dans tout secteur. Même chose lorsque les patrons (ou l'état-patron) refusent de s'entendre sur les services essentiels.

Finie la négociation, les conditions de travail seront désormais imposées par décret dans le secteur public, parapublic et dans le secteur privé. En mettant fin à une grève, le gouvernement pourra quand il voudra décréter les conditions de travail dans n'importe quelle entreprise.



## DES EXEMPLES CONCRETS

### CAS NO 1: GREVE APPREHENDEE DANS UNE ENTREPRISE DE TRANSPORT PAR CAMION

10 jours avant la fin de la période de conciliation le gouvernement s'aperçoit qu'il y aura une grève. Il appréhende une grève (art. 18a).

- 1- Le gouvernement nomme une commission d'enquête (art. 5) (il nomme par exemple, le ministre des transports, un représentant d'une entreprise de camionnage, un représentant syndical), et il lui demande de faire rapport sans délai pour savoir si cette grève peut compromettre la santé, la sécurité, ou le bien-être public dans le Québec ou une de ses régions. Qu'est-ce que bien-être public? Ca n'est défini nulle part dans la loi: donc c'est le bien-être du gouvernement!
- 2- La commission du gouvernement lui répond: oui! Si elle répond non le gouvernement peut nommer d'autres commissaires et ordonner une nouvelle enquête.
- 3- Le gouvernement interdit la grève immédiatement (art. 18).
- 4- Les négociations cessent immédiatement et le gouvernement nomme trois commissaires aux différends.
- 5- Ces commissaires du gouvernement imposeraient intégralement le projet de convention des patrons ou celui du syndicat - sans négociation - devinons lequel des deux ils choisiront!

### CAS NO 2: RALENTISSEMENT DE TRAVAIL DANS LE DOMAINE DE LA CONSTRUCTION

En cours de négociation, pour forcer les patrons à négocier, un groupe d'ouvriers de la construction décide, sans faire la grève, de ralentir le travail.

- 1- Le gouvernement peut émettre un décret chaque fois qu'un groupe de travailleurs "cesse de dispenser ses services de façon habituelle" (ceci comprend les ralentissements) - (art. 7).
- 2- Cet ordre du gouvernement est valable pour 60 jours - et il peut être renouvelé indéfiniment.
- 3- Si les travailleurs ne reprennent leur rythme de travail normal, amende de \$50 à \$250 par jour pour les ouvriers et amende de \$5,000 à \$50,000 par jour pour le syndicat et pour les officiers syndicaux.

### CAS NO 3: GREVE DES EMPLOYES DU TABAC DANS LA REGION DE JOLIETTE

Si les employés faisant la récolte du tabac dans la région de Joliette décidaient de se mettre en grève peu de temps avant la récolte que pourrait-il se passer?

- 1- Le gouvernement nomme une commission d'enquête (par exemple le maire de Joliette, un représentant patronal et un représentant ouvrier).

Si le rapport de la commission d'enquête disait: "Cette grève risque de compromettre l'économie de la région de Joliette qui repose essentiellement sur la récolte et la vente du tabac. La perte de cette récolte serait catastrophique pour la région et mettrait en cause la prospérité financière et le bien-être public des habitants de Joliette". (sic).

Même si l'industrie du tabac est considérée comme nuisible à la santé selon le ministère fédéral.

- 2- Le gouvernement interdirait la grève.
- 3- Il nommerait ses commissaires aux différends, et, par ceux-ci
- 4- Il décréterait les conditions de travail.

Il n'y a pas d'exception: votre entreprise, aussi petite soit-elle, peut être touchée. Choisissez vos propres exemples, le vôtre est bon.



CA N'EST PAS TOUT

Le bill 89 ça veut aussi dire:

- 1- Les syndicats doivent faire la police pour le gouvernement. S'ils ne prennent pas les moyens appropriés pour amener à se conformer à la loi et aux décrets: amendes de \$5,000 à \$50,000 par jour pour l'union et les officiers.

Si les syndiqués désobéissent aux recommandations d'un président et continuent la grève, le gouvernement pourra dire que le président n'a pas pris les moyens appropriés (puisque les syndiqués sont encore en grève) et le condamner à l'amende quand même. (art. 44 et 45).

- 2- Si un syndiqué préfère démissionner plutôt que d'obéir à un décret qui casse une grève, le patron peut refuser sa démission. S'il cesse de travailler quand même il sera en défaut: amende de \$50 à \$250 par jour.

La loi 89 ça veut dire les travaux forcés pour les travailleurs.

Cette loi s'applique partout. Il n'y a qu'une seule et unique exception: la Société des alcools du Québec; même Loto-Québec n'y échappe pas. Toutes les entreprises, petites, moyennes ou grosses, sans exception, publiques, parapubliques, privées, sont touchées. Le bill 89 ça vous concerne.





# DOSSIER

## ENTREVUE AVEC 2 FEMINISTES MARXISTES

*Deux féministes marxistes, Rosamaria Dalla Costa du groupe italien Lotta Feminista et Selma James d'Angleterre étaient récemment de passage à Montréal où elles rencontrèrent des groupes de militantes et présentèrent une conférence réunissant plus d'une centaine de personnes. En collaboration avec le Centre des Femmes, l'APLQ a réalisé une longue entrevue avec ces deux féministes qui apportent une perspective nouvelle à la lutte des femmes et à la lutte de classe tout entière.*

*Certes, le texte est parfois assez laborieux et cela est dû aux sérieux problèmes de langue que nous avons eu à affronter. Pour faciliter la compréhension, nous nous sommes donc permis de retrancher certains passages et nous avons puisé dans la brochure qu'elles ont publiée en commun et intitulée "THE POWER OF WOMEN AND THE SUBVERSION OF THE COMMUNITY" afin de compléter et de préciser d'autres parties du texte.*

### "WE'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY"

*Question - Pourriez-vous résumer l'essentiel de vos positions?*

Selma - Nous avons cherché à définir quel est le rapport entre les femmes et le capital et quelles luttes nous devons mener pour le détruire. Il n'y avait aucune analyse marxiste sérieuse qui visait à situer la fonction des femmes dans l'économie capitaliste. Le mouvement des femmes a donc dû se définir lui-même à partir des expériences de luttes concrètes. De cette recherche, il s'est dégagé deux tendances politiques qui à première vue apparaissent comme les deux pôles opposés de l'éventail politique du mouvement féministe.

La première tendance affirme que c'est la notion de caste et non celle de classe qui est fondamentale et qu'une lutte politique ne peut mettre fin à l'oppression physique et psychologique des femmes. Ces femmes rejettent d'ailleurs carrément la lutte politique révolutionnaire. Elles prétendent que l'on doit se changer et changer les hommes avant tout. Ainsi, non seulement la lutte politique est rejetée mais aussi la possibilité de libération pour la majorité des femmes qui sont trop occupées à travailler et à s'occuper des autres pour avoir le temps de chercher des solutions individuelles.



L'autre tendance affirme au contraire que c'est la classe et non la caste qui est fondamentale et que le capital est l'ennemi principal, non parce qu'il existe mais parce qu'il est encore mal aménagé, mal rodé. Elles ne visent pas à détruire le système capitaliste mais seulement à l'organiser plus rationnellement (à travail égal salaire égal, des garderies plus nombreuses et de meilleure qualité.) Cette analyse de classe a servi jusqu'à maintenant à limiter le secteur d'intervention du mouvement féministe.

On retrouve dans ces deux tendances le même caractère libéral et la plupart des femmes de notre mouvement n'appartiennent ni à l'une ni à l'autre de ces deux tendances.

En fait, les femmes de la tendance "politique" ne voient pas la lutte comme étant QUALITATIVEMENT différente de celle du mouvement ouvrier organisé sous une direction masculine. La différence, c'est qu'il existe maintenant un appendice à la lutte globale, quelque chose qu'on appelle "libération des femmes".

Les questions qui se posent sont les suivantes a) est-ce que les femmes non salariées sont auxiliaires au fonctionnement du capitalisme et conséquemment sont aussi auxiliaires à la lutte plus globale contre le capitalisme? b) Est-ce qu'une lutte qui a exclu les femmes pendant si longtemps peut être considérée comme globale?

Obligées de développer notre propre analyse politique, nous avons rejeté les analyses toutes faites des mouvements socialistes traditionnels et nous avons progressivement transformé la notion de caste en un féminisme révolutionnaire basé sur la notion de classe.

Refusant d'une part de subordonner la question de classe au féminisme et d'autre part de subordonner le féminisme au concept de classe, Mariarosa a tenté d'élaborer une base théorique pour la lutte révolutionnaire autonome des femmes en formulant une critique de l'économie politique de l'exploitation des femmes.

Mariarosa prétend non seulement que la famille est le centre du conditionnement, de la consommation et un réservoir de main-d'oeuvre, mais aussi et surtout un centre de production sociale. Quand les marxistes traditionnels disaient que la famille capitaliste ne faisait pas partie de la production sociale, ils refusaient de reconnaître que la femme puisse avoir un potentiel de pouvoir social et que la ménagère soit productive. Pourtant si notre production est vitale pour le capitalisme, le refus de travailler, le refus de produire constitue un levier de pouvoir social fondamental. En effet, Mariarosa démontre que même lorsque les femmes ne travaillent pas à l'extérieur du foyer, elles sont des productrices essentielles; le bien qu'elles produisent c'est l'être humain, le travailleur lui-même.

La maison, le quartier ne sont donc pas des endroits de détente et de liberté annexés à l'usine, où par hasard il y a des femmes qui sont les servantes personnelles des hommes. Au contraire, le quartier est l'autre moitié de l'organisation capitaliste, l'autre secteur de l'exploitation capitaliste, l'autre source cachée de plus-value. Le point central de cette usine sociale qu'est le quartier, c'est la ménagère qui produit un bien, la force de travail.

Les luttes menées par les femmes constituent une menace à la domination capitaliste qui a fait de nous aussi des instruments d'accumulation de la plus-value et qui a transformé nos rapports avec les hommes et les enfants en travail de reproduction et d'entretien de cette force de travail.

Jusqu'à maintenant, les femmes qui tentaient de sortir de l'isolement de leur foyer pouvaient trouver une alternative seulement à l'intérieur de l'organisation capitaliste. Aujourd'hui cependant la lutte des femmes pose comme seule alternative possible la destruction du capitalisme.

D'après Mariarosa, la classe ouvrière ne comprend pas seulement le travailleur salarié. D'après elle, le rapport social qui existe entre le salarié et le non-salarié au sein de la famille est partie intégrante de la structure du capital et par conséquent la lutte contre l'un est interdépendante de la lutte contre l'autre. Cette définition de la famille et du quartier comme centre possible de transformation sociale, ouvre une toute nouvelle perspective de lutte et d'organisation révolutionnaire qui doit mener à réévaluer le poids et l'impact des femmes dans la lutte.

Mariarosa - Pour résumer l'essentiel de nos positions en ce qui concerne l'autonomie de la lutte des femmes et le salaire pour le travail ménager, nous devons préciser ce que représente le mouvement des femmes et cela malgré les différentes tendances qui y sont exprimées.

A leurs débuts, les mouvements de femmes tentèrent de voir les hypothèses et les stratégies de lutte susceptibles de mettre fin à leur situation d'exploitation et



d'oppression. En fait, les femmes recherchaient une force collective, un pouvoir pour lutter contre cette situation.

Ce que nous appelons un pouvoir n'est pas le pouvoir que le capital donne à quelques femmes contre d'autres femmes, mais le pouvoir de toutes les femmes de lutter contre leur situation d'exploitation.

Les mouvements de femmes représentaient donc une amorce de lutte contre la discrimination dont les femmes ont toujours souffert, tant dans l'organisation du travail que dans les organisations révolutionnaires elles-mêmes. En effet, cette discrimination à l'intérieur des groupes de gauche a été la principale raison pour laquelle les femmes les ont quittés et se sont regroupées dans des mouvements féminins. Ces groupes de gauche avaient complètement oublié et négligé ce qu'était la condition réelle des femmes. Mais à partir du moment où des femmes militantes ou non ont commencé à se regrouper pour parler de leur situation, elles ont immédiatement commencé à parler du travail ménager et de la sexualité. Ces questions n'avaient jamais été soulevées par aucun groupe de gauche ni aucun parti constitué majoritairement d'hommes.

Ceci nous a démontré une fois de plus que seulement les personnes directement concernées, directement intéressées à détruire leur condition d'exploitation peuvent vraiment découvrir l'analyse politique nécessaire et les moyens d'organiser leur lutte et d'exercer un pouvoir véritable.

Les questions d'autonomie de la lutte des femmes, du pouvoir, du travail ménager et de la sexualité sont interdépendantes et constituent les éléments d'une même lutte.

### "POWER TO THE SISTERS AND THEREFORE TO THE CLASS"

*Question - Quels liens faites-vous entre la lutte de classe et la lutte des femmes?*

Mariarosa - puisque les mouvements de femmes blanches, noires et de toutes les races représentent la révolte, la rébellion, la tentative d'organisation de la section de classe la plus exploitée et la plus méconnue, je pense que les mouvements de femmes vont vraiment poser la question de classe c'est-à-dire non seulement la question des femmes mais à travers la question des femmes celle de l'exploitation de la classe ouvrière entière.

A partir du moment où les femmes commencent à s'organiser, commencent à prendre conscience de leur force et de leur pouvoir, c'est la classe ouvrière tout entière qui trouve de nouvelles forces et de nouvelles possibilités de luttes.

Selma - Nous sommes dans la même position que les noirs dans la révolution noire. On a assumé qu'il y avait une classe ouvrière et que le mouvement noir était un accident historique particulier. Mais le mouvement noir a compris que la définition de classe sur laquelle était basée la lutte des mouvements dits de gauche, était une définition étroite et venait d'une classe étrangère.

Le mouvement noir n'est pas un accident historique exotique, mais l'une des fractions (les plus exploitées) de la classe ouvrière qui ouvre à nouveau les possibilités de lutte de toute la classe ouvrière.

Nous, féministes, représentons exactement la même chose; nous ne sommes pas une annexe, un appendice d'une classe mais une partie intégrale de cette classe. Mais parce que nous n'avons pas les mêmes privilèges que d'autres sections de cette classe, nous sommes capables de voir l'organisation complète du travail capitaliste et nous avons la possibilité d'établir des liens dans la lutte ouvrière qui n'ont jamais été établis précédemment. Nous avons une perspective de lutte dans le quartier sans laquelle la lutte dans les usines ne peut réussir.

Pour revenir avec la comparaison avec les noirs, signalons que malgré le fait que des milliers de noirs aient affronté l'Etat américain, beaucoup de gens prétendaient encore que la classe ouvrière américaine n'avait pas agi. Alors que c'était la première fois depuis des années que toutes les usines de Détroit s'arrêtaient de produire, personne ne comprit que la classe ouvrière avait stoppé la production capitaliste. Ils ne comprirent pas, parce que les ouvriers en lutte étaient des noirs. Il en est de même pour nous! Parce que nous avons un utérus, quand nous nous battons, nous ne sommes pas considérées comme faisant partie de la classe ouvrière... nous ne sommes que des femmes!



## EXPLOITATION CAPITALISTE OU RAPPORT SERVILE

*Question - Considérez-vous l'exploitation des femmes comme un rapport d'exploitation capitaliste, considérez-vous le rapport entre les femmes et le reste de la société comme un rapport de classe ou croyez-vous qu'il s'agit plutôt d'une ancienne forme d'exploitation, un ancien type de rapport tel le rapport entre le serf et le seigneur, où le serf échange sa force de travail contre son entretien?*

Selma - Nous sommes féministes marxistes et par conséquent nous commençons avec un point de vue marxiste. Dans le manifeste du parti communiste, Marx dit clairement: "La bourgeoisie ne peut exister sans révolutionner constamment les instruments de production, ce qui veut dire les rapports de production, c'est-à-dire l'ensemble des rapports sociaux. Le maintien sans changement de l'ancien mode de production était, au contraire, pour toutes les classes industrielles antérieures, la condition première de leur existence. Ce bouleversement continu de la production, ce constant ébranlement de tout le système social, cette agitation et cette insécurité perpétuelle distinguent l'époque bourgeoise de toutes les précédentes." Il est vrai que le travail domestique et que la reproduction de la main-d'oeuvre et son entretien ne ressemblent en rien à la production industrielle d'automobiles ou de réfrigérateurs dans une usine. Il est clair que le travail domestique est une forme de travail primitive comparé à la production technologique. Mais c'est précisément une forme de production qui répond à un besoin précis du capitalisme, soit l'entretien et la reproduction de la classe ouvrière.

Les ménagères de la classe ouvrière ne sont pas exclues des salariées, elles sont simplement payées à même le salaire de leur mari et le capitaliste obtient la force de travail de deux ouvriers pour le prix d'un.

Mariarosa - Les femmes ménagères au même titre que les chômeurs et les assistés sociaux ne sont pas directement salariées, mais constituent une réserve de main-d'oeuvre à bon marché toujours soumise aux diktats du capital. La quasi totalité des femmes ont à assumer des tâches ménagères mais on ne peut pas dire que du simple fait qu'elles assurent l'entretien et la reproduction de la classe ouvrière au profit du capital elles constituent une classe. La question devient d'ailleurs particulièrement épineuse quand on parle des femmes de la petite-bourgeoisie qui font partie de cette bourgeoisie strictement à cause de leurs liens de mariage. Etre la femme d'un homme riche c'est un peu comme être l'esclave dans bien des cas d'un riche patron; s'il y a rupture, la femme est souvent condamnée à chercher du travail et nous savons quelles sont les conditions des femmes sur le marché du travail... A cause de l'insécurité complète de leur position sociale, ces femmes peuvent donc avoir intérêt à se lier aux femmes de la classe ouvrière et à mener un combat commun avec ces dernières, contre le capital. Les femmes ne constituent pas une classe en soi mais une fraction de classe particulièrement exploitée et quoi que les femmes de la classe ouvrière ont un intérêt immédiat à s'organiser pour renverser leur situation, certaines femmes de la petite bourgeoisie peuvent aussi avoir intérêt à mener un combat contre le capital.

### TRAVAIL MENAGER ET PLUS-VALUE

*Question - Pourriez-vous préciser de quelle façon la femme produit de la plus-value par son travail ménager?*

Selma - Le premier exemple frappant est celui de l'esclave en Amérique du Nord. L'esclave ne recevait aucun salaire mais il produisait quand même de la plus-value qui permettait d'établir des industries dans la métropole.

Par le travail ménager, la femme produit un bien qui permet de reproduire et d'entretenir la force de travail. La valeur de ce produit (la force de travail) est déterminée par le temps socialement nécessaire pour le reproduire. Or, le capitaliste paie ce produit (la force de travail) beaucoup moins cher, du simple fait que la femme n'a aucun salaire pour le travail qu'elle effectue à la maison. Voilà le point central de la question de la productivité de la femme à la maison.



## VALEUR D'ÉCHANGE ET PLUS-VALUE

*Question - Mais les femmes ne produisent pas de valeur d'échange . Peut-on alors considérer qu'elles produisent de la plus-value?*

Selma - La femme produit de la plus-value dans la mesure où elle accomplit à la maison un travail gratuit permettant au capitaliste de verser un salaire inférieur à l'ouvrier. Si la femme n'assumait pas gratuitement ce travail et que l'ouvrier devait payer pour les services qui lui sont nécessaires quotidiennement pour la reproduction de sa propre force de travail, le capitaliste devrait augmenter son salaire. En fait, quand la femme n'accomplit pas ce travail ménager à l'intérieur de la maison, ce travail devient une valeur d'échange (buanderies, restaurants etc.).

Les profits dans la société capitaliste viennent de la relation entre cette partie de la journée de travail pendant laquelle l'ouvrier doit travailler pour reproduire sa force de travail et l'autre partie de la journée consacrée à produire de la plus-value pour le capitaliste. Or le travail que la femme accomplit gratuitement à la maison diminue d'autant les heures de travail de l'ouvrier réservées à sa propre reproduction et augmente conséquemment les heures de travail consacrées à la production de plus-value.

Je trouve d'ailleurs fort étonnant que des gens qui se réclament du marxisme, puissent présumer que 50% de la population adulte active (les femmes) ne rapportent aucun profit direct aux capitalistes.

Il est aussi ridicule de considérer que le travail ménager des femmes n'a pas une fonction spéciale dans le système économique que de considérer que le travail des esclaves ou celui des paysans du Tiers-Monde se situe en dehors du processus économique.

La femme ne travaille pas gratuitement, pas plus que l'esclave ne travaillait gratuitement, sinon elle mourrait de faim et de froid. La femme est payée pour une partie de son travail comme tous les autres travailleurs, sauf qu'elle n'a pas directement de salaire, même quand elle passe beaucoup de temps à effectuer une tâche; le capitaliste n'a pas à la payer à l'heure.

## LUTTES DE FEMMES, TRAVAIL D'USINE ET ORGANISATIONS REVOLUTIONNAIRES

*Question - En tant que groupe féministe marxiste comment considérez-vous le travail d'organisation des femmes dans les usines et la relation des luttes des femmes avec les luttes ouvrières. D'autre part, quels types de liens, avez-vous établi avec les groupes dits révolutionnaires?*

Mariarosa - QUAND ON DIT QUE LES FEMMES CONSTITUENT LA SECTION LA PLUS EXPLOITEE DE LA CLASSE OUVRIERE, IL NE S'AGIT PAS DE TOUTES LES FEMMES. NOUS VOULONS SEULEMENT DIRE QU'A L'INTERIEUR DU PROLETARIAT, LES FEMMES SONT LES TRAVAILLEURS LES PLUS EXPLOITES. On les retrouve dans les secteurs les plus instables (textile, alimentation), les plus susceptibles de fermer ou de congédier les travailleurs à la moindre crise. Lorsqu'elles sont dans des usines mixtes, le secteur automobile par exemple, elles occupent les pires emplois et en Europe on les utilise à la place des Marocains, des Grecs ou des Algériens. Non seulement les femmes sont les travailleurs les plus exploités mais en plus elles doivent assumer une double journée de travail, faisant leur travail ménager au retour de l'usine.

Comme dans les groupes de gauche la notion de classe ne tenait nullement compte de l'exploitation particulière des femmes, leur stratégie ne pouvait être radicale et vraiment révolutionnaire.

Quand les femmes posent la question de leur exploitation, elles posent la question d'une stratégie entièrement nouvelle et elles ne peuvent présupposer que les groupes de gauche possèdent déjà une stratégie à laquelle elles n'ont qu'à se rattacher, comme un appendice. Beaucoup de femmes à l'intérieur des groupes de gauche pensaient et pensent encore que les hommes doivent définir la question de classe et les femmes doivent s'occuper de la question des femmes. Nous pensons au contraire que la question des femmes doit être posée en terme de classe par des femmes et celles-ci doivent définir les étapes et les instruments de leur lutte.

L'organisation de la lutte autonome des femmes aura des influences sur toute la classe ouvrière et peut-être les hommes consentiront-ils à s'interroger sur leurs



rapports avec la lutte des femmes, ce qui ne peut être au désavantage des femmes puisque en général la stratégie des hommes à l'heure actuelle est plus faible que la stratégie des femmes.

En effet, les hommes ne tiennent compte que de l'exploitation dans le secteur du travail faisant abstraction de toute cette autre source de plus-value qu'est l'organisation de la vie à la maison et le quartier. Ils oublient donc souvent de nombreux éléments oppressifs de la vie quotidienne tels que les rapports d'autorité dans la sexualité, la famille et le travail. Leur front de lutte porte essentiellement sur l'aspect économique et laisse de côté les aspects idéologiques du capitalisme.

Les femmes parce qu'elles sont doublement exploitées, à l'usine où elles sont les plus mal payées, à la maison où elles n'ont aucun salaire et parfois à ces deux endroits en même temps, sont davantage en mesure de formuler des critiques plus radicales sur L'ENSEMBLE de la domination capitaliste.

Prenons un exemple de l'attitude de certains groupes de gauche face à la lutte des femmes.

Dans une usine de produits chimiques à Venise, les travailleurs avaient mené de dures luttes et avaient été à l'avant-garde des luttes qui secouèrent l'Italie à la fin des années 60. Mais les batailles de ces camarades n'avaient en rien modifié la situation d'exploitation de leurs femmes. Ces dernières s'étaient pourtant organisées pour appuyer les hommes en grève comme les femmes l'ont d'ailleurs toujours fait dans des situations semblables.

Un jour, ces femmes qui vivaient dans un quartier ouvrier dépourvu d'espaces verts et de parcs pour enfants, découvrirent un terrain vague et voulurent l'utiliser. Après quelques jours cependant, on leur en interdit l'entrée et on éleva une clôture de barbelés. Elles détruisirent aussitôt la clôture et continuèrent à l'utiliser. Le propriétaire riposta en affichant des pancartes interdisant l'entrée. Elles passèrent outre à cette défense. En dernier lieu, le propriétaire eu recours à des chiens.

En désespoir de cause, les femmes firent alors appel à leurs maris. Ceux-ci répondirent de façon classique: "Nous avons des choses plus sérieuses à régler, ne nous dérangez pas!"

C'est un exemple typique de la position subordonnée des femmes à l'intérieur des groupes mixtes. Les femmes doivent renverser ces rapports en organisant de façon autonome leur propre lutte et alors seulement elles pourront compter sur un appui éventuel des hommes.

Selma - Au même titre que ce sont les groupes révolutionnaires blancs qui ont établi des liens avec les groupes noirs, les groupes de gauche doivent prendre l'initiative d'établir des liens avec les groupes féministes. C'est à eux d'accepter et d'appuyer le programme des mouvements féministes et non aux mouvements féministes de leur demander leur appui.

En tant qu'exemple précis de la relation entre hommes et femmes dans les usines, nous pouvons nous référer aux luttes des années 30 aux Etats-Unis et en France, lors de la création de l'AFL-CIO et de d'autres syndicats. Je me souviens par exemple d'une usine de montage automobile où hommes et femmes travaillaient ensemble et naturellement dans ce secteur les hommes étaient en majorité. Lorsque les travailleurs occupèrent l'usine, ils comprirent rapidement que la police et l'armée allaient tenter de les expulser mais ils étaient prêts à les affronter. Les hommes ordonnèrent cependant aux femmes de sortir prétextant qu'il était trop dangereux de rester dans l'usine. Les femmes supplièrent les hommes de rester en disant: "nous avons été exploitées comme vous, nous avons le droit de lutter au même titre que vous. C'est d'ailleurs la seule façon, si nous vaincons que cette victoire soit "notre" victoire. Mais les hommes refusèrent et, comme ils étaient en majorité, les femmes durent sortir. Elles organisèrent la lutte de l'extérieur, apportèrent des vivres aux hommes. Elles étaient reléguées encore une fois aux tâches dévolues aux femmes et devenaient "de simples auxiliaires de leur propre lutte".

Au cours d'une lutte que nous avons menée, il y a quelques années en Angleterre, cette même question a été soulevée. Elle a cependant été posée en termes différents puisque les femmes étaient en majorité. Les hommes ont dû reconnaître qu'ils ne pouvaient rien obtenir pour eux-mêmes sans appuyer la lutte des femmes.

Ainsi, quand l'égalité du salaire entre hommes et femmes a été revendiquée, les hommes ont appuyé leurs camarades.

Au cours des dernières années, les femmes ont souvent mené de très dures luttes pour l'égalité du salaire et les hommes les ont rarement appuyées. Très souvent



d'ailleurs, ce sont les syndicats qui brisaient l'unité de ces deux groupes de travailleurs et qui incitaient les hommes à ne pas appuyer ces luttes sous le prétexte qu'il s'agissait là de revendications de femmes. Mais c'est faux, la revendication à travail égal salaire égal est une revendication fondamentale pour la classe ouvrière.

On accuse souvent les femmes d'être réactionnaires parce qu'elles ne luttent pas, parce qu'elles ne semblent pas combattre suffisamment leur condition d'exploitation. On oublie qu'elles ont une longue histoire dans la cuisine et qu'elles sont rarement appuyées par les hommes dans leur lutte. En tant que féministes, nous ne voulons pas nous isoler des hommes, au contraire. Mais nous voulons que les hommes nous rejoignent et acceptent le programme, les conditions, les perspectives de lutte de cette section de classe qui est la plus exploitée et à qui la société capitaliste a refusé tout privilège.

Nous voulons aussi préciser que nous considérons la question de la sexualité comme une question de classe. Quand nous parlons de mener une lutte féministe à l'intérieur de l'usine, nous voulons détruire les barrières que les syndicats ont élevées pas nous isoler des hommes et femmes sous le prétexte qu'il s'agissait d'une lutte de classe, par conséquent d'une lutte sérieuse, dont la stratégie et l'organisation appartenaient aux hommes. Pour nous, la sexualité est une question de classe parce que reproduire des enfants pour nous c'est reproduire des enfants pour la classe capitaliste. Notre travail ménager est au service du capitalisme et l'institution de la famille elle-même est au service du capitalisme. A partir du moment où les femmes, qu'elles soient à l'usine ou à la maison, commencent à identifier les intérêts de leur fraction de classe, et commencent à lutter pour défendre leurs propres intérêts, les luttes ouvrières prennent un caractère tout à fait différent.

#### SALAIRE MENAGER: REVENDICATION STRATEGIQUE OU FONDAMENTALE

*Question - Vous avez souvent abordé la question du salaire ménager. S'agit-il d'une revendication conçue comme une étape transitoire conçue pour rassembler de larges masses de femmes et amorcer tout un travail de sensibilisation sur la situation des femmes en société capitaliste ou croyez-vous qu'il s'agit là d'une revendication tellement fondamentale qu'elle remet en question toute l'organisation capitaliste du travail?*

Mariarosa - Le seul type d'action qui puisse vraiment détruire le capitalisme, c'est l'action de la population armée. Il serait cependant illusoire dans les conditions actuelles de croire à une révolution armée, venant spontanément de la classe ouvrière.

Nous devons établir une stratégie qui permette de détruire la relation de pouvoir entre le capital et la classe ouvrière. Dans notre cas, cette stratégie doit se baser sur les demandes les plus cruciales qui répondent aux intérêts les plus fondamentaux de cette fraction de classe surexploitée que sont les femmes et ces revendications doivent correspondre à leur volonté de s'organiser.

Dans les usines, les hommes se sont d'abord battus pour augmenter leur salaire et pour améliorer leurs conditions de travail et leurs conditions de vie. Quand les travailleurs ménagers demandent d'être payés pour leur reproduction et quand ces travailleurs exigent des conditions de travail (garderies) et des conditions de vie acceptables (logement, espaces verts, etc) pourquoi sommes-nous surpris?

Exiger un salaire pour le travail ménager permettrait à la femme ou à l'homme qui effectue ce travail de briser le lien de dépendance économique qui le lie à son conjoint et qui devient souvent si avilissant. Le travailleur ménager pourrait enfin avoir une certaine autonomie financière, pourrait modifier les rapports de dépendance et de domination à l'intérieur de la famille et pourrait sortir de l'isolement de la maison.

Cette revendication correspond à un besoin vital de tous les travailleurs ménagers et évidemment en particulier des femmes et elle constitue un moyen d'organisation privilégié permettant à des milliers de femmes de s'organiser contre le capital. Car il faut bien savoir que cette revendication n'est pas une demande partielle et réformiste. Elle remet en cause toute l'organisation capitaliste du travail et toute la structure familiale traditionnelle.

Le salaire ménager assure un minimum d'indépendance indispensable aux femmes et leur permet d'intervenir collectivement au niveau du quartier, cet autre secteur de production de plus-value où elles peuvent mener des luttes tout à fait nouvelles.



Je me souviens par exemple qu'un groupe de femmes complètement exaspérées de ne pouvoir régler leur problème de garderies décidèrent d'aller mener les enfants à l'usine, les laissèrent aux hommes et le patron dut faire cesser la production et discuter de la garderie.

## ORGANISATIONS ET LUTTES FEMINISTES

*Question - Vous faites partie dans vos pays respectifs d'organisations féministes. De quel type d'organisation s'agit-il et quel type de lutte menez-vous?*

Mariarosa - Nous faisons toutes deux partie de mouvements féministes marxistes et nous refusons d'endosser plus longtemps les vieilles notions de classe qui subordonnent les travailleurs non-salariés aux travailleurs salariés; on cache derrière ces notions l'exploitation du travail de la femme à la maison i.e. sa productivité ainsi que les raisons de sa double exploitation lorsqu'elle se retrouve sur le marché du travail. De cette analyse découle la possibilité d'intervenir dans de nouveaux champs de lutte et la possibilité de faire de la subversion non seulement à l'usine et au bureau mais aussi dans le quartier et il ressort aussi la nécessité de lier la lutte de ces deux secteurs de production: l'usine et la maison. Par conséquent à Lotta Feminista, qui n'a aucun lien de parenté avec Lotta Continua, nous intervenons dans ces deux secteurs à la fois.

Lotta feminista tient des rencontres de coordination deux fois par mois afin d'approfondir certaines questions politiques, de déterminer plus clairement la stratégie, de confronter les expériences des divers groupes et de régler certains problèmes techniques. Cependant, les groupes locaux conservent une entière autonomie pour définir leurs priorités de lutte en fonction de l'évaluation de leurs forces et de la situation particulière de leur région, tout en tenant compte cependant des perspectives d'ensemble du mouvement.

Jusqu'à présent, nous avons préféré mener des luttes locales correspondant à nos capacités d'organisation plutôt que d'engager des batailles larges sans base militante réelle. Nous commençons toutefois à envisager la possibilité de mener des luttes à travers toute l'Italie. Ainsi, actuellement nous faisons une vaste campagne d'information pour supporter l'une de nos camarades, Lolla, qui subit un procès pour avortement. Nous voulons utiliser ce cas pour appuyer la lutte de toutes les autres femmes aux prises avec cette question afin de démasquer les forces réactionnaires qui refusent à la femme cette liberté et ce droit fondamental de contrôler son propre corps.

Nous avons aussi commencé à soulever la question des allocations familiales, qui en Italie sont versées directement aux hommes. Dans la perspective d'exiger un jour le salaire ménager, nous devons exiger que cette allocation soit directement versée aux femmes. Il importe d'autre part que cette question soit posée au plan national car elle constitue une demande fondamentale pour l'organisation des femmes et permet de dégager toute une analyse politique. Il est évident que les femmes qui souvent par le biais d'un travail large se joignent au mouvement n'ont pas toutes le même degré de maturité politique mais leur appartenance au mouvement leur permet de développer cette maturité.

Selma - De notre côté, en Angleterre, nous avons entrepris une dure lutte contre l'Etat qui veut retirer aux femmes les quelques miettes d'argent qu'elles recevaient par le biais des allocations familiales. Déjà des milliers de femmes de tendances différentes se sont jointes au mouvement et il est étonnant de voir comment nous réussissons à discuter de nos divergences politiques, à respecter les particularités de chaque groupe et même à mener des actions différentes qui se situent dans une même perspective et se complètent.

## FEMINISME INTERNATIONAL

*Question - Des féministes marxistes de France, d'Angleterre, d'Italie et des Etats-Unis se sont réunis pour former une Internationale féministe marxiste, et vous êtes actuellement en tournée aux USA et au Canada pour rencontrer d'autres groupes de féministes. Pourquoi, au stade actuel de la lutte, amorcez-vous déjà des contacts internationaux; ne croyez-vous pas que c'est prématuré?*



Selma - Bien qu'elle varie dans ses détails d'un pays à l'autre, la condition des femmes et sa relation avec la société capitaliste est universelle.

Nous croyons que les luttes des femmes des différents pays sont interreliées, qu'il y a avantage à approfondir collectivement nos analyses et à tirer profit des différentes luttes qui sont menées. Notre lutte est une lutte de classe, c'est non seulement la lutte des femmes mais aussi la lutte des hommes et des enfants qui a déjà commencé sur le plan international. La planification capitaliste quelque soit sa manifestation dans un pays donné est simplement une articulation du capitalisme international dont nous avons toujours été victimes et contre lequel nous avons toujours lutté.



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N°2

ANNO II

CONTRATTI DEI METALMECCANICI

SCUOLA IN CINA



POTERE FEMMINILE E SOVVERSIONE SOCIALE

f. 11

DUE FILM POLITICI

## I CONTRATTI DEI METALMECCANICI

CONTRATTI, CLASSE OPERAIA, SINDACATO E CAPITALE

Le attuali lotte per il rinnovo contrattuale dei metalmeccanici si inseriscono dentro un quadro generale che ha come punti fondamentali da una parte il capitale dall'altra parte il sindacato. La novità del capitalismo avanza — rispetto al capitalismo delle origini, del primo Ottocento, consiste proprio nel fatto che il capitale ha un piano di mantenimento del potere diverso da quello non solo dell'Ottocento ma anche del primo Novecento, quando il sindacato veniva visto come un'istituzione operaia da eliminare, soprattutto quando finiva per portare, come nel 1920, durante la lotta contrattuale, all'occupazione delle fabbriche, armi alla mano. Allora il capitale, impaurito anche dalle recenti vicende russe, sferrò una contro-rivoluzione preventiva che eliminò sindacati e libertà tradizionali. Oggi il capitale non ha più un atteggiamento di contrapposizione frontale nei confronti della classe operaia; tenta anzi continuamente di inglobarla in sé, di riassorbirla. Anche le rivendicazioni operate possono servire al capitale; nel senso che gli aumenti salariali costringono continuamente il capitale a razionalizzarsi, a rammodernarsi (introduzione di sempre maggiori macchine, nuovi

investimenti, ecc.), per aumentare i profitti che diversamente sarebbero intaccati dagli aumenti salariali, e per creare un mercato interno dei prodotti. Pensiamo, per esempio, alla situazione dell'Italia, dove le rivendicazioni sindacali costringono la piccola industria o ad ammodernarsi o a lasciarsi assorbire dalle grosse concentrazioni monopolistiche.

In questo progetto del capitale di inglobare la classe operaia dentro di sé, di utilizzare anche le rivendicazioni operaie per sviluppare il capitale, un ruolo importante lo dovrebbe giocare indubbiamente il sindacato. Il sindacato esprime certamente gli interessi della classe operaia, nel senso che tenta di vendere il lavoro operaio al maggior prezzo possibile (ai salari possibilmente più alti). Il sindacato però, mentre organizza gli operai per strappare salari più alti, condizioni di lavoro migliori, costituisce, per ciò stesso, un elemento di stabilizzazione. Il sindacato è un'istituzione che accetta sostanzialmente il capitale e, dentro alla realtà del capitale, lotta per strappare le migliori condizioni. Il sindacato non pare abbia più oggi nessuna funzione rivoluzionaria, di rottura del sistema capitalistico. In questo senso il sindacato è utilizzato dal capitale, che lo usa per pianificare le lotte operaie



ie, cioè per inserirle dentro il quadro di sviluppo del capitale. Un momento di questa pianificazione sono i contratti di lavoro, di durata triennale. Il capitale, cioè, al rinnovo dei contratti, certi aumenti salariali, ma sa, poi, che per tre anni ha la sicurezza di poter trarre profitti dal lavoro operaio senza subire nuove lotte operaie. I contratti cioè, con la loro periodicità, pongono dei limiti precisi alle lotte operaie, le regolarizzano.

#### LE LOTTE DEGLI ANNI SESSANTA:

##### "L'AUTONOMIA OPERAIA"

Le lotte degli anni sessanta, culminanti nelle lotte per il rinnovo contrattuale dell'autunno '69, determinano un fatto nuovo nel quadro del discorso fatto fino a questo punto: una parte della classe operaia (quella che viene definita dai gruppetti extraparlamentari con il termine di "avanguardia operaia") sfugge al controllo del sindacato, scopre l'"autonomia" dal sindacato.

Queste "avanguardie operaie" conducono una serie di lotte, spesso brevi, ma intense, fatte in modo autonomo dal sindacato, e talvolta addirittura contro il sindacato. Nascono gli scioperi selvaggi, gli scioperi "a gatto selvaggio", cioè improvvisi, non dichiarati prima, come sono sempre invece gli scioperi indetti dal sindacato. Scioperi assai dannosi per il padrone, che spesso rasentano il vero e proprio sabotaggio. Cosa c'è dietro questa scoperta dell'"autonomia" operaia? C'è l'aspirazione dei ritmi e dei gesti della "catena di montaggio", la distruzione dell'operaio professionalizzato (che è bravo nel suo mestiere), la sua sostituzione con un tipo di operaio-massa, anonimo, disinformato, perché ci vuole poco a capire come si lavora in "catena". Le caratteristiche del lavoro di catena sono la semplicità, la ripetitività, la noia, la subaltermità alla macchina, ai ritmi. Viene di qui il "rifugio del lavoro" che è prima di tutto un grosso nodo teorico su cui ha riflettuto un nucleo di studiosi (si veda Mario Tronti, Operai e capitale, Einaudi; o la rivista "Contropiano" uscita dal '68 al '71). Il fenomeno d'altra parte è noto anche ai capitalisti; i giornali del capitale parlano di "disaffezione al lavoro", ma vuol dire la stessa cosa.

Insomma, per concludere, sono le particolari condizioni introdotte dallo sviluppo tecnologico (catena di montaggio operaio-massa intercambiabile, fine dell'operaio professionalizzato, ecc.) che spingono la classe operaia verso atteggiamenti di rottura, o per lo meno di estraneità agli interessi del capitale, di estraneità alle esigenze di sviluppo del capitale. L'"autonomia" delle avanguardie operaie, a sinistra del sindacato, significa, a ben vedere, "autonomia" dal piano di sviluppo del capitale. Insomma, se il capitale tenta continuamente di inserire la classe operaia dentro di sé, la novità degli anni sessanta è che una parte

della classe operaia si pone al di fuori delle ragioni del capitale.

#### L'AUTUNNO CALDO DEL '69: IL SINDACATO TENTA DI RECUPERARE L'AUTONOMIA OPERAIA.

Se questa è la situazione generale, il sindacato si trova impegnato non solo a fronteggiare il capitale ma anche a ristabilire il proprio controllo sull'intera classe operaia, comprese le avanguardie. I contratti del '69 vedono il sindacato accettare alcune richieste portate avanti dalle avanguardie. Il sindacato chiede nei contratti aumenti salariali molto più consistenti di quelli chiesti in passato; riduzione dell'orario di lavoro a 40 ore settimanali; aumenti salariali uguali per tutti e non proporzionati ai diversi salari, alle differenze fra i salari degli impiegati e quelli degli operai, o ai differenti salari delle differenti categorie di operai. Naturalmente nel momento stesso in cui il sindacato riprende le richieste delle avanguardie, le attenua: gli scioperi "autonomi" alla Fiat del maggio '69 avevano visto la richiesta di aumenti salariali di 150 lire l'ora; nella piattaforma sindacale dell'autunno del '69 la richiesta è di 75 lire l'ora. Altre proposte delle avanguardie (36 ore, qualifica unica, con l'eliminazione delle varie categorie che dividono gli operai in operai di 1°, 2°, 3°, 4°) sono ignorate. Lo stesso avviene con i "delegati" di fabbrica. La figura del delegato nasce spontaneamente, dal basso, come esigenza delle lotte "autonome" di avere dei punti di riferimento, degli operai che guidino le lotte selvagge. Il sindacato accetta la figura del delegato, come una nuova struttura di democrazia operaia, ma a certe condizioni. Il delegato non è quasi mai l'operaio più radicale nelle lotte, per lo più immigrato, addetto alla catena di montaggio, che ha guidato con la sua determinazione (fatta più di rabbia che di piena consapevolezza politica) le lotte "autonome" degli anni sessanta.

Il delegato non è cioè l'elemento di punta delle lotte, ma esprime un livello medio della classe operaia, più sensibile all'influenza del sindacato. Nella misura in cui la nuova figura del delegato subisce un certo controllo del sindacato, il sindacato stesso riesce a esercitare un controllo anche su quella parte della classe operaia diventata "autonoma".

#### DOPO L'AUTUNNO CALDO DEL '69: ASSENTEISMO OPERAIO E CRISI DEL CAPITALE.

Il capitale accetta sostanzialmente le richieste sindacali dei contratti.

Il capitale italiano è in una fase di sviluppo, di espansione; accetta di pagare un prezzo alto, ma si ripropone di rifarsi aumentando la produzione. Aumentare la produzio-

ne significa però ritmi di lavoro più intensi, cioè aumento dello sfruttamento. Ma qui avviene l'imprevedibile. La classe operaia, chiusi i contratti, non accetta di tornare a farsi sfruttare come prima, peggio di prima. Continuano gli scioperi selvaggi, improvvisi, che prendono spunto da qualsiasi occasione (richiesta di nuove tute, proteste contro i crumiri, ecc.).

E quando non ci sono le lotte, c'è l'assenteismo. La classe operaia si mette in mutua. E' un modo di resistere, di rifiutare lo sfruttamento. Un modo passivo ma certo efficace. Proprio questo contegno "autonomo" di parte della classe operaia è uno dei fattori principali della crisi economica (che comunque si spiega anche con altri motivi: situazione internazionale, crisi del dollaro, uso ricattatorio che della crisi intendono fare i capitalisti italiani, ecc). Manca l'incremento di produzione, manca lo sviluppo. La storia di questi ultimi tre anni, dal '69 al '72, dai contratti del '69 ai contratti di oggi, è la storia del perdurare e dell'approfondirsi della crisi. Anche se è chiaro che la crisi non è solo la crisi del capitale, ma è anche la crisi degli operai. I padroni contrattaccano infatti con l'aumento dei prezzi che si mangia tutti gli aumenti salariali strappati nell'autunno del '69.

#### IL CONTRATTACCO DEL CAPITALE:

##### FASCISTIZZAZIONE DELLO STATO

L'"autonomia" operaia è dunque un elemento decisivo della crisi del sistema economico capitalistico, ma questo non significa la rivoluzione. Per fare la rivoluzione occorre una organizzazione rivoluzionaria, un partito rivoluzionario, deciso e capace di far precipitare una grave crisi economica e sociale in situazione prerivoluzionaria. Oggi però in Italia manca un partito rivoluzionario.

Il PCI ha scelto da tempo una strada riformista, cioè di inserimento pacifico dentro il sistema, attraverso tempi lunghi e il sindacato, già s'è detto, è del tutto estraneo a una logica rivoluzionaria. Le lotte degli anni sessanta hanno creato, sì, un ampio tessuto di quadri politici rivoluzionari, operai e studenteschi, che però risulta disseminato e frazionato in una serie di gruppi fortemente settari, cioè incapaci di aggregarsi dando vita a quello che dovrà essere il nucleo del futuro partito rivoluzionario. Mancando allora l'iniziativa di un partito rivoluzionario, l'iniziativa è del capitale. Il capitale decide di uscire da questa situazione di stallo, di stagnazione, di crisi economica dando una lezione alla classe operaia, distruggendola come classe operaia organizzata. "autonoma", combattiva oltre i limiti consentiti. Il capitale accetta la crisi, rinuncia allo sviluppo, pur di distruggere la classe operaia come forza contrapposta a sé. Al minimo sciopero, anche di pochi operai, il capitale risponde mettendo tutti gli operai in liber-

tà, in cassa integrazione.

Certo il capitale ci perde la produzione, ma ci perde anche la classe operaia. Per il capitale in questo momento è prioritaria la distruzione della combattività operaia. E' prioritario riuscire a stroncare l'assenteismo, l'insubordinazione, gli scioperi selvaggi, ecc. Come si realizza questo piano distruttivo del capitale? Si realizza con le serrate, i licenziamenti. E si realizza distruggendo le avanguardie politiche, mettendo fuori legge i gruppetti, imprigionandone i militanti. In questa prospettiva si spiegano tante cose: il progetto di legge sul fermo di polizia, che dà mano libera alla polizia di fermare, arrestare, ecc.; le 600 denunce solo a Torino a militanti di lotta continua, Potere operaio, Unione marxisti-leninisti; il governo di centro-destra con i liberali, senza i socialisti; l'elezione a presidente della repubblica di Leone con i voti fascisti; la strage di stato che dopo Valpreda continua con Feltrinelli e Calabresi. Insomma una serie di scelte che giustificano la formula "fascistizzazione dello stato", cioè lo stato che si presenta come autoritarismo puro, comando, distruzione, repressione. Il che non significa però la vera e propria dittatura fascista che del resto la situazione internazionale (partecipazione dell'Italia al MEC) e la situazione interna (esigenze del neocapitalismo avanzato, grossa forza del PCI) non tollererebbe. Al massimo si può prevedere una soluzione di tipo gollista.

#### SINDACATO E PCI DI FRONTE AI CONTRATTI DEL 1972

In questo quadro, così definito, che posizione occupano i contratti di questi mesi? E' chiaro che, nella misura in cui è venuto meno lo sviluppo capitalistico di qualche anno fa, i contratti non possono strappare grossi aumenti salariali ai padroni. C'è la crisi, ma la crisi, ovviamente, c'è anche per gli operai oltre che per il capitale. L'atteggiamento del sindacato e del PCI è quindi estremamente prudente, tutto teso a contenere le richieste operaie, a impedire che le lotte per i rinnovi contrattuali - lotte economiche - sfocino in lotte politiche, in tentativi di rottura con il sistema e con lo stato capitalista.

E' significativo allora che i contratti siano partiti in questo autunno con lotte separate e divise. In pratica, sindacato e PCI hanno accettato il gioco dei padroni, estremamente ostili all'idea che coincidesse le lotte per i rinnovi contrattuali dei metalmeccanici e dei chimici, due fra le più combattive categorie operaie. Nel '69 chimici e metalmeccanici lottarono insieme e firmarono i contratti a distanza ravvicinata: il 7 dicembre i chimici, tra il 16 e il 19 dicembre i metalmeccanici. Nel '72 inve-



ce le lotte dei metalmeccanici si sono aperte quando i chimici avevano già chiuso e firmato il loro contratto. Si aggiunga che il contratto dei chimici è stato firmato il 15 ottobre, dopo la revoca all'ultimo momento dello sciopero generale del 10 ottobre, che doveva unificare le varie lotte, dei chimici, dei metalmeccanici e di tutte le altre categorie, e che doveva segnare l'inizio della lotta particolare dei metalmeccanici.

#### I RISULTATI DEL CONTRATTO DEI CHIMICI.

Il contratto dei chimici è stato apparentemente positivo, ma in realtà ha rivelato gravi cedimenti su questioni importanti, come i modi e i tempi con cui verranno concesse dai padroni le conquiste del contratto stesso. Molte cose verranno date cioè un po' alla volta ogni anno, scaglionate nel tempo, cioè lungo l'arco dei tre anni di durata del contratto stesso. Anche l'inquadramento unico, cioè il processo verso la parità di trattamento fra operai e impiegati, non ha fatto molti passi avanti. Sono rimasti otto livelli, fra operai e impiegati, che sono ancora troppi, e inoltre le modalità di passaggio da una categoria all'altra non sono indicate o sono rimandate al marzo '74.

#### IL CONVEGNO DEI METALMECCANICI DI GENOVA

L'assemblea dei delegati operai metalmeccanici, indetta a Genova il 10 e 11 settembre per stilare la piattaforma per i contratti, si è così aperta in un clima di delusione per i cedimenti relativi al contratto dei chimici (ormai prossimo a chiudersi). I giornali borghesi parlavano apertamente di "autunno freddo". A Genova però, improvvisamente, c'è stata la relazione di Trentin, segretario dei metalmeccanici CGIL, che è apparsa a molti una vera bomba. Trentin ha fatto cioè un discorso sufficientemente duro, da cui è venuto fuori che gli operai metalmeccanici intendono "superare l'isolamento nel quale la lotta contrattuale di fabbrica rischierebbe di rimanere se si accettasse una separazione tra obiettivi contrattuali e obiettivi sociali". Se è vero che i padroni si rimangiano gli aumenti salariali con l'aumento dei prezzi, è chiaro che non bastano le lotte per aumenti salariali, ma occorrono lotte condotte fuori della fabbrica per avere affitti meno cari, più ospedali, più scuole, scuole gratis per i figli dei lavoratori, trasporti gratis e comodi, ecc. Ciò significa legare la lotta di fabbrica alla lotta di quartiere. E più in generale l'assemblea di Genova ha sottolineato l'esigenza di collegare l'azione degli operai occupati a quella degli operai disoccupati, di unire occupati e strati di lavoratori con impiego precario (lavoratori a domicilio, ecc.).

"Occorre - si è detto - registrare una saldatura tra lavoratori dell'industria e lavoratori dell'agricoltura, tra occupati, disoccupati, sottoccupati, tra nord e sud". Nella nuova sistemazione che si è venuta creando i metalmeccanici ten-

tano di evitare l'isolamento, allargando l'area delle rivendicazioni e il fronte di lotta, saldandosi con altre forze. Vero è però che l'assemblea di Genova ha escluso dalla piattaforma ufficiale per i contratti la richiesta di certi strati operai relativa al "salario garantito" (cioè salario garantito per gli operai, che siano occupati o siano disoccupati, cioè salario garantito come diritto dell'uomo a vivere, in ogni caso). L'assemblea di Genova ha cioè spostato le rivendicazioni dagli obiettivi più radicali (salario garantito appunto) a obiettivi più sfumati e più facilmente conseguibili, anche se su tempi "lunghi" (creazione di nuovi posti di lavoro, industrializzazione del sud). Certo l'andamento delle lotte e degli scioperi dopo l'assemblea di Genova, nei mesi di ottobre novembre dicembre, non sembra accreditare l'immagine di un sindacato troppo deciso nel portare avanti lo scontro con i padroni. Significativo il fatto dello sciopero generale previsto per dicembre e poi rimandato all'ultimo momento al 12 gennaio (anche se è chiaro che in tutto questo gioca la divisione all'interno dei sindacati fra CGIL da un lato e UIL e CISL, queste ultime su posizioni sempre più filo-patronali).

#### L'ATTEGGIAMENTO DEI GRUPPI NEI CONTRATTI

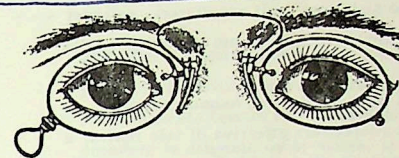
Qual è allora, in questa situazione, l'atteggiamento dei gruppi della sinistra extraparlamentare? Esiste oggi una grossa spaccatura all'interno di essa. Da un lato ci sono il Manifesto, il Collettivo Lenin, Gruppo Gramsci, ecc., che in fondo pensano di dover tallonare il sindacato, spingerlo il più possibile a sinistra, costringerlo ad accettare le richieste delle avanguardie operaie. Essi vedono nei contratti la possibilità di radicalizzare lo scontro, di fermare l'offensiva padronale e scatenare il contrattacco operaio. Vedono anche nei contratti l'occasione per staccare strati sempre più consistenti della classe operaia dall'influenza del sindacato e del PCI. Per questi gruppi solo nel fuoco della lotta, là dove sindacato e PCI devono svelare la propria funzione frenante, "pompieristica", è possibile per l'operaio prendere coscienza della necessità di staccarsi dalle organizzazioni tradizionali del movimento operaio. Dall'altro lato c'è invece soprattutto Potere Operaio, che dà per scontato che i contratti saranno contratti-bidone, che non è possibile spingere il sindacato a sinistra, come nel '69, per il semplice fatto che in momento di crisi economica il sindacato ha poco o nulla da strappare ai padroni. Anzi sono i padroni che dettano le loro condizioni (controllo dell'assenteismo, fine degli scioperi selvaggi, possibilità di utilizzare i macchinari 24 ore su 24, facendo lavorare gli operai anche di notte, a turno ovviamente). Di qui un atteggiamento un po' "staccato" di Potere Operaio che praticamente pensa già al "dopo contratti". In che termini ci

pensa? Come lotta di quartiere contro il caro-vita, contro gli affitti, i trasporti, ecc. E' vero che questa indicazione è comune un po' a tutti i gruppi, ma Potere Operaio si caratterizza per il "taglio" che dovrebbe avere questa lotta di quartiere: servizi d'ordine, militarizzazione dello scontro, ecc. Questo non è ovviamente ancora la rivoluzione, ma è la premessa. Solo quando c'è la violenza antistatal e degli operai può crescere e formarsi il partito rivoluzionario. Insomma l'insurrezione per la creazione del partito rivoluzionario. Il problema è però come arrivare a questo tipo di lotta dura, violenta, nel quartiere, per gli obiettivi del salario garantito, della gratuità della casa, dei trasporti, della scuola, ecc. Il limite del discorso di Potere Operaio sembra consistere soprattutto nello stacco fra il "prima" e il "dopo", fra la stagione dei contratti e stagione dei dopo-contratti. Posizione intermedia occupa infine Lotta Continua che, pur non distaccandosi troppo dalle tesi di Potere Operaio, sembra preoccupata in questo momento soprattutto di essere anch'essa "dentro" alle lotte contrattuali, per poter domani dirigere le lotte del quartiere indipendentemente dal sindacato. Sembra porsi però per Lotta Continua l'esigenza di un'analisi della situazione di classe, che spesso è carente in questo gruppo.

#### GLI STUDENTI DI FRONTE AI CONTRATTI

Resto un ultimo problema: quale è il ruolo degli studenti nella situazione presente? Il sindacato, soprattutto la sinistra sindacale, si è mossa con maggior perspicacia rispetto al passato. All'assemblea dei metalmeccanici a Genova, dopo un silenzio di anni, si è sentito parlare di alleanza con gli studenti che fosse seria (non cioè il generico "solidarismo" degli studenti agli operai). Lo sciopero generale a Milano del 31 ottobre è stato, da questo punto di vista, un grosso successo. Così come lo sono stati i cortei studenteschi a Torino nello stesso giorno. Dopo anni di lotte studentesche contro "l'autoritarismo" dei professori, gli studenti cominciano ad affacciare una serie di richieste (gratuità di libri, trasporti, diritto allo studio, assemblee aperte, cioè aperte alle forze operaie, ecc.) suscettibili di unificare lotte studentesche e lotte operaie. Il problema che resta aperto è chi gestirà questo nuovo ciclo di lotte studentesche che si affacciano all'orizzonte: i gruppi della sinistra extraparlamentare o il sindacato? Certo l'obiettivo della lotta ai costi della scuola è stato lanciato da almeno un paio di anni dai gruppi più lucidi e più coscienti, ma - bisogna riconoscere - senza la capacità di mobilitare intorno a questo obiettivo l'intera potenzialità di lotta delle masse studentesche. Il sindacato metalmeccanici ha costituito d'altra parte "consigli di zona", che fanno capo alle "leghe dei metalmeccanici" in cui gli studenti sono invitati a collaborare per individuare alcune te-

matiche comuni a operai e studenti. E' troppo presto per poter dire che rispondenza susciti questa operazione negli studenti. Certo bisogna dire che è in atto un grosso tentativo da parte della sinistra sindacale per ristabilire, un controllo del sindacato (e, dietro di esso, del PCI) sull'intero quadro delle forze studentesche, in particolare i "medi" (gli universitari, da tempo, non sembrano dare troppi segni di vita).



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## LA SCUOLA IN CINA

## PREMESSA

La Cina è di moda. I mezzi di informazione di massa che fino a qualche anno fa la ignoravano oppure ne davano immagini grossolanamente o sottilmente deformate, oggi, in gara tra loro, offrono ai lettori, agli ascoltatori, agli spettatori notizie e interpretazioni sempre più numerose della realtà cinese.

Eppure gli utenti dei mass-media non hanno compiuto decisivi progressi nella conoscenza effettiva di tale realtà, e solo alcuni dei più macroscopici pregiudizi sono caduti; la cerchia di coloro che, pur senza essere degli esperti, sono almeno in grado di accogliere criticamente e di valutare con una certa esattezza le informazioni sulla Cina, non si è quindi molto allargata.

Nel trattare della Cina non si affrontano infatti alla radice, nei termini cioè di visione globale della società cinese, i diversi argomenti e problemi, perché, se così si facesse, si favorirebbe il vacillare di credenze e di opinioni quasi universalmente accettate; si promuove invece la informazione copiosa, ma frizionata, superficiale o inesatta, conformemente del resto al duplice scopo che i mass-media si propongono in ogni campo: soffocare, sul momento, possibili interessi verso i temi di fondo, e creare, in prospettiva, un atteggiamento mentale che sia alieno da approfondimenti e che si soddisfi dell'immediato e del facile.

Esiste sempre, e vero, una minoranza che, talora con fatica e con rischio, ricerca altre informazioni, si impadronisce di altri metodi di conoscenza e diffonde quello che di diverso ha appreso; ma essa non è giudicata pericolosa, dato che i più sono condizionati e agiscono in modo conformistico, e verrebbe ostacolata soltanto nel caso in cui

## BIBLIOGRAFIA

- Ottimi strumenti per lo studio della nuova Cina e della storia della sua nascita e del suo sviluppo sono le seguenti pubblicazioni:
- Saggi: E. Snow - "Stella rossa sulla Cina" - Einaudi - L. 2000  
 E. Snow - "L'altra riva del fiume" - Einaudi - L. 5000  
 J. Myrdal - "Rapporto da un villaggio cinese" - Einaudi - L. 1500  
 J. Myrdal - "Rapporto da un villaggio cinese durante la Rivoluzione culturale" - Einaudi - L. 1000  
 E. Collotti Pischel - "La Cina rivoluzionaria" - Einaudi - L. 2000  
 J. Horn - "Dottore in Cina" (Il libro è di facilissima lettura. Esso è stato da qualcuno definito agiografico e mitico; ma è la Cina che è mitica, nel senso che la storia delle sue masse in lotta incessante contro lo sfruttamento, la miseria, l'arretratezza, ha del grandioso e dell'epico, e il racconto di Horn, come quelli dei Cinesi, riflette in modo immediato tale grandiosità ed epicità). - Longanesi - L. 2700  
 W. Hinton - "Fan-shen" - Einaudi - L. 6000  
 F. Schurmann - "Ideologia, organizzazione e società in Cina dalla liberazione alla Rivoluzione culturale" - Il Saggiatore - L. 6000

mutando i tempi, cominciasse a crescere di numero e parallelamente si sviluppasse un impetuoso movimento rivoluzionario.

Contro l'informazione disinformatrice di una gran parte delle fonti più comuni di notizie, si fomiranno quindi alcune indicazioni, anche se sommarie e incomplete, per letture proficue sulla Cina.

L'articolo che segue si propone del resto di invogliare chi lo leggerà a cercar di conoscere in modo sempre più approfondito la società cinese odierna. Non può infatti avere altre pretese l'esame, per di più rapido e parziale, di una sola istituzione, in questo caso la scuola: come è stato detto, soltanto se non si ignora la totalità dell'organizzazione economica, politica, sociale di uno stato si possono comprendere compiutamente i diversi settori in cui la sua vita si articola, e si può sfuggire agli opposti rischi, altrimenti quasi inevitabili, di considerare quello che è diverso dalla realtà in cui si vive come qualcosa di lontano e di irrealizzabile, e persino di esotico, o di pensare che certe innovazioni possano essere trasferite pari pari e ottenere gli stessi risultati, senza che siano compiuti altri più vasti e decisivi mutamenti. Il che non implica, evidentemente, che non si debbano trarre spunti dall'esperienza cinese; ma questo è un discorso che non si può che accennare qui, mentre richiederebbe un'analisi particolareggiata.

Romanzi: S. Gordon-T. Allan - "Il bisturi e la spada" (E' la vita del dottor Norman Bethune) - Feltrinelli - L. 800.  
 A. Malraux - "La condizione umana" - Bompiani - L. 2.000.

Riviste e giornali: Documentatissima e aggiornatissima è la rivista trimestrale "Vento dell'Est", delle edizioni Oriente di Milano (abbonamento annuo L. 3.000; in vendita a Torino presso la Libreria Popolare, Via S. Anselmo 13, la Libreria Hellas, Via Bertola, 6 e la Libreria Feltrinelli, Piazza Castello).

E' opportuno anche leggere quanto sul "Manifesto" si pubblica sulla Cina; sono usciti finora articoli di K.S. Karol, E. Collotti Pischel, A. Natoli e di altri che fecero parte della delegazione che visitò in agosto la Cina.

Si parlerà qui in particolare della scuola media in Cina, mettendone in luce alcuni elementi caratterizzanti, molti dei quali sono comuni alle università e alle scuole di grado inferiore.

LA GESTIONE DELLE SCUOLE - Abolita, come dappertutto, la direzione unica, dirigono le scuole i Comitati rivoluzionari, e i Comitati di partito (i nuovi Comitati di partito, sorti per lo più nel 1968/69), che hanno spesso dei membri in comune.

I Comitati rivoluzionari, divisi di solito in un certo numero di sezioni - per esempio, politica, amministrativa, per la rivoluzione dell'insegnamento, per l'organizzazione della fabbrica annessa alla scuola - sono variamente composti. In una scuola media del centro di Pechino, frequentata da 1700 allievi, 19 sono attualmente i componenti del Comitato rivoluzionario: 4 rappresentanti della squadra operaia e della squadra dell'esercito, 3 dei quadri rivoluzionari, 6 degli insegnanti, 4 degli operai che lavorano nella fabbrica della scuola, 2 degli allievi.

LA COMPENETRAZIONE DI SCUOLA E SOCIETA' - La composizione dei Comitati rivoluzionari dimostra come la scuola non sia un corpo isolato dal resto della società, e come non rappresenti un vuoto slogan l'affermazione dei Cinesi che il problema educativo interessa non solo le persone che tradizionalmente operano nella scuola, ma anche, e soprattutto, gli operai e i contadini, dovendo l'educazione prevalentemente servire alla politica del proletariato e creare continuatori della causa del comunismo.

Altre conferme di questa compenetrazione reciproca di scuola e società si trovano nei fatti seguenti: gli studenti per circa otto mesi seguono le lezioni a scuola, e per due mesi lavorano in fabbrica o in campagna; negli otto mesi del periodo scolastico trascorrono diverse ore settimanali nella fabbrica della scuola (in quella che è stata prima cisterna, costruiscono pezzi di ricambio per autoveicoli, utilizzando materiali tratti da vecchie macchine, e con la vendita dei prodotti la scuola si autofinanzia nei mezzi didattici) o lavorano, insieme con i contadini o gli operai della zona a risolvere problemi pratici (una delegazione che si recò in Cina nell'estate del 1971 constatò che gli studenti quattordicenni di una scuola media della brigata agricola di Tachai studiavano con i lavoratori del luogo la pro-

gettazione di opere idrauliche); gli insegnanti, abituati prima della Rivoluzione culturale a svolgere compiti esclusivamente teorici che li rendevano incapaci di comprendere le esigenze delle masse, si rieducano lavorando anche loro per determinati periodi in fabbrica o in campagna, e, se incontrano difficoltà di fronte a studenti che sono ora, in numero sempre maggiore, di provenienza operaia e contadina, sono gli studenti, gli operai e i contadini stessi che devono aiutarli affinché di fronte a i nuovi compiti trovino un nuovo spirito animatore, e linguaggio e metodi egualmente nuovi.

LA "RIVOLUZIONE ININTERROTTA" E LA SOLIDARIE-TA' DI CLASSE NELLA SCUOLA; I RISULTATI DI QUEST'ULTIMA - Quanto è stato detto finora permette già di riscontrare, nella scuola, due fattori centrali di tutta la realtà cinese.

L'uno è la dinamicità, la continua trasformazione, la "rivoluzione ininterrotta": contraddizioni emergono incessantemente, e non bisogna disarmare mai di fronte ad esse, ma analizzarle correttamente per risolverle altrettanto correttamente, ripetono sempre i compagni cinesi, insistendo sulla necessità della "lotta-critica-trasformazione". L'altro è l'aiuto reciproco, la solidarietà nella lotta di classe, che è fatto concreto e si propone come meta l'abolizione delle disuguaglianze sociali, e che pertanto non ha niente a che fare con la solidarietà vaga e inconsistente, accomunata sfruttati e sfruttatori, della quale parlano, per esempio, i filantropi socialdemocratici e che non mira a radicali trasformazioni, ma lascia intatta struttura e meccanismi di classe.

Sul tema della solidarietà è opportuno spendere ancora alcune parole. Gli insegnanti non considerano chiuso il loro compito quando le ore di lezione sono terminate: è preciso dovere loro e degli allievi che traggono maggior profitto dalle lezioni aiutare quelli che stentano a seguirle. Se, nonostante questo assiduo aiuto, qualche studente non riesce a superare gli esami - che concludono ogni anno scolastico - di nuovo gli insegnanti e soprattutto i compagni di studio lo assistono nella preparazione per gli esami di secondo appello.

Tale metodo di aiuto reciproco ottiene principalmente due scopi: in primo luogo, contribuisce alla creazione di un uomo nuovo, che viva non per sé solo, ma per la col-



lettività, e che veda soddisfatti, poiché tutti gli altri sono orientati nella stessa direzione, alcuni dei bisogni fondamentali dell'individuo, quelli della sicurezza, della accettazione e della partecipazione sociale; in secondo luogo, rende possibile e soddisfacente l'apprendimento in una situazione tecnicamente difficilissima; basti pensare che, nonostante gli straordinari sforzi compiuti anche nel settore scolastico e i continui progressi, misurabili di anno in anno, non c'è ancora - e non potrebbe essere altrimenti, date le condizioni da cui si partì nel 1949 - un numero sufficiente di scuole medie superiori e di insegnanti, e le classi sono formate in media di 40/45 alunni. Eppure, a quanto affermano concordemente gli osservatori più attenti, si impara, la massiccia diffusione dell'istruzione si attua non a livelli bassi, ma a livelli via via più alti (il contrario sta avvenendo da noi, con la cosiddetta scuola di massa), e quel che più conta, si cresce serenamente, perché ai giovani si dà fiducia e perché si cerca di organizzare tutta la società in funzione delle masse, e non di una minoranza di privilegiati. L'impressione che il visitatore di una scuola cinese riporta, e che gli è confermata dagli incontri allo esterno, è infatti quella di una gioventù serena, matura, equilibrata, autodisciplinata. Un esempio, modesto ma tuttavia indicativo: spesso si vedono grandi o piccole squadre di giovani e anche di ragazzini dei due sessi spostarsi per le città e nelle campagne, diretti a riunioni, senza accompagnatori adulti, e il loro comportamento è cameratesco e disinvolto, ma rivela nello stesso tempo un certo riserbo e autocontrollo. Un altro esempio del medesimo genere: il chiasso nelle scuole durante gli intervalli e quello dei bambini che giocano nelle strade e nei cortili è una manifestazione di salute fisica e mentale, e non ha per tanto nessuna di quelle caratteristiche di srenatezza nevrotica che contraddistinguono i momenti di libertà o, meglio, di sfogo di chi è represso.

**GLI ESAMI** - Gli esami, che si svolgono secondo il sistema "a libro aperto", cioè senza domande trabocchetto e con l'aiuto dei testi, e che partono dalla valutazione complessiva del lavoro compiuto durante l'anno, vengono superati, in primo o in secondo appello, da quasi tutti gli allievi. In casi eccezionali l'esame non si supera, ma il ripetere l'anno, per la situazione generale in cui il fatto avviene, non è sentito, o almeno si tende a non farlo sentire, come un'umiliazione, né, tanto meno, come una prova di emarginazione. Anche i voti, che parevano aboliti durante la Rivoluzione culturale e che oggi invece si usano, hanno un valore diverso da quello che assumono nelle scuole delle società individualistiche e competitive, passano cioè in secondo piano; essi vengono assegnati, dopo l'esame, con due metodi: valutazione da parte degli insegnanti e valutazione da parte

te degli insegnanti e degli allievi insieme.

**LA POLITICA AL PRIMO POSTO** - Le valutazioni sono, senza mistificazione alcuna, apertamente riportate alla politica, che occupa, nella scuola come altrove, il primo posto, e con buon atteggiamento politico si intende non certo il parlare a vuoto di politica - giudicato una pericolosa manifestazione di ultrasinistrismo -, ma l'impegno serio nello studio del pensiero di Mao, del marxismo-leninismo, delle varie materie, e nel lavoro l'uso di quello che si è appreso non per un privato abbellimento intellettuale o come strumento per far carriera, ma come mezzo per servire, non solo nel futuro, ma già nel presente, il proletariato (per esempio, i compagni meno favoriti in partenza).

Non si contrabbandano con il termine generico di cultura contenuti e metodi aventi precisi scopi politici e non si sostiene quindi la neutralità della cultura stessa, ma si riconosce chiaramente l'interdipendenza di struttura e sovrastruttura, si legano strettamente la teoria e la pratica rivoluzionaria (vedi, in particolare, l'esempio riferito di Tachai), si individuano in ogni campo le contraddizioni. In questo quadro non viene affatto rifiutato il patrimonio culturale, antico e contemporaneo, dell'Occidente e quello del passato della Cina, ma essi "servono al nuovo", vengono cioè utilizzati per lo sviluppo del socialismo e la costruzione futura del comunismo.

**CONCLUSIONE** - A questo punto, come conclusione di quanto si è detto, sono necessarie alcune precisazioni. Anzitutto, dato che si è parlato dei continui progressi che si compiono nella scuola, come negli altri campi, e si è accennato, come termine di riferimento, alle condizioni della Cina al momento della vittoria della Armata rossa, è opportuno documentare anche brevemente tale situazione. Basteranno due citazioni di testimoni oculari. Eugenio Orrego Vicuna in "Mujeres, paisajes y templos" (Montevideo, 1931), citato da Bermann ne "La salute mentale in Cina" (Einaudi, 1972), dichiara: "Pechino è in vendita. Le anime e le cose sono in vendita. Potreste comprare uno schiavo di dodici anni per un pugno di monete e la benedizione del padre tormenterebbe a lungo il vostro orecchio. Più volte un cittadino mi seguì, tirandomi per il soprabito e supplicandomi di prendermi sua figlia. I mendicanti pullulano intorno ai negozi di generi alimentari. Due o tre monete farebbero la felicità di un uomo, ma sono tanti che la soddisfazione di pochi diventerebbe un rimorso... Mai gli uomini, nelle loro notti d'incubo, poterono sognare una miseria tanto spaventosa...".

Jack Beldenne "La Cina scuote il mondo" (Laterza, Bari, 1971), parlando dei contadini cinesi dell'entroterra

ra della Cina settentrionale, zona in cui egli visse negli anni precedenti la liberazione, dice (pag. 204): "Quanto al consumo di carne, quello del contadino medio - che visse in una zona ricca oppure povera non faceva alcuna differenza - era di una libbra e un terzo l'anno. Più o meno il peso di una buona bistecca che voi potete mandar giù in un pasto solo. Nelle zone a coltura cotoniera i contadini disponevano solitamente di due libbre e due terzi di tela di cotone l'anno a testa (più la stessa quantità di cotone grezzo). Nelle zone dove non si coltivava cotone un uomo non aveva che una libbra di tela e mezza libbra di cotone l'anno. Semplici cifre. Ma cifre che per il contadino racchiudevano una situazione tragica. Un uomo si considerava fortunato se aveva un qualsiasi straccio da mettersi addosso. Gli indumenti venivano spesso usati in comune da due o tre persone. Quando un uomo usciva di casa indossava l'unico paio di pantaloni della famiglia, e sua figlia rimaneva a letto nuda. Marito e moglie si arrangiavano portando a turno lo stesso paio di pantaloni. Non c'è da stupirsi se nello Shansi settentrionale le donne non uscivano nei campi". Le precedenti citazioni dovrebbero far comprendere che quella sorta di ascetismo e rigorismo che regola la società cinese odierna è dote positiva e non negativa, anche perché essa non intacca minimamente la serenità, l'equilibrio e persino la festosità che i Cinesi manifestano e potrebbe anzi esserne una delle condizioni (ma qui si dovrebbe aprire un discorso sulle motivazioni e sui mezzi che meglio permettono agli uomini di soddisfarle), e che sono antistoriche le accuse che a questo proposito rivolgono alla Cina molti di coloro che vivono, appagandosi, in società cosiddette permissive. Senza durissimi sacrifici sarebbe stato possibile arrivare ai risultati attuali e sarebbe possibile continuare a progredire? E, del resto, è possibile creare in qualsiasi campo qualcosa di valido senza un faticoso impegno?

In secondo luogo, non si può tacere che oggi, terminata la Rivoluzione culturale, la Cina sta attraversando una fase di aggiustamento, e alcuni suoi aspetti, anche, naturalmente, per quanto riguarda la scuola, appaiono oscuri o almeno non sufficientemente chiari - come i rapporti tra i Comitati rivoluzionari e il Partito.

Non bisogna infine dimenticare che i Cinesi, consci della specificità di ogni esperienza non propongono mai se stessi come modelli, ma sostengono che ogni popolo deve ricercare la sua via per la rivoluzione e che, compiuta la già

difficilissima opera che porta alla vittoria del proletariato, se ne inizia un'altra, ugualmente ardua e lunghissima, di costruzione del socialismo in vista del comunismo, che è meta ancora lontana.

Da questo rifiuto di qualsiasi utopistica e trionfalistica deformazione della realtà, come da quello dell'indifferenza e del disimpegno, ci vengono dai Cinesi preziose indicazioni per le nostre lotte.

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## POTERE FEMMINILE E SOVVERSIONE SOCIALE

Nella serie sempre più fitta di libri che si pubblicano sulla cosiddetta "questione femminile" merita una giusta attenzione il volumetto di MARIAROSA DALLA COSTA, Potere femminile e sovversione sociale (Padova Marsilio, 1972, L. 1000), di cui è imminente la seconda edizione: segno dell'interesse che il libro ha suscitato fra le lettrici. Il punto di partenza dell'autrice è la modificazione che il capitalismo introduce nell'assetto familiare. Nella società primitiva di tipo precapitalistico i beni economici sono prodotti nell'ambito familiare. Sia che si tratti di attività agricola che artigianale, il nucleo di produzione è la famiglia e quindi tutti i componenti (uomini, bambini, vecchi) sono ad un tempo produttori e consumatori dei beni di consumo. Con l'avvento del capitalismo il centro di produzione si sposta invece dalla casa alla fabbrica: questo semplice fatto scompagina l'attività e l'equilibrio sociale ed economico del nucleo familiare.

E' l'uomo infatti ad essere prelevato quale forza-lavoro e ad essere inserito nella fabbrica divenendo lavoratore salariato (è vero che il capitalismo delle origini sfrutta anche il lavoro delle donne e dei bambini, ma si tratta di un fenomeno quantitativamente marginale). Gli altri — donne bambini vecchi — restano fuori, a carico dell'uomo lavoratore. Inizia così lo sfruttamento del lavoratore da parte del capitale attraverso il salario. Tale sfruttamento però non si limita solo all'uomo che come lavoratore entra in prima persona nel ciclo produttivo, ma si allarga evidentemente anche a coloro (soprattutto le donne) che economicamente dipendono da lui. Si può anzi dire che questo sfruttamento più indiretto e quindi più nascosto e mistificato è anche il più efficace.

Il lavoro delle donne è infatti sempre apparso come una prestazione personale di servizi resi al di fuori del capitale; è opinione comune che la donna con il suo lavoro domestico non è produttiva. Questo non è vero perché (a parte ogni considerazione di carattere pratico: basti pensare al peso, all'orario, alla responsabilità del lavoro domestico e dell'allevamento dei figli e al fatto che il lavoro domestico è l'unico a non trarre vantaggi dall'innovazione tecnologica poiché il tempo risparmiato con lavatrici ecc. non si traduce in tempo libero, come avviene con il lavoro in fabbrica, ma solo in più tempo da dedicare ai figli o ad altre cose della casa) la donna dal punto di vista del capitale, è forza altamente produttiva in quanto, senza alcun salario, produce, alleva, accudisce la forza-lavoro salariata (l'uomo), e inoltre, lavando, pulendo, allevando figli, libera l'uomo da queste incombenze e lo

rende quindi completamente disponibile per il lavoro in fabbrica e pronto per lo sfruttamento.

Oltre a questo uso economico della donna, c'è poi, da parte del capitale, anche un uso sociale, in quanto la donna e la famiglia in genere hanno sempre funzionato come agenti frenanti sulle possibilità di eversione e di aggressività delle classi oppresse. La famiglia è il grembo sempre pronto a riaccogliere gli uomini che le crisi del capitale espellono dal posto di lavoro, e tale riassorbimento, funzionando come valvola di sfogo delle frustrazioni, ha proprio il compito di smussare e sviare l'aggressività che da tali frustrazioni deriva.

A questo punto ci si può chiedere come mai la donna, così particolarmente sfruttata (dal capitale che la fa lavorare senza pagarla; dall'uomo-marito come detentore del potere economico familiare), non abbia alle sue spalle momenti di lotta, di presa di coscienza della propria condizione di sfruttata, ma sia anzi considerata anche dai partiti e dalle organizzazioni politiche della sinistra una forza di conservazione e di freno sulle lotte operaie. La risposta sta nell'analisi appena condotta: nel momento in cui la donna è stata isolata nella casa, costretta ad un lavoro monotono e non realizzante, ha perso l'occasione altamente formativa che dà l'esperienza della lotta collettiva in seno alla propria classe, l'esperienza della rivolta sociale che sola dà coscienza delle proprie capacità e del proprio potere. L'isolamento ha fatto della donna un individuo socialmente ineducato e, soprattutto, le ha fatto perdere i contatti con la propria classe sociale (quando non l'ha resa addirittura nemica). A questo punto è però anche necessario sottolineare come i partiti del movimento operaio abbiano per lo più evitato di fare della questione femminile un asse centrale della propria strategia di lotta. Hanno, sì, avanzato rivendicazioni che potevano interessare principalmente le donne, come asili nido, scuole a tempo pieno ecc., ma evitando sempre di condurre su questi obiettivi lotte dure, decise, mobilitando soprattutto la rabbia femminile. In fondo i partiti tradizionali del movimento operaio hanno puntato sempre prioritariamente sull'elevazione delle condizioni economiche dei lavoratori maschi.

Difficile a questo punto prospettare delle soluzioni. La Dalla Costa esclude comunque che la soluzione per la donna sia uscire dalla casa per andare a lavorare. L'emancipazione della donna non può passare attraverso il lavoro fuori di casa, per almeno due motivi: a) perché il lavoro è sempre lavoro, sia in casa che fuori, e la schiavitù della catena di montaggio non è migliore della schiavitù

vitù del lavandino; b) perché lavorare fuori casa non significa mai non lavorare più in casa, ma solo sommare i due oneri, aggiungendo quindi sfruttamento a sfruttamento.

Certo non si può negare che la donna che lavora fuori di casa facilmente portata a prendere coscienza dei propri problemi: coscienza del proprio sfruttamento in fabbrica, e quindi anche del proprio sfruttamento in casa. Ma d'altra parte, in ogni caso, la soluzione del lavoro femminile in fabbrica o negli uffici è del tutto impossibile, per ragioni oggettive. Attualmente in Italia su un totale di 27 milioni di donne solo 5 milioni risultano impiegate nei vari settori produttivi. Il 79,9% sono dunque, senza lavoro, "casalinghe" per forza. E' noto che quando il bisogno di lavoro diminuisce le prime ad essere espulse in massa dal lavoro produttivo sono proprio le donne.

In particolare nell'ultimo decennio si è avuta una diminuzione di unità lavorative di 1.360.000. Se questa dunque è la situazione, se il lavoro fuori casa non è la soluzione per la donna — se non per principio almeno praticamente — allora non resta che accettare la realtà della "casa", la condizione di "casalinga" (che è quella che riguarda la stragrande maggioranza delle donne, quasi l'80% come si è visto) e partire di qui per impostare la propria lotta.

Si tratta insomma per le donne di prendere coscienza del lavoro domestico come forma mascherata di lavoro produttivo. E si tratta quindi per la donna, successivamente, di infrangere la struttura stessa del lavoro domestico, rifiutandosi come casalinga, rifiutando la casa come ghetto, intaccando il concetto stesso di famiglia, che tende a relegare la donna nei ruoli di moglie e di madre. Si tratta insomma per le donne di uscire finalmente allo scoperto, come individui, per cominciare a incontrare le altre donne non più come amiche o vicine di casa ma finalmente come compagne di lavoro (a quel particolare tipo di lavoro non salariato che è il lavoro domestico) e di lotta. Ogni sede di lotta fuori della casa, proprio in quanto tutta l'organizzazione capitalista presuppone la casa, è idonea all'attacco femminile: le riunioni di quartiere, le assemblee studentesche, le assemblee di fabbrica (questi due ultimi luoghi per le donne che siano anche, oltre che casalinghe, studentesse o lavoratrici fuori casa) possono essere gli spazi della lotta femminile.

Il discorso della Dalla Costa è interessante nella misura in cui sottolinea con forza il carattere di lavoro produttivo che ha il lavoro domestico, e pone al centro del progetto rivoluzionario la "casa" e la figura della "casalinga". In questo senso l'autrice si pone in polemica non solo con le forze tradizionali del movimento operaio (PCI, sindacato), ma anche con quelle forze della cosiddetta sinistra extraparlamentare che hanno privilegiato costantemente lo spazio della "fabbrica". La Dalla Costa evidenzia giusta —

mente come la struttura della casa sia funzionale al capitalismo, alla fabbrica, come sia essa stessa fabbrica, "fabbrica sociale".

A partire da questa precisazione, la Dalla Costa propone come livello sociale in cui aprire la lotta appunto "la casa", e considera la donna figura centrale della sovversione sociale. Non la fabbrica, ma il quartiere, insomma. I primi esempi di lotte di questo tipo sono le lotte di quartiere contro l'aumento dei prezzi o per l'occupazione delle case: tutte lotte che hanno visto le donne proletarie in prima fila.

Certo è vero che da almeno un paio di anni i gruppi più consapevoli della sinistra extraparlamentare si sono resi conto dei limiti della lotta di fabbrica. La lotta in fabbrica, lo sciopero duro, selvaggio, anche il sabotaggio, funzionano nella misura in cui bloccano la produzione, bloccano lo sviluppo del capitale. Ma quando il capitale sceglie la crisi, accetta di perdere la produzione pur di stroncare la classe operaia (che è la scelta di questi ultimi due — tre anni fatta dal capitale italiano), quando il capitale al più piccolo sciopero manda a casa, mette in cassa integrazione migliaia di operai, e fuori dalla fabbrica, si mangia gli aumenti salariali strappati dentro la fabbrica, a che serve l'arma dello sciopero? Di qui i gruppi hanno dedotto la necessità di una lotta non più in fabbrica ma "nel sociale", cioè nel quartiere, contro l'aumento dei prezzi, per trasporti gratis, scuole gratis, ecc.. Secondo la Dalla Costa però "la proposta della sinistra per la lotta a livello sociale era semplicemente l'estensione meccanica e la proiezione della lotta di fabbrica: l'operaio maschio continuava ad essere la figura centrale" (p. 10). Secondo la Dalla Costa cioè non bisogna concepire la lotta sul sociale come prolungamento della lotta in fabbrica, ma come lotta che sorge spontaneamente, da dentro il quartiere, da quello spazio chiuso che è la casa, che è la fabbrica-prigione della donna. La Dalla Costa vede cioè nella donna — in quanto individuo maggiormente sfruttato, più sfruttato dell'operaio maschio — l'elemento guida della sovversione totale. Restano tuttavia da chiarire alcuni punti. Prima di tutto, come nasce nella "casalinga" la consapevolezza e la determinazione della lotta? Abbiamo già detto come sia più facile per la donna che lavori fuori casa acquisire una coscienza politica. Per le casalinghe questa coscienza come viene fuori? Viene fuori spontaneamente? (L'analisi del passato direbbe di no). Oppure è "portata" alle casalinghe dalla propaganda di una minoranza cosciente e organizzata, una specie di partito bolscevico femminile che "porta" la coscienza rivoluzionaria alle masse? E, in secondo luogo, quale è il rapporto tra movi-



mento di liberazione femminile e movimenti rivoluzionari rappresentati dai gruppi, in cui la predominanza è dei maschi?

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DUE FILM POLITICI:

"CREPA PADRONE" e "IL POTERE"

Che il cinema sia un importante strumento di comunicazione di massa, capace di raggiungere milioni di persone, di ogni strato sociale, è cosa nota. Che sia possibile usare questo strumento per fare un preciso discorso politico è una vecchia aspirazione degli intellettuali impegnati. Il problema è di fare un film che pur essendo "politico" non sia un "mattoncino", e sia quindi in grado di raggiungere i milioni di spettatori. Ci hanno riprovato, di recente, un celebre regista francese, Godard, e uno sconosciuto regista italiano, Tretti.

Il film di Godard parte da un'idea felice: rifare Love story. Fare cioè un film d'amore, con due grossi attori di richiamo (Yves Montand e Jane Fonda). Scrive Godard: "Essi si amano e si agitano come in tutti i film. Ma noi definiamo ciò che li separa o ciò che li unisce: lotta di classe. E ciò che fa sì che Jane Fonda, giornalista, o Yves Montand, regista cinematografico, passino dall'io ti amo allo io non ti amo più, e poi di nuovo ad un secondo "io ti amo", questa volta diverso dal primo; è che tra i due "io ti amo" ci sono quaranta minuti in cui essi sono stati sequestrati in una fabbrica". La storia d'amore si intreccia, con una lotta di classe (la donna, appunto giornalista, è andata in una fabbrica, accompagnata dall'uomo, per intervistare il direttore proprio mentre scoppia uno sciopero "duro" e gli operai sequestrano direttore e ospiti). L'i-

dea è buona, ma è la realizzazione che è modesta. E, peggio ancora, è propriamente l'analisi politica della Francia '68-'72 che è insufficiente. Il film è ambientato nel '72 ma il punto di riferimento ideale è il maggio '68 (e numerosi sono i flash back relativi al maggio). Il maggio è l'esplosione dell'"autonomia operaia", sfuggita al controllo del sindacato, capace di inchiodare il capitalismo alla crisi economica, ma incapace - per mancanza di una organizzazione rivoluzionaria, di un partito rivoluzionario - di far precipitare la crisi economica in lotta insurrezionale per la conquista del potere, per l'abbattimento del potere borghese. Gli anni '68 - '72 sono gli anni in cui gli obiettivi del maggio (che nel maggio erano delle grandi fabbriche intorno a Parigi) si estendono a una miriade di piccole e medie fabbriche: gli obiettivi dei massicci aumenti salariali e della rivoluzione dell'orario di lavoro (anche se le lotte per questi obiettivi raramente sono vincenti). Di questa complessa realtà operaia che cosa coglie invece Godard? Coglie l'aspetto fenomenico, più esterno, superficiale, più vistoso: coglie il tipo di lotta "dura" (il sequestro del direttore, l'assalto finale al supermercato). Ma esaltare il particolare tipo di lotta "dura", come fa Godard, senza mostrare cosa c'è dietro a questa scelta,

significa offrire una rappresentazione parziale, schematica, insufficiente.

Ancora più schematico è il film di Tretti, "Il potere": e per forza di cose dal momento che tenta una sintesi del "potere" dalla preistoria a oggi, attraverso una serie di episodi significativi (i Romani, cioè Tiberio Gracco; indiani d'America e uomini bianchi; il fascismo; la situazione della pietra, che mostra il sorgere del potere religioso, ma che sta un po' a sé nel complesso del film. I quattro episodi storici sono intervallati da sequenze a colori (il resto del film è in bianco e nero) che mostrano tre personaggi, con maschere di animali al posto del capo che simboleggiano il potere economico, il potere giudiziario e il potere militare (gli ultimi due in pratica sono al servizio del primo, che parla con la "erre moscia", si da ricordare Agnelli). Come dire che al di là del mutare delle varie situazioni storiche resta una costante, che è quella del potere economico (appoggiato sistematicamente dal potere militare e da quello giudiziario). La scelta dei due brani storici del passato (Romani e Indiani) è un po' gratuita, con

scarsi legamenti interni. Più convincenti le due parti finali, più "moderne", e anche più lunghe come durata, e quindi più approfondite. Il fascismo è giustamente mascherato per quello che è, difesa degli interessi capitalistici in una particolare fase dello sviluppo storico. C'è una cosa che però non ci convince nel film: ed è la tendenza a fare inconsciamente l'apologia del "potere", a mostrare le infinite risorse attraverso le quali le classi dirigenti mantengono il potere: ad es., come nell'ultimo episodio, fingendo di abbracciare la causa degli sfruttati (il centro-sinistra, cioè l'apertura ai socialisti come modo di rafforzare il potere capitalistico). Insomma da un lato, in alto, sta l'iniziativa capitalistica, la sua infinita intelligenza; e dall'altro lato, in basso, sempre subalterne, sempre sconfitte, stanno le classi sfruttate. Non si tratta, evidentemente, di presentare una sconfitta del capitalismo che finora non c'è stata; si tratta però di guardare alla realtà dal punto di vista della classe operaia, della classe rivoluzionaria, che lentamente si organizza e prepara la rivoluzione.

CIRCOLO "3 LUGLIO"

Si è costituito a Torino il Circolo "3 luglio". Il nome si riferisce al 3 luglio '69, la battaglia operaia di corso Traiano contro le forze dell'ordine al servizio dei padroni. Il circolo non è un gruppo e non ha neppure un progetto complessivo di organizzazione politica. Esso considera però essenziale nel processo rivoluzionario la politica delle alleanze, e ritiene che in questa fase è possibile mettere in luce la realtà operaia di taluni settori di classe (lavoratori intellettuali, studenti, tecnici della scienza, ecc.) che attraverso l'attuale processo di proletarianizzazione assumono un potenziale rivoluzionario. L'attività del Circolo si esprimerà in un lavoro di chiarimenti, agitazione e propaganda, articolato inizialmente in una serie di settori di intervento:

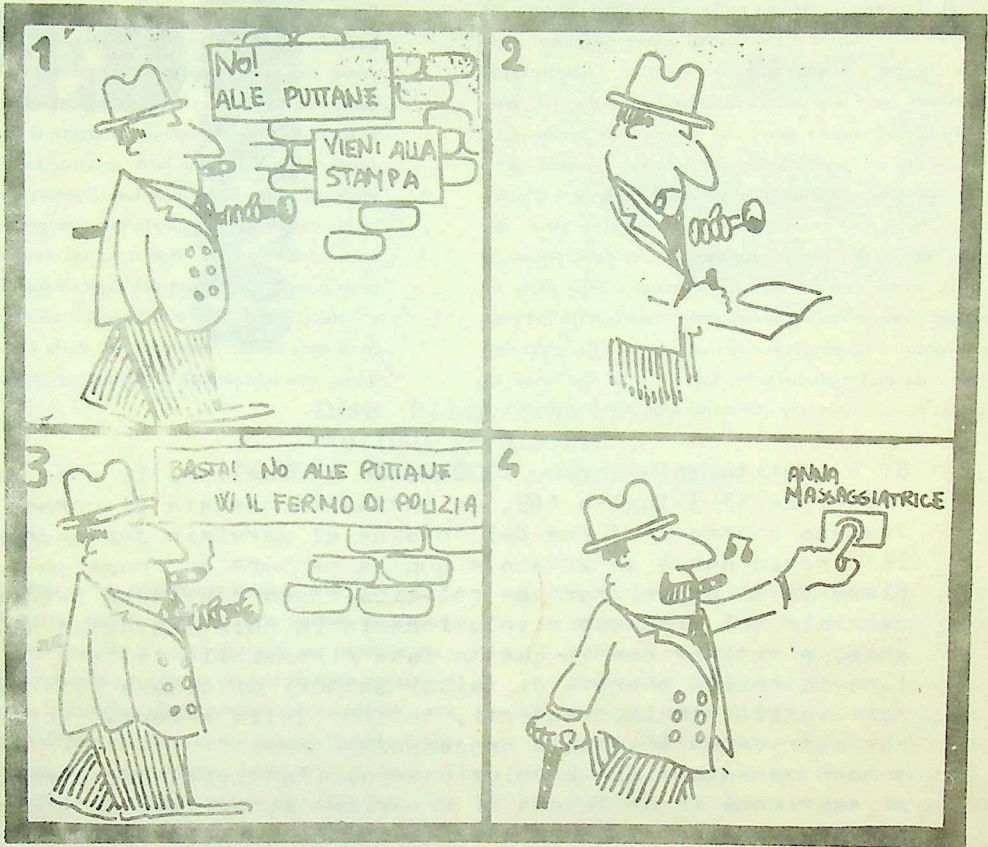
- 1) CINEMA: cicli di film sul PCI e la Resistenza, film delle Pantere Nere, film pop, film di cinema militante
- 2) TEATRO: iniziative di teatro politico e sperimentazione di teatro politico per bambini
- 3) CRITICA DELLA CULTURA: dibattiti sul lavoro intellettuale e lo sviluppo capitalistico
- 4) MOVIMENTI DI LIBERAZIONE SESSUALE: dibattiti sui movimenti femministi ed omosessuali
- 5) STORIA DEL MOVIMENTO OPERAIO: dibattiti sulle situazioni di classe, a livello nazionale e internazionale; rilettura della Resistenza come lotta armata antifascista e anticapitalista.

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# POUR UNE VRAIE FÊTE

## DES MÈRES & MÉNAGÈRES

### le 1<sup>er</sup> mai et la fête des mères

Au mois de Mai, il y a deux fêtes:

- le 1<sup>er</sup> Mai, la fête des travailleurs
- le 13 Mai, i.e. à tous les deuxièmes dimanches de Mai,

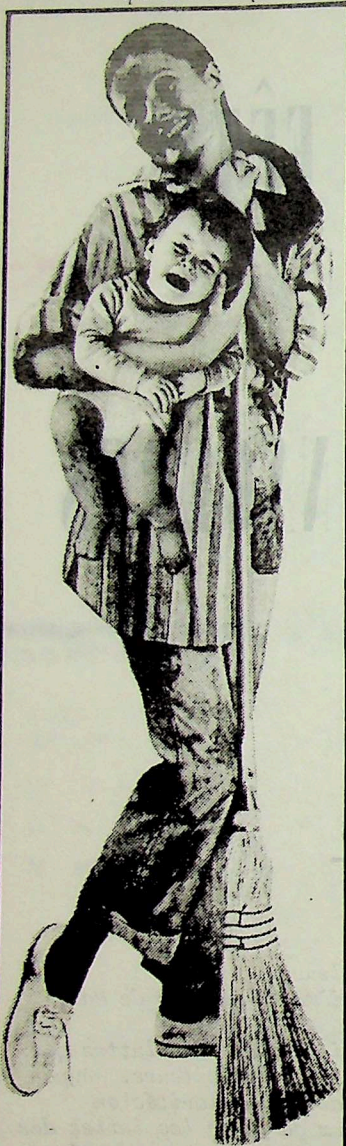
la fête des Mères.

Au Québec, c'est encore nouveau de fêter le 1<sup>er</sup> Mai, symbole des luttes que mènent les travailleurs/euses à travers le monde contre les exploités. Auparavant, en Amérique du Nord, on ne fêtait pas le 1<sup>er</sup> Mai: les autorités en place aux États-Unis, jugeant qu'il était trop dangereux de fêter les luttes des travailleurs, instituèrent à la place une fête du "Travail", tous les premiers lundis de Septembre. Ironie du sort, le 1<sup>er</sup> Mai rappelle justement les grèves de Mai 1886, entreprises par les travailleurs/euses des États-Unis, pour obtenir la journée de 8 heures. Fête inoffensive, jour de congé, fin de semaine d'accidents de la route, la fête du Travail est devenu un jour de congé comme le Lundi de Pâques et elle perd ainsi tout sens combattif.

Avec le nouveau développement des luttes des travailleurs/euses au Québec est apparue la nécessité d'avoir une fête symbolisant ces luttes. C'est donc maintenant le 1<sup>er</sup> Mai, comme dans le monde entier, que l'on fête les batailles menées par les travailleurs/euses vers leur libération.



Pour ces travailleuses que sont les mères, on leur offre à tous les deux-  
ième dimanches du mois de Mai, la "Fête des Mères". Mais fêter les "mamans",  
qu'est-ce que c'est?



Le fameux sourire de la  
maman (photo accompagnant  
les "poèmes à la maman" du  
guide Mt-Royal)

"Maman, c'est ta fête dimanche!

Un être cher, c'est un être que l'on aime, que  
l'on admire. C'est un être à qui l'on ne veut que du  
bien. C'est un être que l'on veut aussi remercier. Qui,  
mieux qu'une maman, représente l'être cher. Une mère,  
c'est le symbole parfait de l'amour, du dévouement, de  
l'abnégation même.

Les occasions de la remercier de son amour, de  
son dévouement sont multiples. Mais la plus appropriée  
demeurera toujours la "FETE DES MERES".

....."Qu'y a-t-il de plus précieux sur la terre  
qu'une maman.

Comment ne pas l'inonder de notre recon-  
naissance.

Maman par tes prières, tes larmes, tes  
souffrances et surtout ton sourire

Tu as engendré en moi ce respect, cette  
dignité de mon être."

Jean Hébert, membre du  
Club Optimiste Plateau Mt-Royal.

( Citations du Guide Mont-Royal, Mercredi 9 Mai 1973.)

Voilà, on fête les mamans pour leur dévouement, leur  
abnégation, leurs larmes, leurs souffrances et aussi pour...  
leur sourire!

Imagine-t-on les travailleurs le jour du 1er mai, à  
leur manifestation, se promenant avec des pancartes du gen-  
re:

"VIVE NOTRE DEVOUEMENT A L'USINE!"

"VIVE NOS SALAIRES DE MISERE!"

"VIVE NOS SOUFFRANCES CAR ELLES ENGENDRENT LA DIGNITE DE  
NOTRE ETRE!"

"DONNEZ-NOUS DES FLEURS POUR NOS PLEURS!"

NON, on ne peut pas imaginer une telle manifestation... Et pourtant, une fête  
toute spéciale a été inventée pour "inonder de notre reconnaissance" toutes  
les mères. Ainsi les mères, travailleuses à plein temps, silencieuses et i-  
solées, reçoivent un bouquet de fleurs UNE fois par année, pour continuer à  
pleurer, prier et souffrir les 364 autres jours de l'année!

C'est sûr, on ne passe pas son temps à pleurer ou à souffrir quand on s'oc-  
cupe des enfants et nombreuses sont les mères qui sont heureuses de voir ar-  
river leurs enfants avec une fleur ou un dessin pour elles. Il ne s'agit pas  
de dire qu'on ne devrait pas fêter les mères, mais plutôt de savoir pourquoi et  
comment les fêter.

## la fête des mères, qu'est-ce que c'est?

### L'origine de la fête des mères

C'est Napoléon qui a créé la fête des mères; la petite histoire nous dit  
qu'il a créé cette fête en l'honneur de sa mère qu'il admirait et qu'il chéris-  
sait beaucoup. Mais il y a des choses que cette même petite histoire "oublie"  
de nous dire. C'est que:

- Napoléon était un chef d'Etat impérialiste et qui, pour ses guerres de con-  
quête, avait besoin d'une nombreuse armée, de bonne chair à canons en d'autres  
mots. Il fallait pousser les françaises à avoir beaucoup d'enfants... pour les  
envoyer se faire tuer; mais il fallait remercier les mères de bien travailler  
pour la nation ("la patrie reconnaissante..." On connaît la chanson!). Un des  
candies (bonbons, en français) que Napoléon offrit aux mères de France, fut donc  
d'instituer la fête des mères.

- Ce même Napoléon en apparence si généreux pour les femmes, créa le fameux Co-  
de Napoléon: ce code civil faisait des femmes mariées des individus complète-  
ment impuissants, "incapables" au même titre que les enfants et les "fous" et  
sans aucun droit au point de vue juridique. Ce code institutionnalisait la sou-  
mission de la femme envers son époux. En faisant ce code, Napoléon détruisait  
les derniers espoirs de nombreuses femmes qui s'étaient battus lors de la Ré-  
volution française de 1789, pour faire reconnaître leurs droits. Ce code inspi-  
ra le premier code civil québécois de 1869, qui, à part quelques modifications,  
fut le même jusqu'au bill 16 de 1964. (cf. Analyse socio-économique des Ménagè-  
res; page 248.)

Il ne faudrait donc pas se méprendre sur les intentions de Napoléon lorsqu'il  
institua la fête des mères.

### de nos jours

La fête des mères, telle qu'elle est fêtée de nos jours, semble avoir une  
signification bien précise: il s'agit de convaincre les mères-ménagères, qu'elles  
font leur travail uniquement par amour pour leur mari et leurs enfants. On es-  
camote ainsi le fait que le travail qu'elles font, c'est effectivement un tra-  
vail qui demande beaucoup de temps et d'énergie. On passe sous silence le fait  
qu'il n'y a pas de garderies et que donc les mères n'ont pas réellement le choix  
de rester à la maison avec les enfants, ou de prendre un travail à l'extérieur.  
On fait de la mère une sainte qui est prête jour et nuit à s'occuper des enfants  
sans compter son temps et sa fatigue, puisque "c'est par amour" qu'elle agit.  
La maman est toujours là pour écouter les peines des uns et des autres; mais  
qu'une mère revendique un peu de temps libre, elle devient une "mère ingrate",  
dont "l'instinct maternel" est dévié!



Par la fête des mères, on valorise le côté sentimental de l'éducation des enfants sans parler des tâches matérielles indispensables à cette éducation: le ménage toujours à recommencer, le marché, le repas, le raccomodage etc... On fait perdre aux mères de famille (et aux membres de leur famille) la notion de la valeur réelle du travail qu'elles accomplissent. On fête les mères, oui, mais on n'en continue pas moins d'attendre qu'elles jouent le même rôle traditionnel qui leur a toujours été accordé. De plus, la publicité diffusée dans les journaux et à la radio, à l'occasion de la fête des mères, confirme à toutes et à tous que la place des mères est bien A LA MAISON.

Aimer c'est...



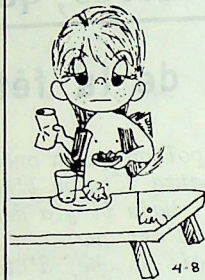
... être la meilleure mère du monde.

Aimer c'est...



Aimer, c'est... lui servir son petit déjeuner au lit par un beau dimanche.

Aimer c'est...



... faire table rase plusieurs fois par jour pour lui.

Aimer c'est...



... faire quelque chose pour lui plutôt que de regarder la télévision.

Tout ce qu'il faut faire "par Amour", voilà ce que nous enseigne régulièrement le Montréal-Matin...

## la publicité et la fête des mères

"POUR LIBÉRER VOTRE MAMAN, OFFREZ-LUI UN LAVE-VAISSELLE VIKING".  
 "AVEC UNE MACHINE A COUDRE BERNINA, VOUS DONNEREZ LE PLUS BEAU CADEAU A VOTRE MAMAN".  
 "LE FER A REPASSER XYZ RENDRA VOTRE MAMAN SI HEUREUSE".

Toute occasion est bonne pour les compagnies de vendre, vendre, vendre... C'est la fête des mères, leur seul jour de relâche de l'année - en principe. Qu'à cela ne tienne! on leur offre de quoi leur rappeler que dès demain elles retourneront dans leurs chaudrons et leur lavage..

Une fois de plus, on exploite le sentimentalisme qui entoure la famille pour pousser à la consommation et à l'endettement. Le meilleur exemple de cette course à la consommation est le Salon des Femmes qui a lieu chaque mois de Mai, et qui termine en beauté le jour de la fête des mères. Ce salon des femmes de- vrait plutôt s'appeler "la foire des objets ménagers". La majorité des kios- ters leurs tâches ménagères. On ajoute un soupçon "d'activités socio-culturel- les" (comme la nomination des 10 femmes de l'année au Québec, présidée par Mme Bourassa) et le tour est joué! Nous voilà transportés dans le monde des femmes! ou plutôt dans le monde où on veut les enfermer...

Cette année, on a même eu la gentillesse de faire une belle petite garderie pour permettre aux femmes d'aller se promener dans le Salon et de dépenser leur argent encore plus tranquillement. C'est bien la preuve que lorsque les indus- triels-commerçants ont besoin des femmes, ils font des garderies!.. Par contre, quand c'est dans nos intérêts à nous, ils n'ont plus "les moyens" de faire des garderies... (rappelons-nous les dernières déclarations de Castonguay: "Et j'opterais davantage pour une politique visant à l'augmentation des allocations familiales, en 1974, plutôt qu'à l'établissement d'un réseau de garderies popu- laires au Québec. Cette augmentation substantielle laisserait aux parents le choix. Le choix d'employer cet argent à l'achat d'aliments, de vêtements ou à payer les services d'une garderie."1 Quel choix!).

## pour une vraie fête des mères & ménagères

Que faut-il en conclure? Qu'il ne faudrait plus de fêtes des mères? Certainement non car mères et ménagères, nous sommes des travailleuses aussi et nous avons des batailles à mener et des luttes à fêter.

Cette année, la manifestation contre la répression anti-ouvrière qui a eu lieu à Montréal, le premier mai, regroupait plus de 25,000 travailleurs et tra- vailleuses. Les femmes étaient présentes et en grand nombre. En tant que fem- mes-ménagères-travailleuses et militantes du Centre des femmes, nous sommes al- ler manifester en signe de solidarité avec tous les autres travailleurs/ses.

Nous portions nos pancartes disant entre autres:

PREMIER MAI, FETE DES TRAVAILLEUSES, MENAGERES ET TRAVAILLEURS.  
 TRAVAILLEURS ET MENAGERES, TOUS UNIS CONTRE LES CAPITALISTES.

QUEBECOISES DEBOUTTE! (évidemment!)

PAS DE LIBERATION DES MENAGERES SANS LIBERATION DES TRAVAILLEURS, PAS DE LIBERA- TION DES TRAVAILLEURS SANS LIBERATION DES MENAGERES.

Nous tenions à rappeler que les ménagères sont des travailleuses (ou à l'ap- prendre à certains). Mais il est sûr que les batailles des ménagères-travail- leuses pour leur libération ne font que commencer au Québec. Ce sera donc au cours des luttes qui se mèneront que nous apprendrons à célébrer ces luttes et les victoires que nous gagnerons. Alors, peut-être enfin pourrions-nous choisir de fê- ter une vraie fête des mères-ménagères en lutte!

PAS DE LIBERATION DES MENAGERES SANS LIBERATION DES TRAVAILLEURS, PAS DE LIBERA- TION DES TRAVAILLEURS SANS LIBERATION DES MENAGERES!

1- La Presse 16 mai 1973



# L'ADDS

## une organisation politique des non-salariés exploités

Qu'est-ce que l'A.D.D.S. ?

L'ADDS (Association pour la Défense des Droits Sociaux) est un mouvement qui s'est créé, il y a deux ans environ, sur l'initiative des assistés-sociaux. Parti de Pte St-Charles, le mouvement s'est rapidement développé pour englober les quartiers suivants: Petite-Bourgogne, Centre-sud, Mercier, St-Louis, St-Henri, St-Laurent, St-Michel, Rosemont et Outremont. Depuis un an, un secrétariat a été mis sur pied pour desservir ces dix locaux qui regroupent une cent cinquante de personnes.

Dans un premier temps, l'ADDS se voulait être l'organisation de défense des assistés-sociaux. Le gros des activités consistait à fournir aux assistés-sociaux de l'information sur leurs droits, et à aller défendre ces droits avec eux jusque dans les bureaux du Bien-être social (BES). On s'est vite rendu compte qu'il fallait dépasser cette étape et qu'il ne s'agissait pas tant de défendre les assistés-sociaux comme de les rendre capables, en leur donnant certains moyens, de se défendre eux-mêmes.

Le congrès, qui eut lieu cette année, accentuait la démarche par une remise en question du travail des avocats populaires (\*) et par certaines prises de position qui vont marquer, c'est certain, le développement ultérieur du mouvement. Ainsi, le congrès déclarait que la lutte des assistés-sociaux était partie intégrante de la lutte de la classe ouvrière au Québec. De cette manière, il se refusait à ce que l'ADDS devienne une sorte de tampon entre les assistés-sociaux et le gouvernement. Le congrès critiquait également la formation d'une petite élite d'assistés-sociaux qui une fois "promus" avocats populaires risquaient de se couper de la majorité des assistés-sociaux. De plus, il demandait la démocratisation du secrétariat. Finalement, le congrès soulignait la nécessité de dépasser le service d'avocats populaires pour déboucher sur un travail de politisation et d'organisation dans les quartiers respectifs des locaux. Et il proposait à ces mêmes locaux d'accorder une grande importance à la formation politique des militants (es).



militantes

au congrès...

Depuis quatre ou cinq mois, les différents locaux ont entrepris de mettre en application cette orientation générale définie par le congrès. Les expériences varient selon les locaux, dépendant de leur situation respective. Il semble qu'à l'heure actuelle, l'ADDS soit un mouvement populaire, qui comme bien d'autres, cherche ses formes de lutte.

QUEBECOISES DEBOUTTE a rencontré cinq militantes de l'ADDS qui représentaient les locaux de Mercier, Centre-sud, St-Michel et St-Louis. Nous avons voulu en connaître plus sur ce mouvement dont on parle beaucoup mais qu'on connaît peu finalement. Cela nous intéressait d'autant plus que l'ADDS est un mouvement où les femmes, assistées-sociales pour la plupart, prédominent largement. Au cours de l'interview, les militantes nous ont expliqué pourquoi il en était ainsi et elles nous ont parlé des implications qui se dégagent d'une telle situation de fait.

### Un mouvement

#### qui rejoint des femmes

Question	Votre mouvement s'adresse à qui?
Mercier	Le groupe de gens que l'on côtoie le plus souvent, ce sont les femmes séparées qui vivent sur le bien-être et qui ont pour la plupart 3 ou 5 enfants. On a aussi des travailleurs à faible revenu. Là, j'ai remarqué une chose, y sont beaucoup embarqués au point de vue dette. Y sont sur la finance pis y s'embarquent de plus en plus. Y faut leur faire prendre conscience qu'y doivent pas s'embarquer davantage. Y a aussi une catégorie de gens qui sont handicapés et qui peuvent pas aller au travail, mais qui sont pas de l'âge de la pension de vieillesse. On en a passablement. Y faut leur faire avoir du bien-être pis tout ce qu'y ont droit. Finalement, y a les chômeurs. En grande partie, c'est des femmes qui viennent, au moins 85%. Y a pas d'hommes. C'est très rare qu'on voit des hommes venir demander des renseignements...sauf peut-être à St-Henri où y a beaucoup de chômeurs qui viennent.



Question Comment expliquez-vous ça?

Mercier D'abord y a beaucoup de femmes qui sont séparées. Mais y a celles aussi qui ont leur mari mais qui sont "pognées". Je pense qu'elles sont plus capables d'aller demander des renseignements pour s'en sortir. L'homme, y veut, mais y est pas capable de foncer pour y aller. D'après moi, avec son orgueil d'homme, y est pas capable de dire que là y est dans le trou. C'est ça l'affaire: de par son tempérament. Tandis que la femme, le fait des enfants la pousse à oublier tout ça, à dire "ben là y faut voir à ça". L'homme y va essayer tout seul ou ben y va se refermer sur lui-même...parce qu'y se sent dévalorisé.

## structures de l'adds

### locaux

*se réunit annuellement pour définir l'orientation générale du mouvement*

### congrès des membres

*au nombre de dix, constituent la base militante du mouvement*

### conseil régional

*composé d 3 membres de chaque local, il voit à adapter l'orientation à chaque situation*

### comité de direction

*composé d'un membre de chaque local, il voit à définir des tâches pratiques, en fonction de l'orientation*

### coordonateur

*il voit à l'exécution des tâches définies par le comité de direction*

### secrétariat

## Un problème concret;

### le manque d'argent

Question Qu'est-ce que c'est le principal problème que vous rencontrez?...le manque d'argent?

Mercier Ah oui! Définitivement, c'est un manque d'argent. Le coût de la vie est encore augmenté. Pis si on regarde les barèmes du bien-être, le plus haut montant accordé pour le NVPD, c'est \$184.00 par mois. Ca, c'est si t'as 4 enfants de 16 ans et plus. Y a rien à faire avec ça. C'est des miracles qu'y faudrait faire pour arriver.

Question C'est quoi le NVPD?

Mercier C'est Nourriture, Vêtements, nécessité Personnelle et Domestique. Ce à quoi a droit un assisté-social, c'est ça le NVPD. Là-dedans, y faut pas que tu comptes le logement, l'électricité pis le chauffage. Parce que ça, ça va aux autres: le propriétaire, l'Hydro pis le marchand d'huile. Le NVPD, c'est le petit montant qui te reste pour vivre quand t'as fini de payer tout le monde.

St-Michel Par exemple, moi j'ai deux enfants, une de 5 ans pis une de 9 ans. Y me donnent \$106.00 avec l'augmentation. Je suis dans la catégorie la plus basse, celle du 0-9 ans!

Centre-sud Pis avant, les gens avaient droit à des meubles, à des réparations. Le bien-être payait certains arriérages de compte. Mais maintenant, y ont même plus le droit à ça. Avec le petit montant du bien-être (NVPD), y doivent se nourrir, s'habiller acheter la literie, les meubles, faire réparer les appareils ménagers, la plomberie. Le gouvernement a donné une petite augmentation, la même pour tous les assistés-sociaux, pis y doivent s'arranger avec ça.

Mercier Vois-tu l'écoeuranterie que le gouvernement a fait! Y sont arrivés en avril pis y ont tout coupé les besoins spéciaux. Pourquoi y ont pas attendu au mois de juin ou juillet? Pour les déménagements au mois de mai, y ont dit: "trouvez-vous un logement pis organisez-vous!" Pis là y arrivent avec la loi de coupure au mois d'avril. Alors automatiquement les gens sont pognés dans leur logement avec pas d'installation, rien pour payer, rien pour s'organiser. Y ont pas demandé l'avis des gens pour faire ça.

Question Ce que vous pouvez faire, c'est seulement revendiquer pour les assistés-sociaux dans les termes des barèmes que le gouvernement a fixé?

Mercier C'est ça. On leur fait connaître leur droit pis on les motive à aller le chercher leur droit.

Centre-sud C'est qu'avant, y leur donnaient pas ce qu'y avaient droit.

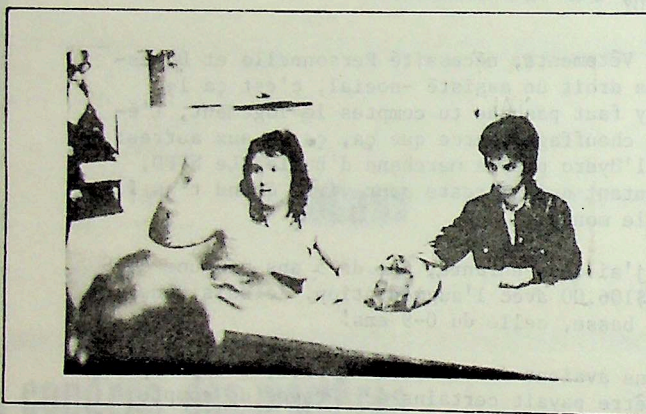


Mercier Maintenant que l'ADDS existe, y réalisent que les avocats populaires sont là pis qu'y vont faire respecter les barèmes. Alors y sont plus intéressés à faire rire d'eux autres. Mais après les barèmes, y a les besoins spéciaux. Nous on dit aux gens "vous avez droit à ça, ça". Mais si la même personne va voir un officier de bien-être, y lui dira pas qu'elle y a droit.

Centre-sud Je vais vous donner un exemple. Moi, l'année passée, quand j'ai passé au feu, toute ce qu'y m'ont donné c'est \$100.00. Le gars du bien-être m'a pas dit ce à quoi j'avais droit mais normalement j'aurais pu avoir \$500.00!

St-Louis On dirait que c'est leur argent qu'y défendent.

Mercier Ouais...y défendent les intérêts du gouvernement.



"On dirait que c'est leur argent qu'y défendent!"

" C'est à nous autres de se réveiller "

Question Les officiers agissent-ils vraiment comme ça?

Centre-sud Y en a qui sont encore plus écoeurants. Y vont demander à une femme de coucher pis si elle accepte, elle va avoir un peu plus. Y a aussi les rackets d'appareils ménagers. Y sont en rapport avec des compagnies pis par exemple, dans un cas, la même télévision s'est faite réparée sept fois dans un ah! Pis y a la corruption directe: un gars va donner une bouteille de cognac à l'officier pour faire enlever certaines pièces de son dossier.

Mercier Un autre jeu qui se fait aussi, c'est qu'un officier dit: "M'as te faire avoir \$130.00 par mois. Donne-moi \$30.00, tu vas en avoir \$100.00. Quatre ou cinq de même par mois, ça va vite. Y a pas seulement les assistés-sociaux qui fraudent, les officiers aussi.

Question La fraude, la soi-disant fraude des assistés-sociaux, est-ce que c'est courant?

Mercier Ben moi, j'appelle pas ça de la fraude, j'appelle ça des besoins. Les assistés-sociaux sont obligés de prendre des moyens détournés pour s'en sortir. Mais les officiers appellent ça de la fraude. Tu te dis "j'ai pas assez avec mon NVPD" ben tu vas essayer d'aller chercher des besoins spéciaux. C'est pas de la fraude mais eux y appellent ça de la fraude.

Question Une autre chose que le gouvernement dit, c'est qu'y a beaucoup d'assistés-sociaux qui fraudent dans le sens où y pourraient travailler...

St-Michel D'après une enquête, y en a pas plus que 2% de même. Mais penses-tu que le bonhomme qui va aller travailler pour \$40 par semaine y est pas mieux de rester chez eux?

St-Louis Avant, quand le bien-être donnait de l'argent pour les besoins spéciaux, un homme pouvait être plus regagnant de rester sur le bien-être. Maintenant avec les coupures, on dirait qu'y veulent inciter le monde à aller travailler.

Mercier Pis aller travailler pour du "cheap labor". Qui c'est qui va en profiter? Les industries pis les patrons. Pas les assistés-sociaux.

St-Michel Pis pour une femme comme moi avec deux enfants, je calcule que ça me coûterait une affaire de \$35.00 par semaine pour les faire garder. Si je fais \$100.00 par semaine, mettons \$80.00 clair, y va me rester à peu près \$50.00 par semaine. C'est quasi impossible que j'aïlle travailler. Le gros bobo, c'est qui manque des garderies gouvernementales. Si y avait des garderies où ça nous coûterait rien, là y aurait possibilité que j'aïlle travailler. J'ai toutes mes facultés mais en partant, avec le coût de la gardienne, plus m'habiller, plus les transports, plus mes repas à l'extérieur, plus la mise en plis de temps en temps (les boss y aiment pas ben ça voir arriver une fille avec une crigne comme la mienne!) ...calcule-le comme tu voudras, je pourrais pas arriver, c'est impossible.

St-Louis Mais les garderies, faudrait pas te faire d'illusions la-dessus. Avec le livre de Lalonde, les gouvernement dit que les catégories de gens qui vont avoir droit au bien-être, c'est les handicapés, les aveugles pis les mères seules avec des enfants! Les garderies sont pas tellement au programme...

Mercier Moi, une question que je me pose c'est pourquoi le gouvernement y veut tant forcer les assistés-sociaux à travailler quand y a tant de chômage?

St-Michel C'est parce qu'ils veulent qu'on soit du "cheap labor".

Mercier C'est à nous autres de se réveiller. Pourquoi qu'on va embarquer dans leur galère? C'est à nous autres de dire "non on y va pas".



## Partir d'une réalité précise

- Question Est-ce que c'est facile justement de "réveiller" les assistés sociaux?
- Centre-sud Non, c'est pas facile. D'abord y faut dire une chose: le bien-être social, c'est pas un droit, c'est une "charité" que fait le gouvernement. Alors les assistés-sociaux vivent sous une menace constante: celle de se faire enlever leurs chèques de se faire couper telle et telle affaire...
- St-Louis Par exemple à St-Louis, on a voulu monter un atelier de couture avec des assistées-sociales. C'était un projet PIL, les femmes auraient été payées. Ben on a eu toute la misère du monde à trouver des femmes. Elles avaient peur de pas être capables de se remettre sur le bien-être après le projet.
- Centre-sud De même, y en viennent vite à croire qu'y peuvent rien changer. La peur finalement, ça les rend amorphes. C'est ce qui explique je pense les difficultés qu'on a à organiser des réunions. Entre la télévision pis une soirée d'information, les gens vont choisir la télévision.
- Mercier La seule façon d'arriver à regrouper le monde, c'est de partir d'un problème ben précis. On s'en est rendu compte à Mercier avec les cours d'information sur le Bill 26 (\*\*). Y fallait partir de situations ben concrètes. Mais après une série de trente heures de cours, on pouvait remarquer une chose: des gens qui sont informés, y ont moins peur. La plupart disait qu'y voulaient continuer les cours parce qu'y commentaient juste à comprendre. Mais c'est ben difficile de faire une politisation à partir de là. Faut y aller tranquillement. Les gens font pas le lien entre leur chèque pis le gouvernement. Y croient pas que toute leur merde vient du gouvernement

## Les femmes sur le bien-être social

- Question Vous disiez au début de l'interview que ce sont les femmes en grande majorité qui veaient demander votre aide. Vous nous avez expliqué en gros pourquoi et vous avez mentionné que le manque d'argent é-ait un problème fondamental. Est-ce que vous pourriez nous parler des problèmes spécifiques que les femmes sur le bien-être rencontrent.
- Centre-sud D'abord, on retrouve différentes catégories de femmes sur le bien-être social: les mères célibataires, les veuves, divorcées et séparées. A part le manque d'argent, le principal problème qu'elles rencontrent c'est sûrement l'envahissement et le contrôle de leur vie privée.

- St-Michel Par exemple, les mères célibataires. Le contrôle commence à l'hôpital, lors de l'accouchement. Tout de suite après la naissance, une travailleuse sociale rend visite à la mère et exerce des pressions sur elle pour qu'elle abandonne son enfant. On peut leur dire: "pourquoi tu gardes ton petit, ça va t'empêcher de te trouver un homme?" Les officiers de bien-être eux y vont dire: "c'est lui qui a eu du fun pis c'est nous autres qui va s'occuper de ses troubles!" Ou bien: "pourquoi tu te trouves pas un amant pour te faire vivre?" Dans L'ADMES (association des mères étant seules), qui regroupe environ deux cents femmes, la moitié est sur le bien-être. Y se font écoeurer. C'est une bataille perpétuelle avec les maudits officiers.
- Centre-sud Et puis les mères célibataires ont pas le droit d'habiter dans un logement. Faut qu'elles vivent dans un meublé. Y disent qu'une femme seule avec des enfants c'est pas une vraie famille et pis qu'ils meublent pas des futurs mariés.
- St-Michel Si une femme (célibataire, veuve ou séparée) a un "chum", on lui coupe le bien-être. On présume que le "chum" la fait vivre. Cette loi-là est vraiment écoeurante pis son application encore plus. Les officiers viennent fouiller la maison pour voir si y aurait pas un homme qui y vit. Quand y arrive, y s'identifient pas et si la femme refuse d'ouvrir, les prestations sont coupées. Une vraie gestapo!
- Centre-sud Des fois, c'est des femmes qui se dénoncent entre elles, exaspérées qu'une autre s'en sorte mieux. Dans notre société compétitive, c'est presque "normal". En tout cas, ça fait l'affaire du gouvernement. Pour la garde des enfants c'est pareil: il suffit qu'une voisine te dénonce pour ta vie "ir-régulière" pis tu peux te faire enlever tes enfants.
- St-Michel Pour les femmes séparées pis divorcées, c'est pas ben drôle non plus. Surtout celles qui reçoivent une pension. Elles sont dépendante du mari pis du bien-être. Elles sont toujours obligées de courir.
- Question Qu'est-ce qu'elles reçoivent du bien-être les femmes qui ont des pensions?
- St-Michel Elles reçoivent la différence de la pension, en fonction des barèmes du bien-être. Là aussi la loi est écoeurante. Si une femme émet pas de refus de pourvoir (\*\*\*), elle ne peut pas recevoir de bien-être. Quand un mari abandonne sa femme, le bien-être attend un mois avant de lui donner de l'argent... au cas où le mari reviendrait! Pis pour une femme, c'est ben difficile d'obtenir une pension: la plupart des maris n'ont pas les moyens de la payer, y a même des hommes qui arrêtent de travailler pendant la durée du procès en poursuite ou qui vont jusqu'à menacer leurs femmes.
- Centre-sud Tu sais, c'est assez difficile de garder ta dignité dans ces conditions-là. Quand le gouvernement lui-même te considère comme une putain en puissance...



Question

Dans le Centre-sud, vous avez commencé une bataille contre les officiers... Pouvez-vous nous en parler?

### La "bataille des officiers"

Centre-sud

D'abord faut dire une chose: la loi du bien-être social est écoeurante pis la job d'officier l'est aussi. Y faut bien se rendre compte de ça. Au début de la bataille, l'ADDS demandait le renvoi de 3 officiers du bureau Plessis. Après réflexion, on décidait de ne demander que le déplacement des officiers à un poste où ils n'auraient plus affaire au public. C'est que l'ADDS refusait de se poser en juge face à d'autres travailleurs.

Après une campagne d'information dans le quartier et certaines pressions exercées sur le gouvernement (délégation de l'ADDS à l'Assemblée nationale), la bataille demeurait sans suite.

Au bout d'un mois et demi environ, un fonctionnaire gouvernemental vint proposer à l'ADDS d'organiser une commission d'enquête au bureau Plessis, commission dont elle aurait le contrôle entier. Si la commission réussissait à étayer par des faits les plaintes formulées contre les 3 officiers, le gouvernement s'engageait à renvoyer ces officiers.

Flairant le piège, l'ADDS constatait que le gouvernement se posait en arbitre neutre entre deux groupes de travailleurs: les assistés-sociaux et les fonctionnaires. De plus, il présentait l'image d'un gouvernement "libéral" qui se met à l'écoute des groupes populaires.

L'ADDS décidait donc de contourner le piège en contactant le syndicat des fonctionnaires pour mener cette bataille avec eux. Désormais, l'objectif, ce n'est plus uniquement le déplacement des officiers concernés, mais une remise en question de leurs fonctions. L'ADDS demande au syndicat de dépasser les revendications économiques pour étudier la fonction politique, sociale et économiques des officiers du bien-être et de déterminer quelles conditions de travail seraient plus avantageuses afin que les officiers puissent donner un service plus adéquat.

L'ADDS est ben consciente des limites de cette bataille. C'est pas demain que la loi va changer. Dans l'immédiat il n'y a qu'une chose à obtenir: le déplacement des 3 officiers particulièrement odieux. Mais c'est une bataille importante, ne serait-ce que plusieurs groupes du quartier y sont impliqués: la clinique juridique du centre-sud, le journal de quartier "Le va vite", une groupe de travailleurs des services familiaux et le local de l'ADDS centre-sud. C'est donc une bataille à finir.

### sortir du service

Question

Cette bataille est un exemple, je pense, des efforts tentés par les locaux de l'ADDS de sortir du cadre étroit du service d'avocats populaires et de la lutte contre le Bill 26...

Centre-sud

Oui. Dans le Centre-sud, on se dirige de plus en plus vers ce que nous on appelle un syndicat de quartier. On veut plus rassembler tout le monde autour du Bill 26. Il s'agit plutôt de devenir un centre de référence pour les gens du quartier, un endroit où ils pourraient trouver des instruments qui leur permettrait de mener des luttes dans le quartier. Il s'agit aussi de les aider à ce que ces luttes ne soient pas récupérées par le pouvoir. L'idée de ce syndicat reste à préciser bien sûr, mais pour nous, c'est un pas en avant.

Mercier

A Mercier c'est différent, mais là aussi on n'est plus limité au service d'avocat populaire. Dernièrement, des gens du quartier ont parti un mini-prix. Ils vendent du linge usagé à très bas prix (.05, .10, .25...). Avec les profits, ils vont acheter du neuf pour le revendre presque au prix coûtant. Y a 4 avocats populaires qui vont travailler bénévolement dans ce petit magasin. Tranquillement, on s'organise. Y a quelqu'un qui prend les noms des clients pour rester en contact avec eux et les inviter aux cours d'informations.

"on se dirige de plus en plus vers ce qu'on appelle un syndicat de quartier"



### des militantes en grosse majorité

Question

On sait maintenant que ce sont des femmes qui majoritairement viennent vous demander de l'aide. Mais ce sont aussi des femmes qui majoritairement participent au travail des locaux...

Mercier

Oui, c'est des femmes en grosse majorité. A Mercier on est 8, 8 femmes.

Centre-sud

Nous on est 6 femmes.

St-Michel

Nous y a pas d'hommes.

St-Louis

Nous y a trois hommes mais y sont ben conscients de la situation des femmes. En tout cas y se forcent!...



Centre-sud Je pense que c'est normal que ça soit de même. Le travail qu'on fait y est ben quotidien. Par exemple: le service, la garderie, les repas...Les problèmes des femmes qui viennent nous voir sont aussi ben quotidiens: la popotte, les enfants. Les hommes y ont ben de la misère à s'impliquer à ce niveau-là. On dirait qu'eux autres y aiment mieux les grandes batailles!

St-Michel Moi je dirais qu'y se sentent humiliés de s'occuper de problèmes de femmes.

Centre-sud C'est pas qu'y veulent pas...y se sentent moins concernés. C'est des bons gars mais y se sentent moins concernés, y suivent pas. Dans notre local, y en avait 5. Maintenant y en reste 1. On se retrouve entre femmes. Ca c'est fait soucement.

Question Le fait que ce soit des femmes qui militent est-ce que ça pose des problèmes particuliers...la garde des enfants par exemple?

St-Louis Ca, c'est à moitié résolu. L'ADDS paye les gardiennes des militantes.

Centre-sud Nous on a une garderie. C'est une garderie qui fonctionne par rotation. Les militantes ont chacun leur jour pour s'occuper des enfants. On pourrait en parler plus longuement dans un autre numéro du journal de la garderie parce que c'est vraiment intéressant. D'abord, on l'a monté avec pas grand chose, elle fonctionne le plus collectivement possible et la vie infantine est respectée. Les gens se font des idées sur les garderies. Y s'imaginent qu'y faut absolument des spécialistes. Y faut surtout des gens qui aiment les enfants, qui les respectent comme des individus, des gens qui ont du gros bon sens finalement. On est le seul local qui a une garderie. C'est plus un besoin pour nous parce qu'on a des enfants en bas âge. Dans les autres locaux, les enfants vont à l'école. A St-Henri, les femmes voudraient s'organiser pour que les enfants viennent dîner avec elles.

"Faut pas se faire d'illusions: les garderies c'est pas pour demain!"



"Y faut surtout des gens qui aiment les enfants..."

Question Qu'est-ce qui motive les femmes à venir travailler avec l'ADDS?

Centre-sud D'abord le désir de s'en sortir, pis d'aider d'autres à s'en sortir.

Question Est-ce aussi parce que ce travail permet aux femmes de sortir de la cuisine?

Centre-sud Ca joue beaucoup.

Question Ce facteur-là n'est-il pas très important quand on envisage des regroupements de femmes dans un quartier?

St-Louis C'est évident. Les femmes ne se connaissent pas entre elles, même entre voisines. La plupart veulent sortir de la cuisine. C'est à considérer pour faire un premier processus de socialisation. Mais c'est difficile d'organiser des affaires qui pourraient déboucher sur une prise de conscience. Je veux dire que c'est facile d'organiser un cours de couture pour des femmes du quartier mais c'est difficile d'aller plus loin avec ça.

Question Mais si on pense par exemple à une maison des ménagères, une maison dans un quartier où les femmes pourraient d'abord se retrouver entre elles, faire garder les enfants, suivre des cours qui les intéressent...est-ce que vous pensez qu'à plus ou moins long terme y aurait des possibilités?

St-Louis Je pense que oui. Nous autres, toutes les femmes qui sont venues pour le cours de couture sont venues aussi pour les cours sur le Bill 26. Pis si c'était difficile de déboucher pendant le cours de couture, y avait toujours le café qu'on prenait ensuite. Là on pouvait se parler...



\* Bill 26: loi sur l'assistance-sociale votée par l'assemblée nationale le 12 décembre 1969

\*\* Avocat populaire: nom que se donne les militants (es) de l'ADDS en rapport avec leurs activités d'information et de défense légale.

\*\*\* Refus de pourvoir: recours que possède une femme mariée, selon la loi, de poursuivre son mari quand il abandonne son rôle de pourvoyeur.



## une orientation qui se dessine

Après lecture du texte de l'entrevue, un fait s'impose clairement: l'ADDS est un mouvement populaire qui s'adresse aux femmes ménagères les plus démunies et les plus exploitées, ainsi qu'à cette catégorie de travailleurs qu'on dit "déclassés" et marginaux parce qu'ils sont exclus du salariat.

Ce fait est de toute première importance car c'est à partir de cette réalité que devront se définir les orientations de l'ADDS.

Les femmes ménagères comme les chômeurs et les assistés-sociaux ont traditionnellement été exclus, sinon en théorie du moins en pratique, de la lutte révolutionnaire de la classe ouvrière. Soi-disant "exclus" de la production sociale (dans sa conception orthodoxe), on ne leur accordait aucun pouvoir - à l'opposé des travailleurs qui eux ont cet ultime pouvoir face aux capitalistes de faire grève et de stopper la production. On prétextait aussi qu'ils étaient "inorganisable" du fait qu'ils n'étaient pas déjà regroupés dans un lieu de travail.

La lutte des femmes particulièrement a souffert de cette analyse qui s'avère insuffisante et absolument inadéquate à la réalité québécoise.

Pour leur part, les militantes de l'ADDS la remet en question. Comme les militantes du mouvement des femmes (auquel certaines d'entre elles s'identifient), elles croient important de situer les femmes ménagères et tous les non-salariés exploités dans l'organisation capitaliste actuelle, et d'établir clairement leur potentiel de lutte. Ce potentiel, s'il se situe à l'usine (pour les ménagères-travailleuses), il se situe également dans le quartier. Car c'est là que les femmes travaillent à produire et à reproduire la force de travail que les capitalistes vont exploiter.

L'ADDS semble s'orienter dans cette voie en situant son action auprès des non-salariés (es) et dans le quartier. Le syndicat de quartier dont parlait une militante sera peut-être la force politique de "L'autre moitié de l'organisation capitaliste", cette moitié qui travaille justement à produire cette "marchandise" si importante: la force de travail.

## humour noir

# «rue des pignons» c'est-y westmount ?

Voilà maintenant 7 ans que des milliers de québécoises (cois) s'installent tous les mardis soirs, 9 heures, pour regarder leur téléroman préféré "Rue des Pignons". Sans plus penser nous nous laissons bercer par ce que Mme Riddez nous dit être la réalité des quartiers ouvriers. Allez-y voir entre le Parc Lafontaine et la rue Hochelaga...

## où est la réalité ?

Toute l'intrigue a pour noyau 4 familles ou groupes: les Jarry, les Milot, les Marsouin, les Lafeuille, autour desquels évoluent des personnages "satellites". Voyons d'abord ce qui arrive aux Jarry, famille de 12 enfants dont le père est ouvrier certes mais contremaître et qui plus est, le seul ouvrier de toute la Rue des Pignons. Alors qu'en réalité, les ouvriers se retrouvent majoritaires dans ces quartiers et ne sont pas particulièrement contremaîtres. Il arrive que les Jarry parlent de soucis d'argent mais grâce au ciel (il occupe une grande place dans cette émission), ils ne sont pas endettés contrairement à la majorité des gens de ces quartiers. On n'a qu'à regarder l'appartement et l'ameublement de la famille Jarry, l'élégance des robes de Mme Jarry, ses cheveux impeccables pour nier l'importance des problèmes financiers dont ils font parfois état. Nous sommes transportés d'ailleurs régulièrement dans le monde des maris et amants des filles Jarry qui



Des problèmes financiers?...Allons donc!





sont médecins, présidents de cie ou avocats et avec lesquels on retrouve bien peu des préoccupations qui sont le lot des ouvriers. Les filles Jarry se sentent bien à l'aise dans cette classe "d'adoption", à croire qu'il n'y a vraiment aucune différence entre leurs conditions de vie passées et présentes.

Parlons donc de l'in vraisemblance ahurissante de la petite fille d'ouvrier qui devient hôtesse d'un chic restaurant de Westmount, dont un "bon" millionnaire tombe amoureux et qui l'épouse. Comme l'affirme Mme Riddez, c'est la vie quotidienne, c'est la réalité... Parlons donc de cette petite secrétaire sans expérience qui se retrouve dans un bureau d'avocat à \$130. par semaine! Vous croyez vraiment qu'elle couche avec son boss par amour?... Avez-vous été à sa place au Centre de Main-d'Oeuvre? Pensez-vous qu'elle avait le choix?... Parlons donc du fils Jarry qui va à l'université pour devenir ingénieur; qui paie ses frais de scolarité? Evidemment tous les fils d'ouvriers ont un beau-frère millionnaire... Tous les fils d'ouvriers font de hautes études. Heureusement Laurent a la chance d'être le seul gars de la famille, s'il y en avait eu 3 ou 4, auraient-ils tous été à l'université? On ne parle pas des filles, elles, ça ne vaut pas la peine, c'est de l'argent gaspillé puisqu'elles se marient et restent à la maison par la suite.

Le groupe Milot est structurellement plus complexe que la famille traditionnelle. Flagosse Berrichon et les trois enfants Milot qu'il a pris en tutelle ont, paraît-il, connu une grande misère. Nous n'avons vu de tout ça que la fine psychologie de Flagosse pour éduquer les petits voyous que Maurice et Hector étaient dans les premières saisons. Nous avons vu de quelle façon Flagosse en est arrivé à canaliser la révolte de Maurice dans la boxe et comment par la suite Maurice s'est "casé". Il y eut bien sûr sa maladie qui acheva tout à fait d'en faire un "homme sérieux". Lui aussi a connu une facilité déconcertante à obtenir un emploi important dans une bonne cie, malgré qu'il était épileptique.



Les joies qu'on trouve à servir "ses" hommes...

Même en prenant des cours du soir, un gars sans instruction peut-il accéder à un haut poste aussi facilement? Et là je parle d'un gars bien portant; demandez aux épileptiques s'ils ont facilement des emplois?... Bien que souvent ils ne souffrent qu'à un faible degré de cette maladie, les patrons ne font pas de différence et finalement ces gens souffrent plus de la discrimination accrochée au mot "épileptique" que de l'épilepsie elle-même...

Parmi le groupe Milot on retrouve aussi Hector et sa jeune femme (la seule femme mariée qui travaille à l'extérieur du foyer dans l'émission... ). On croyait qu'Hector ne se marierait jamais n'étant pas très séduisant, mais il eut la "bonté" de prendre pour épouse une fille-mère (c'est le 2ème bon homme qui épouse une fille-mère depuis le début de la Rue des Pignons...). Andrée travaille dans une manufacture comme opératrice de machine à coudre à l'exemple de bien des femmes de milieu ouvrier, mais la réalité s'arrête là: elle vient d'être promue, par une chance inestimable, desinatrice de mode pour enfants. Il y a de l'avenir partout n'est-ce pas? Parlez-en aux femmes attelées à leur machine à coudre depuis 20 ans! Parlez-en aux femmes mises à pied de la Regent Knitting et de Susan Van Heusen!...

Le groupe Marsouin aussi n'est pas conforme aux normes structurelles de la famille. Le père est veuf, la fille aussi avec deux enfants. Le groupe se constitue donc surtout des employés de leur petite épicerie et des amis (es) du veuf et de sa fille. Il y a quelques années, on nous a présenté un "mariage par obligation" exceptionnel qui a viré en un roman d'amour très mélo (-méli...). Sylvette avait transformé sa pitié pour le bon gros Jacky en un grand amour, ébranlée qu'elle était par la compréhension et l'amour de son mari ainsi que par son propre sentiment de culpabilité vis-à-vis cet homme qui l'aime, même avec l'enfant d'un autre que lui. On en voit beaucoup de ces bons mariages...! Heureusement, même si cet amour était bien émouvant, on a tous été reconnaissant à l'auteur d'y mettre fin (alors qu'il brillait encore de toute sa beauté) par la mort de Jacky, pour permettre à Sylvette de revenir à ses anciennes amours et à Maurice (quand même plus séduisant que le gros Jacky) de se racheter complètement de ses vieux péchés...

Un autre couple dans le groupe Marsouin c'est celui de Fifine (ancienne employée à l'épicerie) et Manius (boucher à l'épicerie) le plus réaliste parce que le plus pauvre. On les sentait à l'étroit dans leur petit logement avec les triplés et les couches qui séchaient un peu partout. Voilà que, de façon tout aussi réaliste, ils viennent de gagner \$5,000. à la loterie... C'est la vie quotidienne quoi!...

On pourrait croire que le plus réel dans tout ça c'est Abondius Désiré, assisté social, alcoolique. Ce n'est qu'un piège...! Est-ce par hasard que le seul assisté social de toute l'émission soit aussi dégoûtant, aussi alcoolique, aussi voleur? La seule chose qui l'empêche de travailler c'est cet alcoolisme méprisable; pourtant le beau docteur Lavergne a bien vaincu ce vice par amour! Si Abondius ne veut pas essayer c'est qu'il est un lâche. Le fin mot de tout ça c'est qu'Abondius est un écoeurant et que les gens de la Rue des Pignons sont bien bons de s'occuper de lui avec toute leur "charité chrétienne"



Faute de mieux...

pleine de mépris et de préjugés... La réalité est pourtant autre, une enquête au gouvernement a prouvé dernièrement que seuls 3% des assistés sociaux ont la capacité de travailler et donc que 97% ne le sont pas "pour le fun" comme nous le fait croire Mia Riddez, mais le sont par pure nécessité. Mia Riddez ne fait qu'alimenter la colère des gens contre les assistés sociaux, cette gang de paresseux et de vauriens qui vivent de nos taxes; savez-vous qu'un homme dans la situation d'Abondius ne peut avoir que \$75. par mois pour payer sa nourriture, ses vêtements, ses loisirs, ses médicaments, ses meubles?...

La "gang" des Lafeuille est plus restreinte: le père Lafeuille, sa femme et les 3 enfants de celle-ci. Pour eux aussi tout s'arrange toujours pour le mieux. Emery devient heureux grâce à l'amour de sa Pauline après avoir été un homme taciturne, bête et malheureux. Il réussit à se faire aimer des enfants de sa femme, etc. Ils n'ont pour ainsi dire pas d'histoire, ils sont là pour donner l'exemple aux vieux couples. Leur plus vieux va aussi à l'université; comment paient-ils ses frais de scolarité? Mystère et boule de gomme...

En tout cas, tout est toujours bien qui finit toujours bien... Comme dans la vie de tous les jours dans tous les quartiers populaires de Montréal!



## conséquences idéologiques

Non seulement la "Rue des Pignons" pêche-t-elle en faussant la réalité mais encore, elle nous dicte des jugements, des attitudes, des comportements qui ne remettent aucunement en question l'organisation sociale et qui nous font croire que tout problème ne peut avoir qu'une solution individuelle. En faisant monter chaque personnage dans l'échelle sociale, en leur faisant profiter de chances inespérées sous prétexte qu'il faut "donner de l'espoir", la "Rue des Pignons" encourage le monde à se contenter de cette petite demi-heure hebdomadaire d'espoir (il serait plus juste de parler d'illusion). Pourtant, le reste de la semaine, ils se laissent exploiter de la même façon en attendant cette chance qui viendra bouleverser leur vie et les "sortir du trou".

Écoutons ce que Mia Riddez pense de son travail: "Je suis engagée par Radio-Canada pour écrire ce qui se passe chez les gens ordinaires et démontrer qu'il y a toujours un embryon d'espoir, même si on est écrasé par une politique avilissante et si la vie est devenue si chère qu'on ne peut plus rien acheter. On dit que je fais des romans à l'eau de rose; il faut quand même décrire la réalité et donner de l'espoir". 1

Nous ne sommes pas contre le fait qu'il faille donner de l'espoir, au contraire, il est de première importance que la classe ouvrière soit consciente de ses capacités, de ses possibilités, qu'elle sache qu'elle peut se délivrer de son état de servitude millénaire, de son exploitation institutionnalisée pour que par la suite elle puisse prendre les moyens de se libérer. Mais cela est un espoir qui doit se baser sur des faits et des données réelles, sur des analyses de sa situation objective, sur les possibilités concrètes de transformer cette situation et non sur des illusions où chaque individu se cantonne en lui-même

afin de "saisir la chance quand elle passe" (quand on sait dans quel camp se crée cette chance) ce qui pour la majorité des gens signifie l'attendre "jusqu'à ce que mort s'en suive"...

Non, ce que Mia Riddez nous offre ce n'est pas de l'espoir parce que ce n'est pas réalisable (du moins pas pour la majorité), c'est de la pure illusion et en cela Mme Riddez fait pire que "tricher avec la réalité", elle empêche toute lutte objective de se développer et empêche les gens de s'unir pour que cette lutte réussisse en attaquant les vraies racines de l'exploitation et de la misère de la classe ouvrière.

"Mia Riddez refuse de parler de la société elle préfère parler des individus. (...) Plus j'écoute parler Mia Riddez, plus je me dis qu'il n'y a pas de société définie mais seulement des individus qui ne cessent de transformer une société". 2

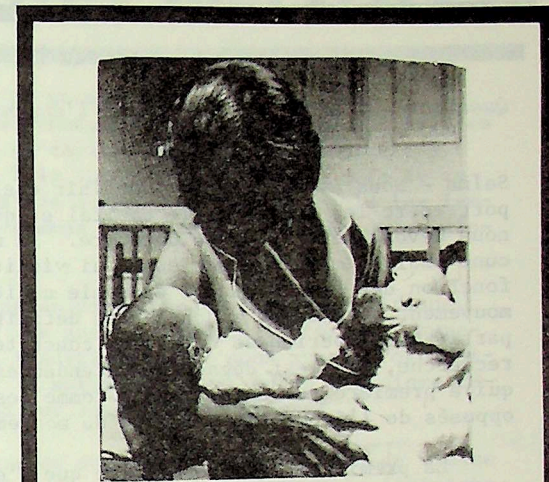
Voilà une bien belle phrase qui se situe absolument à l'opposé de la réalité. Parler ainsi c'est nier la réalité fondamentale de notre société: la lutte des classes. Celle-ci détermine la société en ce sens qu'une poignée de possédants contrôle la société et que la majorité des gens est transformée par cette société. Il existe ainsi toutes sortes "d'agents" (d'intermédiaires) comme Mia Riddez, pour nous amener à penser et à vivre ce que ceux qui possèdent veulent nous faire penser et vivre, pour mieux nous exploiter. Ils s'assurent ainsi que nous ne serons pas en désaccord avec eux.

Ainsi "Rue des Pignons" nous pousse à mépriser les assistés sociaux; à encourager l'oppression que les femmes connaissent par le mariage et le travail ménager en ne nous présentant que des femmes heureuses, aimées de leur mari; à nier la lutte des classes en faisant côtoyer des présidents de cics avec les familles du quartier; à encourager la répression sexuelle en faisant se sentir coupable une fille-mère, en faisant croire que l'avortement est moralement

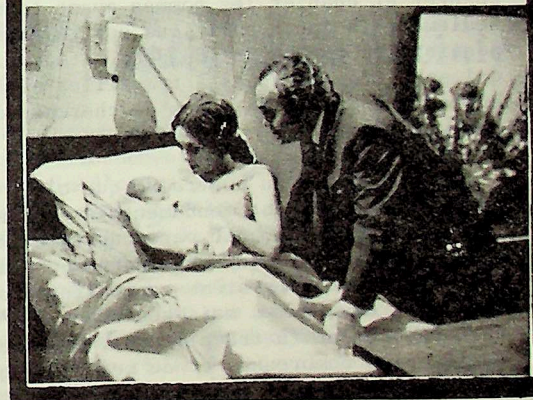
impensable dans un tel cas, en l'obligeant à aller se cacher à la campagne pendant sa grossesse, en l'empêchant de prendre ses propres responsabilités vis-à-vis sa grossesse puisque ce sont les parents des deux "pêcheurs" qui ont décidé de leur avenir et de celui de l'enfant; à prêcher la résignation et le sens du devoir en imposant à la mère toutes les responsabilités des actes de sa fille; à nier la pauvreté en faisant croire que ceux qui sont pauvres le sont par paresse ou par manque d'organisation et que quelqu'un qui travaille bien toute sa vie voit toujours nécessairement sa situation s'améliorer; à nier le chômage; à faire croire que le désir d'avoir des enfants est un besoin inné chez toutes les femmes et que c'est là la seule vraie source d'épanouissement; à faire croire que la famille est un antre de paix, d'amour et de compréhension où les désaccords ne sont que passagers et où tout le monde s'épanouit; etc., etc..

Tout cela dans le seul et unique but de neutraliser, en imposant comme "naturelle" la logique des exploitateurs, la révolte qui a toujours tendance à monter au cœur de ceux dont les conditions de vie sont trop difficiles et dont les besoins ne sont jamais que partiellement satisfaits. "Rue des Pignons" n'est qu'un exemple parmi d'autres de la façon subtile dont les exploitateurs s'y prennent pour parvenir à leurs fins.

Notons qu'il est bien déplorable que dans la "lutte idéologique" amorcée par les militantes et militants du Québec, on ne tienne compte que de l'exploitation économique vécue sur le marché du travail sans s'attaquer sur un même plan à ce qui se passe dans les maisons, dans les familles, en oubliant qu'il y a là aussi une exploitation économique et donc qu'il y a là aussi une lutte à mener. La classe dominante pourtant, n'oublie pas elle, que chaque foyer est un bastion à défendre...



Une femme sans enfant n'est pas une "vraie femme"...



### REFERENCES.-

- 1)- Photo-Journal, Lise Lapierre, 16 du 22 avril 1973, page 11.
- 2)- idem.



# rencontre

Question - Pourriez-vous résumer l'essentiel de vos positions?

Selma - Nous avons cherché à définir quel est le rapport entre les femmes et le capital et quelles luttes nous devons mener pour le détruire. Il n'y avait aucune analyse marxiste sérieuse qui visait à situer la fonction des femmes dans l'économie capitaliste. Le mouvement des femmes a donc dû se définir lui-même à partir des expériences de luttes concrètes. De cette recherche, il s'est dégagé deux tendances politiques qui à première vue apparaissent comme les deux pôles opposés de l'éventail politique du mouvement féministe.

La première tendance affirme que c'est la notion de caste et non celle de classe qui est fondamentale et qu'une lutte politique ne peut mettre fin à l'oppression physique et psychologique des femmes. Ces femmes rejettent d'ailleurs carrément la lutte politique révolutionnaire. Elles prétendent que l'on doit se changer et changer les hommes avant tout. Ainsi, non seulement la lutte politique est rejetée mais aussi la possibilité de libération pour la majorité des femmes qui sont trop occupées à travailler et à s'occuper des autres pour avoir le temps de chercher des solutions individuelles.

L'autre tendance <sup>active</sup> au contraire que c'est la classe et non la caste qui est fondamentale et que le capital est l'ennemi principal, non parce qu'il existe mais parce qu'il n'est pas assez bien organisé. Elles ne visent pas à détruire le système capitaliste pour changer la situation des femmes mais seulement à l'organiser plus rationnellement (à travail égal, salaire égal, des garderies plus nombreuses et de meilleure qualité). Cette tendance soi-disant politique a servi jusqu'à maintenant à limiter le secteur d'intervention du mouvement féministe.

On retrouve dans ces deux tendances le même caractère libéral et la plupart des femmes de notre mouvement n'appartiennent ni à l'une ni à l'autre de ces deux tendances.

En fait, les femmes de la tendance "politique" ne voient pas la lutte comme étant QUALITATIVEMENT différente de celle du mouvement ouvrier organisé sous une direction masculine. La différence, c'est qu'il existe maintenant un appendice à la lutte globale, quelque chose qu'on appelle "libération des femmes".

# avec deux

Le 29 et 30 avril dernier, deux féministes marxistes, Mariarosa Dalla Costa et Selma James étaient de passage à Montréal. Nous avons pensé qu'il pouvait être important de les rencontrer pour échanger nos expériences de lutte et faire le point de nos analyses respectives. Dans cette optique nous avons organisé une rencontre avec des femmes militantes de divers milieux ainsi qu'une conférence publique à laquelle plus d'une centaine de personnes ont assisté.

L'analyse qu'elles font du système économique actuel et de la fonction des femmes dans ce système ouvre des perspectives de lutte entièrement nouvelles pour la classe ouvrière. Nous n'endossons pas cette analyse inconditionnellement mais elle nous a amené à poser plus clairement certaines questions concernant entre autres la fonction et la nature du travail ménager, les modalités de regroupement des ménagères, le salaire aux ménagères etc... Nous envisageons ces questions dans l'optique d'un travail constant de clarification d'une analyse féministe révolutionnaire ainsi que de précision de nos objectifs à moyen terme et des modalités de l'organisation des femmes.

Mariarosa Dalla Costa et Selma James ont publié ensemble une brochure, "The power of women et subversion in the community", qui doit paraître en français sous peu.

Nous avons profité de leur bref séjour pour préparer en collaboration avec l'APLQ un interview résumant l'essentiel de leurs positions que nous vous présentons ici. Le texte peut paraître quelques fois assez lourd mais cela est dû aux problèmes de traduction que nous avons eu à affronter.

# féministes marxistes

Les questions qui se posent sont les suivantes:

a) est-ce que les femmes non salariées sont auxiliaires au fonctionnement du capitalisme et conséquemment sont aussi auxiliaires à la lutte plus globale contre le capitalisme? b) Est-ce qu'une lutte qui a exclu les femmes pendant si longtemps peut être considérée comme globale?

Obligées de développer notre propre analyse politique, nous avons rejeté les analyses toutes faites des mouvements socialistes traditionnels et nous avons progressivement transformé la notion de caste en un féminisme révolutionnaire basé sur la notion de classe.

Refusant d'une part de subordonner la question de classe au féminisme et d'autre part de subordonner le féminisme au concept de classe, Mariarosa a tenté d'élaborer une base théorique pour la lutte révolutionnaire autonome de des femmes en formulant une critique de l'exploitation des femmes.

## le quartier cette usine sociale

Maria-Rosa prétend non seulement que la famille est le centre du conditionnement, de la consommation et une réserve de main-d'oeuvre, mais aussi et surtout un centre de production sociale. Quand les marxistes traditionnels disaient que la famille capitaliste ne faisait pas partie de la production sociale, ils refusaient de reconnaître que la femme avait un potentiel de pouvoir social et que la ménagère était productive. Pourtant si notre production est vitale pour le capitalisme, le refus de travailler, le refus de produire constitue une source de pouvoir social fondamental. En effet, Maria-Rosa démontre que même lorsque les femmes ne travaillent pas à l'extérieur du foyer, elles sont des productrices essentielles; le bien qu'elles produisent c'est l'être humain, le travailleur lui-même.

La maison, le quartier ne sont donc pas des endroits de détente et de liberté annexés à l'usine, où par hasard il y a des femmes qui sont les servantes personnelles des hommes. Au contraire, le quartier est l'autre moitié de l'organisation capitaliste, l'autre secteur de l'exploitation capitaliste, l'autre source cachée de plus-value. Le point central de cette usine sociale qu'est le quartier, c'est la ménagère qui produit un bien, la force de travail.



Les luttes menées par les femmes constituent une menace à la domination capitaliste qui a fait de nous aussi des instruments d'accumulation de la plus-value et qui a transformé nos rapports avec les hommes et les enfants en travail de reproduction et d'entretien de cette force de travail.

Jusqu'à maintenant, les femmes qui tentaient de sortir de l'isolement de leur foyer pouvaient trouver une alternative seulement à l'intérieur de l'organisation capitaliste. Aujourd'hui cependant la lutte des femmes pose comme seule alternative possible la destruction du capitalisme.

D'après Maria-Rosa, la classe ouvrière ne comprend pas seulement le travailleur salarié. D'après elle, le rapport social qui existe entre le salarié et le non-salarié au sein de la famille est partie intégrante de la structure du capital et par conséquent la lutte de l'un est interdépendante de la lutte de l'autre. Cette définition de la famille et du quartier comme centre possible de transformations sociales, ouvre une toute nouvelle perspective de lutte et d'organisation révolutionnaire qui doit mener à réévaluer le poids et l'impact des femmes dans la lutte.

Maria-Rosa - Pour résumer l'essentiel de nos positions en ce qui concerne l'autonomie de la lutte des femmes et le salaire pour le travail ménager, nous devons préciser ce que représente le mouvement des femmes et cela malgré les différentes tendances qui y sont exprimées.

A leurs débuts, les mouvements de femmes tentèrent de voir les hypothèses et les stratégies de lutte susceptibles de mettre fin à leur situation d'exploitation et d'oppression. En fait, les femmes recherchaient une force collective, un pouvoir pour lutter contre cette situation.

## la fraction la plus exploitée de la classe ouvrière



*Question - Quels liens faites-vous entre la lutte de classe et la lutte des femmes?*

Ce que nous appelons un pouvoir n'est pas le pouvoir que le capital donne à quelques femmes, mais le pouvoir de toutes les femmes de lutter contre leur situation d'exploitation économique.

Mariarosa - Puisque les mouvements de femmes blanches, noires et de toutes les races représentent la révolte, la rébellion, la tentative d'organisation de la section de classe la plus exploitée et la plus méconnue, je pense que les mouvements de femmes vont vraiment poser la question de classe c'est-à-dire non seulement la question des femmes mais à travers la question des femmes celles de l'exploitation de toute la classe ouvrière.

A partir du moment où les femmes commencent à s'organiser, commencent à prendre conscience de leur force et de leur pouvoir, c'est la classe ouvrière tout entière qui trouve de nouvelles forces et de nouvelles possibilités de luttes.

Selma - Nous sommes dans la même position que les noirs dans la révolution noire. On pensait qu'il y avait "la" classe ouvrière et que le mouvement noir était un accident historique particulier. Mais le mouvement noir a compris que la définition de classe sur laquelle était basée la lutte des mouvements dits de gauche, était une définition étroite qui leur venait de l'extérieur.

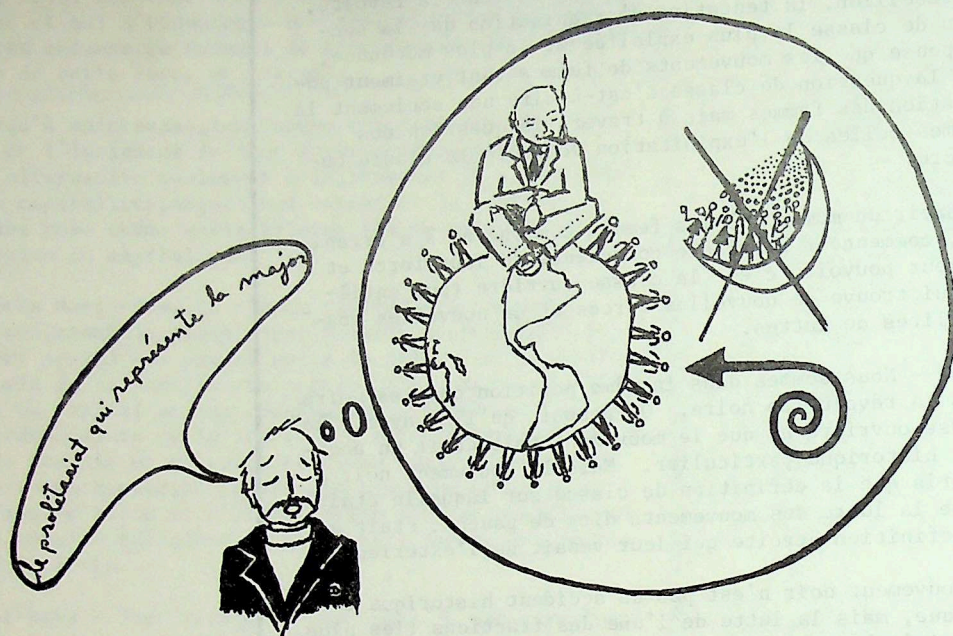
Le mouvement noir n'est pas un accident historique exotique, mais la lutte de l'une des fractions (les plus exploitées) de la classe ouvrière qui ouvre à nouveau les possibilités de lutte de toute la classe ouvrière.

Nous, féministes, représentons exactement la même chose; nous ne sommes pas une annexe, un appendice d'une classe mais une partie intégrale de cette classe. Mais parce que nous n'avons pas les mêmes privilèges que d'autres sections de cette classe, nous sommes capables de voir l'organisation complète du travail capitaliste et nous avons la possibilité d'établir des liens dans la lutte ouvrière qui n'ont jamais été établis précédemment. Nous avons une perspective de lutte dans le quartier sans laquelle la lutte dans les usines ne peut réussir.

Pour revenir à la comparaison avec les noirs, signalons que malgré le fait que des milliers de noirs aient affronté l'Etat américain, beaucoup de gens prétendaient encore que la classe ouvrière américaine n'avait pas agi. Alors que c'était la première fois depuis des années que toutes les usines de Détroit s'arrêtaient de produire, personne ne comprit que la classe ouvrière avait stoppé la production capitaliste. Ils ne comprirent pas, parce que les ouvriers en lutte étaient des noirs. Il en est de même pour nous! Parce que nous avons un utérus, quand nous nous battons, nous ne sommes pas considérées comme faisant partie de la classe ouvrière... nous ne sommes que des femmes!

Il est aussi ridicule de considérer que le travail ménager des femmes n'a pas une fonction spéciale dans le système économique que de considérer que le travail des esclaves ou celui des paysans du Tiers-Monde se situe en dehors du processus économique.





Je trouve fort étonnant que des gens qui se réclament du marxisme, puissent présumer que 50% de la population adulte active (les femmes) ne rapportent aucun profit direct aux capitalistes.

La femme ne travaille pas gratuitement, pas plus que l'esclave ne travaillait gratuitement, sinon elle mourrait de faim et de froid. La femme est payée pour une partie de son travail comme tous les autres travailleurs, sauf qu'elle n'a pas directement de salaire, même quand elles passe beaucoup de temps à effectuer une tâche; le capitaliste n'a pas à la payer à l'heure.

Les ménagères de la classe ouvrière ne sont pas exclues des salariés, elles sont simplement payées à même le salaire de leur mari et le capitaliste obtient la force de travail de deux ouvriers pour le prix d'un.

Mariarosa - Les femmes ménagères au même titre que les chômeurs et les assistés sociaux ne sont pas directement salariées, mais constituent une réserve de main-d'oeuvre à bon marché toujours soumise aux diktats du capital. La quasi totalité des femmes ont à assumer des tâches ménagères mais on ne peut pas dire que du simple fait qu'elles assurent l'entretien et la reproduction de la classe ouvrière au profit du capital elles constituent une classe. La question devient d'ailleurs

particulièrement épineuse quand on parle des femmes de la petite-bourgeoisie qui font partie de cette bourgeoisie strictement à cause de leurs liens de mariage. Etre la femme d'un homme riche c'est un peu comme être l'esclave dans bien des cas d'un riche patron; s'il y a rupture, la femme est souvent condamnée à chercher du travail et nous savons quelles sont les conditions des femmes sur le marché du travail... A cause de l'insécurité complète de leur position sociale, ces femmes peuvent donc avoir intérêt à se lier aux femmes de la classe ouvrière et à mener un combat commun avec ces dernières, contre le capital. Les femmes ne constituent pas une classe en soi mais une fraction de classe particulièrement exploitée et quoique seules les femmes de la classe ouvrière ont un intérêt immédiat à s'organiser pour renverser leur situation, certaines femmes de la petite bourgeoisie peuvent aussi avoir intérêt à mener un combat contre le capital.

Question - En tant que groupe féministe marxiste comment considérez-vous le travail d'organisation des femmes dans les usines et la relation des luttes des femmes avec les luttes ouvrières. D'autre part, quels types de liens, avez-vous établi avec les groupes dits révolutionnaires?

lutte des femmes  
et luttes  
révolutionnaires

Mariarosa - QUAND ON DIT QUE LES FEMMES CONSTITUENT LA SECTION LA PLUS EXPLOITEE DE LA CLASSE OUVRIERE, IL NE S'AGIT PAS DE TOUTES LES FEMMES. NOUS VOULONS SEULEMENT DIRE QU'A L'INTERIEUR DU PROLETARIAT, LES FEMMES SONT LES TRAVAILLEURS LES PLUS EXPLOITES. On les retrouve dans les secteurs les plus instables (textile, alimentation), les plus susceptibles de fermer ou de congédier les travailleurs à la moindre crise. Lorsqu'elles sont dans des usines mixtes, le secteur automobile par exemple, elles occupent les pires emplois et en Europe on les utilise à la place des Marocains, des Grecs ou des Algériens. Non seulement les femmes sont les travailleurs les plus exploités mais en plus elles doivent assumer une double journée de travail, faisant leur travail ménager au retour de l'usine.

Comme dans les groupes de gauche la notion de classe ne tenait nullement compte de l'exploitation particulière des femmes, leur stratégie ne pouvait être radicale et vraiment révolutionnaire.



Quand les femmes posent la question de leur exploitation, elles posent la question d'une stratégie entièrement nouvelle et elles ne peuvent présupposer que les groupes de gauche possèdent déjà une stratégie à laquelle elles n'ont qu'à se rattacher, comme un appendice. Beaucoup de femmes à l'intérieur des groupes de gauche pensaient, et pensent encore, que les hommes doivent définir la question de classe et les femmes doivent s'occuper de la question des femmes. Nous pensons au contraire que la question des femmes doit être posée en terme de classe par des femmes et celles-ci doivent définir les étapes et les instruments de leur lutte.

L'organisation de la lutte autonome des femmes aura des influences sur toute la classe ouvrière et peut-être les hommes consentiront-ils à s'interroger sur leurs rapports avec la lutte des femmes.

En effet, les hommes ne tiennent compte que de l'exploitation dans le secteur du travail faisant abstraction de toute cette autre source de plus-value qu'est l'organisation de la vie à la maison et le quartier. Ils oublient donc souvent de nombreux éléments oppressifs de la vie quotidienne tels les rapports d'autorité dans la sexualité, la famille et le travail. Leur front de lutte porte essentiellement sur l'aspect économique et laisse de côté les aspects idéologiques du capitalisme.

Les femmes parce qu'elles sont doublement exploitées, à l'usine où elles sont les plus mal payées, à la maison où elles n'ont aucun salaire et parfois à ces deux endroits en même temps, sont davantage en mesure de formuler des critiques plus radicales sur l'ENSEMBLE de la domination capitaliste.

Prenons un exemple de l'attitude de certains groupes de gauche face à la lutte des femmes.

Dans une usine de produits chimiques à Venise, les travailleurs avaient mené de dures luttes et avaient été à l'avant-garde des luttes qui secouèrent l'Italie à la fin des années 60. Mais les batailles de ces camarades n'avaient en rien modifié la situation d'exploitation de leurs femmes. Ces dernières s'étaient pourtant organisées pour appuyer les hommes en grève comme les femmes l'ont d'ailleurs toujours fait dans des situations semblables.

Un jour, ces femmes qui vivaient dans un quartier dépourvu d'espaces verts et de parcs pour enfants, découvrirent un terrain vague et voulurent l'utiliser. Après quelques jours cependant, on leur en interdit l'entrée et on éleva une clôture de barbelés. Elles détruisirent aussitôt la clôture et continuèrent à l'utiliser. Le propriétaire riposta en affichant des pancartes interdisant l'entrée. Elles passèrent outre à cette défense. En dernier lieu, le propriétaire eu recours à des chiens.

En désespoir de cause, les femmes firent appel à leurs maris. Ceux-ci répondirent de façon classique: "Nous avons des choses plus sérieuses à régler, ne nous dérangez pas!"

C'est un exemple typique de la position subordonnée des femmes à l'intérieur des groupes mixtes. Les femmes doivent renverser ces rapports en organisant de façon autonome leur propre lutte, et alors seulement elles pourront compter sur un appui éventuel des hommes.

Selao- Au même titre que ce sont les groupes révolutionnaires blancs qui ont établi des liens avec les groupes noirs, les groupes de gauche doivent prendre l'initiative d'établir des liens avec les groupes féministes. C'est à eux d'accepter et d'appuyer le programme des mouvements féministes et non aux mouvements féministes de leur demander leur appui.

En tant qu'exemple précis de la relation entre hommes et femmes dans les usines, nous pouvons nous référer aux luttes des années 30 aux Etats-Unis et en France, lors de la création de l'AFL-CIO et de d'autres syndicats. Je me souviens par exemple d'une usine de montage automobile où hommes et femmes travaillaient ensemble et naturellement dans ce secteur les hommes étaient en majorité. Lorsque les travailleurs occupèrent l'usine, ils comprirent rapidement que la police et l'armée allaient tenter de les expulser mais ils étaient prêts à les affronter. Les hommes ordonnèrent cependant aux femmes de sortir prétextant qu'il était trop dangereux de rester dans l'usine. Les femmes supplièrent les hommes de rester en disant: "nous avons été exploitées comme vous, nous avons le droit de lutter au même titre que vous. C'est d'ailleurs la seule façon, si nous vaincons que cette victoire soit "notre" victoire. Mais les hommes refusèrent et, comme ils étaient en majorité, les femmes durent sortir. Elles organisèrent la lutte de l'extérieur, apportèrent des vivres aux hommes. Elles étaient reléguées encore une fois aux tâches dévolues aux femmes et devenaient "de simples auxiliaires de leur propre lutte."



Au cours d'une lutte que nous avons menée, il y a quelques années en Angleterre, cette même question a été soulevée. Elle a cependant été posée en termes différents puisque les femmes étaient en majorité. Les hommes ont dû reconnaître qu'ils ne pouvaient rien obtenir pour eux-mêmes sans appuyer la lutte des femmes.

Ainsi, quand l'égalité du salaire entre hommes et femmes a été revendiquée, les hommes ont appuyé leurs camarades.

Au cours des dernières années, les femmes ont souvent mené de très dures luttes pour l'égalité du salaire et les hommes les ont rarement appuyées. Très souvent d'ailleurs, ce sont les syndicats qui brisaient l'unité de ces deux groupes de travailleurs et qui incitaient les hommes à ne pas appuyer ces luttes sous le prétexte qu'il s'agissait là de revendications de femmes. Mais c'est faux, la revendication à travail égal salaire égal est une revendication fondamentale pour toute la classe ouvrière.

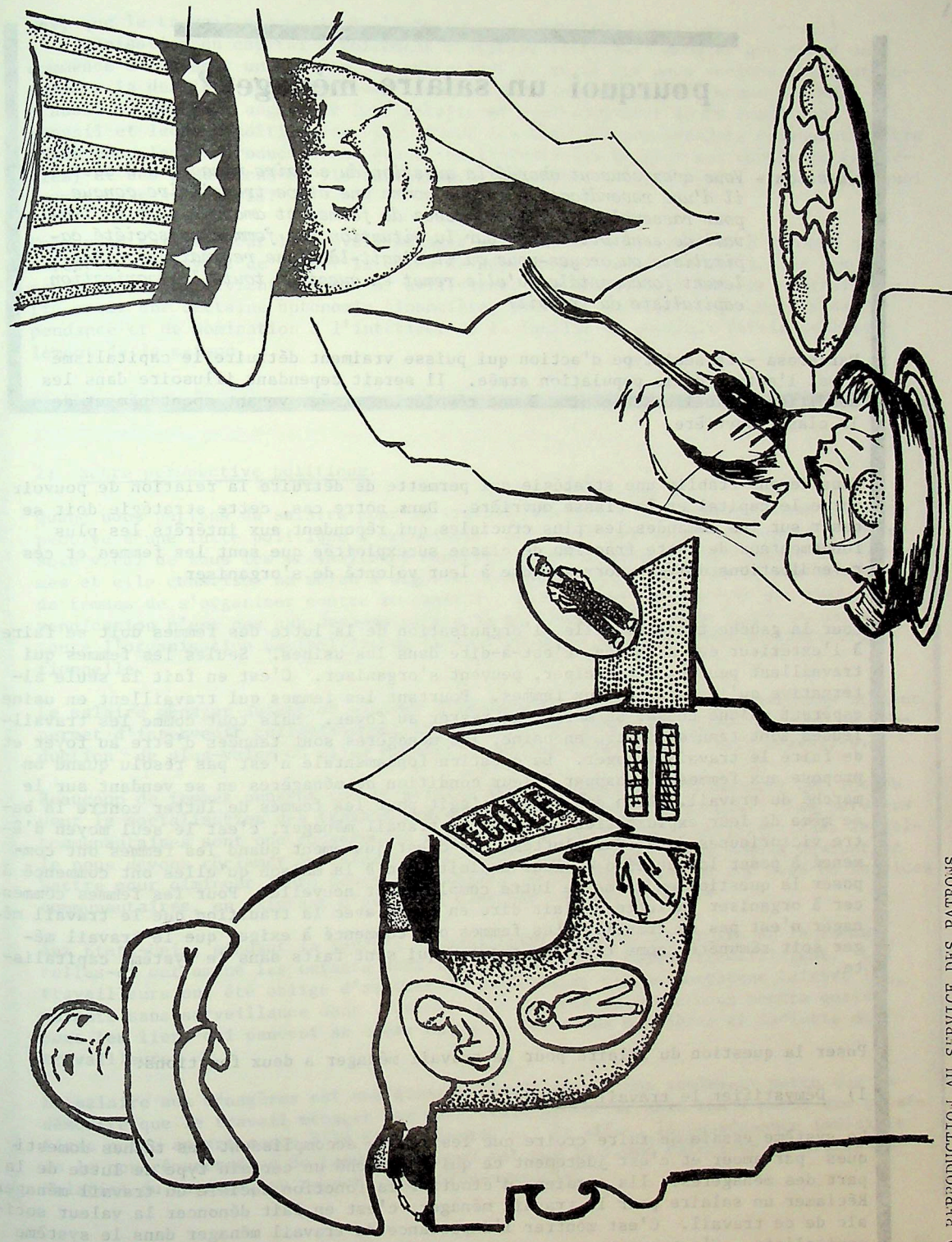
On accuse souvent les femmes d'être réactionnaires parce qu'elles ne luttent pas, parce qu'elles ne semblent pas combattre suffisamment leur condition d'exploitation. On oublie qu'elles ont une longue histoire dans la cuisine et qu'elles sont rarement appuyées par les hommes dans leur lutte. En tant que féministes, nous ne voulons pas nous isoler des hommes, au contraire. Mais nous voulons que les hommes nous rejoignent et acceptent le programme, les conditions, les perspectives de lutte de cette section de classe qui est la plus exploitée et à qui la société capitaliste a refusé tout privilège.

Nous voulons aussi préciser que nous considérons la question de la sexualité comme une question de classe. Quand nous parlons de mener une lutte féministe à l'intérieur de l'usine, nous voulons détruire les barrières que les syndicats ont élevées entre hommes et femmes sous le prétexte qu'il s'agissait d'une lutte de classe, par conséquent d'une lutte sérieuse, dont la stratégie et l'organisation appartenaient aux hommes. Pour nous, la sexualité est une question de classe parce que reproduire des enfants pour nous c'est reproduire des enfants pour la classe capitaliste. Notre travail ménager est au service du capitalisme et l'institution de la famille elle-même est au service du capitalisme. A partir du moment où les femmes, qu'elles soient à l'usine ou à la maison, commencent à identifier les intérêts de leur fraction de classe, et commencent à lutter pour défendre leurs propres intérêts, les luttes ouvrières prennent un caractère tout à fait différent.



*Certains nous appellent "les poules"*

*pensent-ils bien à qu'ils disent ?...*





## pourquoi un salaire ménager?

*Question - Vous avez souvent abordé la question du salaire ménager. S'agit-il d'une revendication conçue comme une étape transitoire conçue pour rassembler de larges masses de femmes et amorcer tout un travail de sensibilisation sur la situation des femmes en société capitaliste ou croyez-vous qu'il s'agit-là d'une revendication tellement fondamentale qu'elle remet en question toute l'organisation capitaliste du travail?*

Mariarosa - Le seul type d'action qui puisse vraiment détruire le capitalisme c'est l'action de la population armée. Il serait cependant illusoire dans les conditions actuelles de croire à une révolution armée, venant spontanément de la classe ouvrière.

Nous devons établir une stratégie qui permette de détruire la relation de pouvoir entre le capital et la classe ouvrière. Dans notre cas, cette stratégie doit se baser sur les demandes les plus cruciales qui répondent aux intérêts les plus fondamentaux de cette fraction de classe surexploitée que sont les femmes et ces revendications doivent correspondre à leur volonté de s'organiser.

Pour la gauche traditionnelle, l'organisation de la lutte des femmes doit se faire à l'extérieur de la maison, c'est-à-dire dans les usines. Seules les femmes qui travaillent peuvent s'émanciper, peuvent s'organiser. C'est en fait la seule alternative qu'ils offrent aux femmes. Pourtant les femmes qui travaillent en usine espèrent qu'une chose: se marier et rester au foyer. Mais tout comme les travailleuses sont tannées d'être en usine, les ménagères sont tannées d'être au foyer et de faire le travail ménager. La question fondamentale n'est pas résolu quand on propose aux femmes d'échapper à leur condition de ménagères en se vendant sur le marché du travail. Loin de là. Il s'agit pour les femmes de lutter contre la base même de leur exploitation qui est le travail ménager; c'est le seul moyen d'être victorieuses dans leurs luttes. Et c'est justement quand les femmes ont commencé à poser la question de leur exploitation à la maison qu'elles ont commencé à poser la question en terme de lutte complètement nouvelle. Pour les femmes commencer à organiser la lutte voulait dire en finir avec la tradition que le travail ménager n'est pas un travail. Les femmes ont commencé à exiger que le travail ménager soit rémunéré comme tous les travaux qui sont faits dans le système capitaliste.

Poser la question du salaire pour le travail ménager a deux fonctions:

### 1) Démystifier le travail ménager.

Le système essaie de faire croire que les femmes accomplissent les tâches domestiques par amour et c'est justement ce qui a empêché un certain type de lutte de la part des ménagères. Ils essaient d'étouffer la fonction sociale du travail ménager. Réclamer un salaire pour le travail ménager, c'est en fait dénoncer la valeur sociale de ce travail. C'est montrer l'importance du travail ménager dans le système capitaliste. C'est rompre avec cette mystification très dangereuse pour les fem-

mes, que le travail accompli à l'intérieur de la maison n'est pas un travail. L'organisation du capital a tellement mystifié le travail ménager que quand on commence à réclamer un salaire, on pense tout de suite que nous voulons institutionnaliser la destinée domestique des femmes. Dans les usines, les hommes se sont d'abord battus pour augmenter leur salaire et pour améliorer leurs conditions de travail et leurs conditions de vie. Quand les travailleurs ménagers demandent d'être payés pour leur reproduction et quand ces travailleurs exigent des conditions (garderies) et des conditions de vie acceptables (logement, espaces verts, etc...) pourquoi sommes-nous si surpris?

Exiger un salaire pour le travail ménager permettrait à la femme ou à l'homme qui effectue ce travail de briser le lien de dépendance économique qui le lie à son conjoint et qui devient souvent si avilissant. Le travailleur ménager pourrait enfin avoir une certaine autonomie financière, pourrait modifier les rapports de dépendance et de domination à l'intérieur de la famille et pourrait sortir de l'isolement de la maison.

### 2) Notre perspective politique.

Quand nous parlons du salaire pour le travail ménager, c'est vraiment dans la perspective d'une lutte politique à organiser. Cette revendication correspond à un besoin vital de tous les travailleurs ménagers et évidemment en particulier des femmes et elle constitue un moyen d'organisation privilégié permettant à des milliers de femmes de s'organiser contre le capital. Car il faut bien savoir que cette revendication n'est pas une demande partielle et réformiste. Elle remet en cause toute l'organisation capitaliste du travail et toute la structure familiale traditionnelle.

Le salaire ménager assure un minimum d'indépendance indispensable aux femmes et leur permet d'intervenir collectivement au niveau du quartier, cet autre secteur de production de plus-value où elles peuvent mener des luttes tout à fait nouvelles.

Beaucoup de femmes pensent que le salaire aux ménagères va à l'encontre des luttes pour la socialisation des travaux domestiques. Ce n'est pas le cas. Les services communautaires sont une conséquence directe de la perspective politique dans laquelle nous devons réclamer le salaire pour le travail ménager. Les femmes devront se battre pour diminuer leurs heures de travail en exigeant la mise sur pied de services communautaires, en exigeant d'avoir le contrôle de ces services.

Aux Etats-Unis, pendant la journée de manifestation pour les droits de la femme, celles-ci ont amené les enfants dans les usines où les hommes travaillaient. Les travailleurs ont été obligés d'arrêter la production; ils ne pouvaient laisser les enfants sans surveillance dans l'usine. Cet exemple de lutte nous montre quels sont les liens qui peuvent se créer entre la lutte des ménagères et la lutte des travailleurs.

Le salaire aux ménagères est une question fondamentale non seulement parce que ça démontre que le travail ménager est un travail productif mais aussi parce que ça affirme notre appartenance à la classe ouvrière. En effet, la conséquence immédiate de la non-rémunération du travail ménager est que la femme <sup>semble</sup> extérieure au processus salarial du capital, au rapport exploitateur-exploité.



*Question - Mais ne pensez-vous pas que le salaire pour le travail ménager ne ferait que soutenir cette division des rôles établit sur une base sexuelle?*

Notre point de vue est exactement l'opposé. Le travail ménager a toujours été sur les épaules des femmes parce que ce n'est pas un travail payé. L'organisation capitaliste du travail a réussi à désorganisé la capacité de lutte des femmes et a réussi à maintenir ce travail comme un travail féminin. Le même problème se pose pour les noirs. Nous savons que ce sont les noirs, en général, qui accomplissent les travaux les plus durs et les moins bien payés; exemple: les porteurs à l'aéroport. Auparavant, ce genre de travail était réservé exclusivement aux noirs. Mais à partir du moment où les noirs se sont regroupés pour mener des luttes exigeant de meilleurs salaires et de meilleures conditions de travail, les blancs ont commencé à réclamer l'accès à ce genre de travail. Nous voulons montrer par cet exemple qu'un travail est féminin, noir ou sur les épaules des sections de classe les plus exploitées dans la mesure où ces sections de classe ne luttent pas durement pour changer ces conditions.

## **l'organisation autonome**

*Question - Vous faites partie dans vos pays respectifs d'organisations féministes. De quel type d'organisation s'agit-il et quel type de lutte menez-vous?*

Mariarosa - Nous faisons toutes deux partie de mouvements féministes marxistes et nous refusons d'endosser plus longtemps les vieilles notions de classe qui subordonnent les travailleurs non-salariés aux travailleurs salariés; on cache derrière ces notions l'exploitation du travail de la femme à la maison i.e. sa productivité ainsi que les raisons de sa double exploitation lorsqu'elle se retrouve sur le marché du travail. De cette analyse découle la possibilité d'intervenir dans de nouveaux champs de lutte et la possibilité de faire de la subversion non seulement à l'usine et au bureau mais aussi dans le quartier et il ressort aussi la nécessité de lier la lutte de ces deux secteurs de production: l'usine et la maison. Par conséquent à Lotta Feminista, qui n'a aucun lien de parenté avec Lotta Continua, nous intervenons dans ces deux secteurs à la fois.

Lotta feminista tient des rencontres de coordination deux fois par mois afin d'approfondir certaines questions politiques, de déterminer plus clairement la stratégie, de confronter les expériences des divers groupes et de régler certains problèmes techniques. Cependant, les groupes locaux conservent une entière autonomie pour définir leurs priorités de lutte en fonction de l'évaluation de leurs forces et de la situation particulière de leur région, tout en tenant compte cependant des perspectives d'ensemble du mouvement.

Jusqu'à présent, nous avons préféré mener des luttes locales correspondant à nos capacités d'organisation plutôt que d'engager des batailles larges sans base militante réelle. Nous commençons toutefois à envisager la possibilité de mener des luttes à travers toute l'Italie. Ainsi, actuellement nous faisons une vaste campagne d'information pour supporter l'une de nos camarades, Lolla, qui subit un procès pour avortement. Nous voulons utiliser ce cas pour appuyer la lutte de toutes les autres femmes aux prises avec cette question afin de démasquer les forces réactionnaires qui refusent à la femme cette liberté et ce droit fondamental de contrôler son propre corps.

Nous avons aussi commencé à soulever la question des allocations familiales, qui en Italie sont versées directement aux hommes. Dans la perspective d'exiger un jour le salaire ménager, nous devons exiger que cette allocation soit directement versée aux femmes. Il importe d'autre part que cette question soit posée au plan national car elle constitue une demande fondamentale pour l'organisation des femmes et permet de dégager toute une analyse politique. Il est évident que les femmes qui souvent par le biais d'un travail large se joignent au mouvement n'ont pas toutes le même degré de maturité politique mais leur appartenance au mouvement leur permet de développer cette maturité.

Selma - De notre côté, en Angleterre, nous avons entrepris une dure lutte contre l'Etat qui veut retirer aux femmes les quelques miettes d'argent qu'elles recevaient par le biais des allocations familiales. Déjà des milliers de femmes de tendances différentes se sont jointes au mouvement et il est étonnant de voir comment nous réussissons à discuter de nos divergences politiques, à respecter les particularités de chaque groupe et même à mener des actions différentes qui se situent dans une même perspective et se complètent.

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# **NOUS SOMMES DEMENAGEES**

au **4319 St-Denis, Mtl.**

**Centre des femmes: 288-4057**



•••••  
• CHU MÉNAGÈRE

- Une autre journée à m'mettre dans l'corps
- J'ai mon voyage mais ça fait rien
- Faut ch'continue le même train-train
- Laver, frotter, torcher tout l'temps
- Quand chu malade, pis quand chu ben
- Pas moyen d'faire d'aut'chose
- A coeur d'année, à coeur de vie
- Maudite belle vie!

- Une autre journée à m'mettre dans l'corps
- J'ai mon voyage mais ça fait rien
- Faut ch'continue le même train-train
- Aimer, guérir, aider tout l'temps
- Quand chu malade, pis quand chu ben
- Pas moyen d'faire d'aut'chose
- J'ai une job steady, chu pas une autre
- Chu ménagère

- Une autre journée à r'commencer
- Les p'tits sont d'bout, Jean est parti
- Faut j'me dépêche, y sont en retard
- Chà pas par quel bout' commencer
- Vaisselle, lavage, époussetage
- Avant le r'pas d'midi
- J'ai une job steady, chu pas une autre
- Chu ménagère

A NOTER:

A cause du volume du présent numéro, la chronique SEXE ET POLITIQUE réapparaîtra seulement dans le prochain numéro

A NOTER:

Nous ne publierons qu'un seul numéro de QUEBÉCOISES DEBOUTTE pour les 2 mois d'été: juillet et août.

## chansons féministes

•••••  
A Poèmes & Chants de la Résistance 3  
(le 9 mai au Centre Paul-Sauvé et le 14 mai au Petit Colisée de Québec), deux militantes du Centre des Femmes ont relié les luttes des femmes aux luttes ouvrières. Elles ont interprété deux compositions collectives (parole et musique) des militantes du Centre des Femmes: Chu Ménagère

&  
Debout les Femmes

•••••  
DEBOUT LES FEMMES

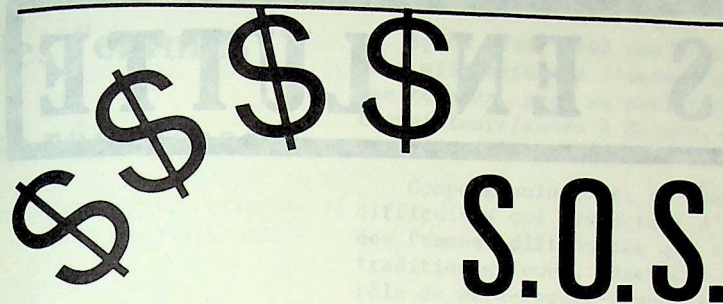
• Debout les femmes, prenons nos vies dans nos mains  
• Debout les femmes, et ne courbons plus les reins  
• Soyons fortes pour demain  
• Nous aussi il faut lutter  
• Avec tous les exploités

• Vivre à genoux, dans le creux de nos misères  
• Vivre à genoux, en silence comme nos mères  
• C'est assez de servitude,  
• C'est assez de solitude,  
• Nous n'avons plus à nous taire

• Qui nous savons, que le profit des patrons  
• Nous le savons, il se fait dans notre chair  
• Aussi dans notre travail  
• Notre double exploitation  
• A l'usine, à la maison

• Luttons ensemble, enfin soyons solidaires  
• Luttons ensemble, ménagères et ouvrières  
• Il n'y a plus de temps à perdre  
• Notre monde est à refaire  
• Levons-nous dès maintenant

• Debout les femmes, prenons nos vies dans nos mains  
• Debout les femmes, et ne courbons plus les reins  
• Soyons fortes pour demain  
• Nous aussi il faut lutter  
• Avec tous les exploités



Le Centre des Femmes, fonctionne déjà depuis un an et demi. Nous avons commencé la publication du journal QUEBÉCOISES DEBOUTTE en novembre dernier et déjà six numéros ont été publiés. La rentrée massive des abonnements nous a grandement surprises et nous a fait constater que ce journal suscitait un grand intérêt, non seulement au Québec mais ailleurs dans d'autres pays.

Le coût peu élevé de l'abonnement a nécessairement contribué à rendre ce journal très accessible. Mais il reste que les frais de publication et d'envoi dépassent le prix chargé jusqu'à maintenant pour l'abonnement. Toutefois, nous maintenons le prix de \$3.00 pour l'abonnement individuel mais nous demandons à partir de maintenant \$9.00 pour les abonnements de groupe. L'abonnement de groupe comprend cinq copies par numéro pour douze publications, ce qui revient à .09 la copie (+ .06 pour frais de poste). Cette augmentation reste minime, mais elle nous permettra de payer les frais de publication. De plus, les frais d'abonnement pour les organismes officiels s'élèvent à \$15.00; cet abonnement pouvant aller jusqu'à cinq copies par numéro.

Mais il reste que la rentrée des abonnements demeure insuffisante pour assurer la possibilité financière de poursuivre le travail amorcé depuis six mois. De par l'intérêt que suscite QUEBÉCOISES DEBOUTTE, nous voulons travailler dans une prochaine étape à organiser un réseau de distribution structuré afin d'élargir la diffusion de textes féministes et de permettre l'utilisation maximum de cet instrument privilégié qu'est notre journal.

Pour réaliser ces objectifs nous avons besoin de l'aide de toutes celles et ceux qui appuient et soutiennent la lutte des femmes. Nous faisons donc appel à vous et nous vous demandons de contribuer financièrement dans la mesure de votre possible. QUEBÉCOISES DEBOUTTE nous concerne toutes et tous, féministes révolutionnaires.

Vous pouvez adresser vos mandats à QUEBÉCOISES DEBOUTTE  
4319 rue St-Denis  
Montréal, Québec

QUEBÉCOISES DEBOUTTE!



# FEMMES EN LUTTE

à

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Coleco compte de 500 (dans les périodes de "Slack") à 800 employés/es et les femmes y constituent 70% de la main-d'oeuvre. D'autre part, les immigrés (surtout des hommes) en représentent 20%.

La moyenne d'âge se situe à environ 23 ans à Coleco. On calcule cette moyenne car il y a environ 50% des employés/es qui ont moins de 18ans (même si on déclare avoir 18ans). Comme la main-d'oeuvre est très jeune, la plupart des femmes ne sont pas mariées ou plutôt "pas encore mariées", car en général elles ne travaillent que pour pouvoir se trouver un mari. Mais règle générale, il ne faut surtout pas qu'il travaille à la même shop. Une partie de leur salaire sert à payer pension aux parents. Tout le reste passe surtout en vêtements à la mode, en produits de maquillage, etc. D'ailleurs, les filles sont bien souvent sur la finance, car elles ont beaucoup de dettes. Et la plupart ne savent trop si elles verront le jour de s'en sortir. C'est pourquoi un bon nombre achètent en plus des billets de loterie en espérant que "leur" billet viendra régler leurs problèmes très bientôt.

La scolarité des travailleurs/euses ne dépasse pas la 10<sup>e</sup> ou la 11<sup>e</sup> année chez les jeunes, mais chez les plus vieux, elle se situe autour de la 3<sup>e</sup> ou la 4<sup>e</sup> année en moyenne. Par contre, plusieurs ne savent pas écrire.

Le salaire initial pour tout employé/e est le salaire minimum (\$1.69). Après 3 mois de travail, quand on est devenu régulier, on monte à \$1.89 l'heure.

D'autre part, Coleco compte une infirmerie à son crédit. Mais comme l'infirmière veut profiter le plus possible des faveurs que lui font les patrons, elle ne prend jamais position pour la prévention des accidents: comme son silence par rapport à la colle utilisée pour l'assemblage qui s'est avérée dangereuse à la manutention à plusieurs reprises.

Coleco est une usine de jouets située à St-Henri et dont le mot d'ordre est: "Rendre les gens heureux, c'est notre affaire." (sic)

Coleco a un syndicat de boutique affilié à la Fédération canadienne des associations indépendantes. Mais les travailleurs/euses vont vouloir mettre la FCAI dehors. ILS ET ELLES ONT DECIDE DE SE DONNER UN SYNDICAT QUI SERVIRA LEURS INTERETS A EUX.

## des femmes se réunissent

Après avoir créé des sympathies à l'intérieur de Coleco, deux militantes de l'usine, invitent un groupe de femmes à une réunion pour se parler du besoin d'organisation des travailleurs/euses à Coleco. Mais dès le départ, on se rend compte de l'instabilité à laquelle fait face le groupe.

Composé uniquement de femmes, on perçoit très vite les difficultés qui ressortent d'un travail d'organisation avec des femmes: difficultés qui tournent toutes autour du rôle traditionnellement réservé à la femme dans la société, son rôle de mère-épouse-ménagère. Elles ont des enfants à charge, des tâches ménagères à assumer toutes seules, etc.

Mais plus encore, on perçoit à quel point l'oppression des femmes peut être forte au sein de la famille: entre autres, certains maris ne permettent pas à leur femme d'avoir des activités le soir. Il y a aussi l'exemple de cette femme qui doit se lever à 2:00am toutes les nuits pour faire à manger à son mari qui revient du travail à cette heure-là; ceci même si elle doit être debout à 6:00 am pour son travail à Coleco et qu'elle a la charge entière des travaux ménagers à assumer en plus.

D'autre part, il y a même eu une femme qui n'est plus retournée au travail quand son mari (très jaloux) a su qu'elle se chargeait de faire signer des cartes d'accréditation syndicale en faisant du porte-à-porte chez les travailleurs/euses de Coleco.

Il y a eu des départs, mais le groupe s'est tout de même consolidé par de nouvelles arrivées (hommes et femmes) et la ténacité des autres femmes du groupe initial.

## on élimine la FCAI

Coleco était déjà "syndiquée" mais c'est beaucoup dire car la FCAI n'est pas connue comme un syndicat qui défend les intérêts des travailleurs/euses mais ceux des patrons. D'ailleurs, on a constaté après une brève enquête, que les travailleurs/euses n'avaient perçu la FCAI que comme un "gobe-sous": ils/elles ne connaissaient rien d'autre, d'elle que le montant des cotisations qu'ils/elles devaient lui verser chaque semaine. Le travail d'organisation a donc commencé à partir d'une critique de la FCAI par les travailleurs/euses de Coleco, insatisfaits de ce "syndicat".

Un travailleur de chez Clix \* (qui venait de se syndiquer) suggère au groupe de se syndiquer aux Métallos (FTQ) parce que les Métallos est le syndicat qui a le plus d'expérience pour éliminer la FCAI au niveau des grosses shops et est soi-disant le syndicat le plus combattif(!).

On commence à faire signer des cartes et on utilise toute sorte de moyens: on va faire sa recette de sucre à la crème pour parler du syndicat, chez des femmes de l'usine, etc. On fait aussi des caricatures des boss dans les toilettes (les patrons étant déjà au courant du début d'organisation syndicale).

\* Clix: usine de fermetures-éclair, située dans le complexe de l'ancienne Defense Industries Ltd (DIL) à Verdun.



## répression anti-syndicale

D'autre part, comme il y a 3 shifts à Coleco, les Métallos paient un gars qui doit se charger de faire de l'animation et de l'organisation pour qu'il y ait une continuité du travail dans les deux autres shifts.

Cette étape des signatures a duré 2 mois en tout: elle a commencé au mois de septembre '71 et on a déposé la demande d'accréditation du syndicat le 11 novembre. Ce fut très rapide quand on considère le nombre d'employée/es à Coleco.

La période des signatures n'a duré que 2 mois mais elle n'a pas été sans embûches. La FCAI s'était rendue compte qu'elle allait perdre ses intérêts à Coleco. Il semble qu'elle est d'abord payé un gars pour espionner si un nouveau syndicat était en formation. Le gars qui se disait payé par la Cie \*, a demandé à une militante du groupe si elle voulait travailler comme lui à espionner les vols dans la shop. Cependant, on le revoit par la suite à une réunion chez un des militants. On lui demande de partir parce qu'on n'est pas sûr de lui et qu'on le soupçonne de venir espionner leur travail. Mais se sentant repéré, il tente de prouver sa bonne foi en signant "sa carte": pas besoin de dire qu'il a donné une mauvaise adresse et que cette journée-là fut sa dernière à Coleco.

Après ça, la FCAI envoie une lettre à tout le monde, faisant croire que les cartes signées aux Métallos ne seraient plus bonnes au bout d'un certain temps. Elle ajoute même en faisant allusion à 2 émissions de radio (sur la syndicalisation) à laquelle participe un militant du groupe: "Ce n'est pas lui qui va vous donner des jobs!" Mais les travailleurs et travailleuses ne se sont pas laissés duper par ce manège.

Après avoir échoué auprès de l'ensemble des travailleurs/euses, la FCAI entreprend des menaces individuelles auprès d'une militante en particulier.

Cette militante est une de celles qui a aidé à l'organisation depuis le début: la FCAI tentait d'attaquer une des "têtes", croyant pouvoir briser l'élan du groupe. Elle reçoit deux fois des menaces par téléphone tard le soir (elle habitait seule). Un autre soir, en sortant faire une commission, une auto l'aurait frappée si elle ne s'était mise à courir en entendant un crissement de pneus tout près d'elle: elle croit à un gars saoul. Pourtant 15 minutes plus tard, un autre téléphone lui dit: "On t'a manquée à soir, mais la prochaine fois on t'aura!" Cette militante n'a que 17 ans à ce moment-là...

\* On croit en fait qu'il devait être payé par la U.B.S. affiliée à la FCAI. La U.B.S. est chargée entre autres de "protéger" les intérêts de la F.C.A.I.

De leur côté les boss savent qu'elle joue un rôle important auprès des travailleurs/euses de son département. Ils saisiront donc le moindre prétexte pour l'isoler. Et, c'est au nom d'un motif ridicule qu'ils ne se gêneront pas pour la muter sur un autre étage avec le staff (dépt du personnel): les patrons veulent clairement l'intimider dans son travail. Par contre même si ses "breaks" sont à des périodes différentes que celles des travailleurs/euses du staff, elle réussit tout de même à créer des sympathies. Mais le boss s'en rend compte et dès le lendemain, plus personne n'ose lui adresser la parole: ils sont menacés de renvoi s'ils sont surpris à lui parler!

Plus tard quand elle sera enceinte, le boss en profitera pour essayer de la motiver à partir d'elle-même. Elle sera suspendue à plusieurs reprises: -p.c.q. elle s'est absentée (en raison de sa grossesse)

-p.c.q. elle est surprise à parler (on invoque les dangers d'accident quoique le risque soit presque inexistant dans son dépt). D'ailleurs la Cie n'a aucune politique d'absences: les patrons procèdent donc d'une façon tout à fait arbitraire pour faire des suspensions. Cet autre exemple le prouve aussi: un militant a été suspendu pour avoir insulté un contremaître (dernièrement). Mais patrons & contremaîtres ne le sont pas, s'ils insultent des travailleurs/euses.

Entre la déposition de la demande d'accréditation et l'accréditation, il y a eu 5 procès d'arbitrage \* pour des travailleurs/euses à cause de mises-à-pied: 4 d'entre eux, pour activités syndicales et la 5<sup>e</sup> (une femme) parce qu'elle ne s'est pas présentée pendant deux semaines pour raison de santé: "Un paquet d'os comme toé, on n'en a pas besoin" (dit le boss). Cette femme a eu tellement peur, qu'elle ne s'est jamais présentée au procès...  
MAIS LE MEPRIS N'AURA QU'UN TEMPS!

Toutefois, on a perdu quelques forces en cours de route: deux gars du groupe des mis-à-pied sont revenus à la shop quelque jours: le temps nécessaire pour être en droit de retirer le salaire perdu entre leur mise-à-pied et leur réengagement. En effet, ils avaient gagné leur procès et avaient droit à être payés pour tout le temps où ils étaient dehors.

\* Procès d'arbitrage: quand il y a un grief, on peut avoir recours à un arbitrage. Un commissaire-enquêteur nommé par le gouvernement écoute les 2 parties (patron et syndicat) plaider leur cause. C'est lui qui décide lequel gagne. Très souvent, les procès d'arbitrage traînent en longueur ce qui désamorce la combativité des travailleurs/euses.

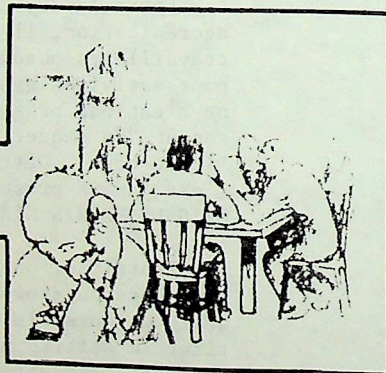


## l'exécutif se forme

Pour la période des signatures de carte (d'accréditation) les travailleurs/euses avaient nommé un exécutif provisoire, la présidente était la jeune militante dont on a parlé. D'autre part, dès que le syndicat fut accrédité légalement, un comité s'est formé pour négocier (en faveur des intérêts des travailleurs/euses) la nouvelle convention collective). Sur cinq personnes, il y a deux femmes sur ce comité dont l'une est cette militante. Cependant dès que le contrat est signé, un complot (monté par des militants du groupe) est organisé contre elle, pour qu'elle ne soit pas réélue à l'exécutif (officiel) du syndicat.

On invoque le fait qu'elle est une femme. Selon eux: Les travailleurs/euses auraient moins confiance en une femme pour les représenter. C'est par cet argument, qu'ils ont d'ailleurs réussi à la convaincre de ne se présenter que comme secrétaire plutôt que comme présidente. Mais ils comprendront plus tard que les travailleurs/euses ne s'identifient à un exécutif que s'ils ont confiance en lui, en constatant le travail concret qu'il (exécutif) effectue dans l'usine; c'est une des raisons qui peut les motiver à s'impliquer dans une lutte future. D'ailleurs, les militants à l'origine de ce complot reconnaissent tous maintenant que cette militante avait la confiance nécessaire des travailleurs/euses pour se faire élire présidente.

D'autre part, au niveau de la participation des femmes à un travail d'organisation, on retrouve à Coleco une situation commune à la majorité des cas où les travailleurs/euses essaient de s'organiser.



Pendant toute la période précédant l'accréditation officielle, les femmes travailleuses ont été présentes et actives et même majoritaires dans ce début de travail d'organisation. Mais dès qu'il y eut l'élection pour un exécutif syndical, elles se sont éclipsées, elles aussi (cf. Lumiray) C'est pourquoi, il n'y a que 3 femmes parmi les 11 personnes de l'exécutif; d'ailleurs elles ne se sont proposées qu'aux postes les moins importants, à part cette militante qu'on a fait élire secrétaire (!). De plus, ces 3 travailleuses ne participent presque plus (maintenant) aux réunions de l'exécutif: problèmes familiaux toujours.

## manipulation

Les négociations commencent au milieu de janvier '72 et se caractérisent par un manque d'information à cause du boss et de la négligence du permanent syndical (!). Le permanent a en outre manipulé d'une façon constante les travailleurs/euses. D'autre part, il ne faut pas oublier que pendant toute la période des négociations, il y a 3 militants/es à l'extérieur (mis-à-pied) et qu'une autre militante est mutée et isolée sur un autre étage. Les patrons savent qu'en les maintenant à l'extérieur de la shop, l'information syndicale circulera avec beaucoup plus de difficultés. Ils tiennent le bout le plus fort de la corde: ils profitent du manque d'expérience de l'ensemble des travailleurs/euses.

De l'autre côté, le permanent se fie au bon ententisme avec les boss, et néglige de compter sur la force des travailleurs/euses. Le mot d'ordre qu'il lance constamment le prouve facilement: "N'intervenez pas trop, il ne faut pas nuire aux relations avec le boss!" De plus, il n'informerait pas les travailleurs/euses: toute sa politique vise à les écarter de la négociation; même si ce sont eux qui auront à subir pendant 3 ans environ, une convention qui ne sera pas adaptée à leurs besoins et revendications particulières.

D'ailleurs pendant toute la période la préparation du contrat, le permanent manipule constamment le comité de négociations (qui représente les revendications des travailleurs/euses). Entre autres, sur la question d'une hausse de salaires, il utilise le prétexte qu': "On ne négocie pas dans la bière, ce qu'on négocie dans les jouets!" Ce qui veut dire que la "demande en bière" sur le marché étant constante, on peut exiger de plus hauts salaires que dans les jouets. Parce que les patrons doivent tout de même faire leurs profits(sic).

Le contrôle du permanent était tellement fort que le boss lui téléphoniait directement pour régler les griefs (sans passer par le comité de négociations comme ça doit être fait). Puis quand on a été prêt à présenter le projet de convention à l'ensemble des travailleurs/euses, on convoque une assemblée générale. Chose curieuse: à cette assemblée, il n'y a que le permanent à avoir une copie du projet- il le lit pendant 5 heures (un samedi en plus). Manoeuvre subtile qui décourage toute tentative de critiques générales du projet et toute intention de faire intégrer des revendications particulières à Coleco. On note en plus que le permanent rassemble continuellement les militants en assemblée générale et conséquemment décourage toute initiative de la part des travailleurs/euses.

Par exemple, si des militants essaient de faire ressortir ou critiquer un point particulier de la convention, le permanent rétorque immédiatement: "Y vous font rêver en couleurs, vous l'aurez pas, j'le sais!" Par cela, il prouve encore qu'il se fie plus au bon ententisme avec le boss que dans la force des travailleurs/euses.



## le rôle des permanents

Comme dans tout processus de syndicalisation, il y a une division très nette du travail de chacun des 3 permanents, recruteur-organisateur-négociateur. Certains militants ont même constaté que le travail de syndicalisation est tellement contrôlé par les permanents (en général) que les travailleurs/euses se disent de shop en shop: "J'espère que vous aurez pas affaire à X comme négociateur, y'é pire qu'Y."

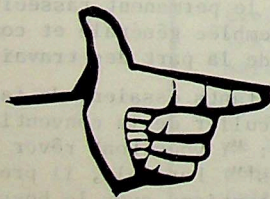
Cette constatation n'est pas exclusive aux Métallos (FTQ) car les autres centrales semblent procéder de la même façon. Un seul permanent devrait suivre le cheminement des travailleurs/euses dans leur lutte pour l'organisation syndicale. Son rôle devrait être surtout axé sur l'information. Car il revient aux travailleurs/euses d'orienter eux-mêmes leur travail d'organisation pour qu'ils puissent prendre définitivement en main le syndicat qu'ils se donnent.

## changements depuis le syndicat

On a fait diminuer à 3 mois le temps requis pour être reconnu employé régulier: c'est-à-dire le temps requis pour être dorénavant protégé par le syndicat.

En ce qui concerne les maternités, le mari obtient un jour payé pour l'accouchement de sa femme. Mais comme dans la plupart des cas, les travailleuses-mêmes de Coleco ne sont pas payées pour leur journée d'accouchement. Elles bénéficient par contre d'un congé de maternité tel que prévu dans la loi de l'assurance-chômage (mais bientôt elle n'aura plus court) \*. Mais ne bénéficient de ce congé que celles qui reviennent au travail après la période prévue.

On a aussi obtenu égalité de salaire pour travail égal; mais il faut le dire ce sont encore les femmes qui ont les jobs les plus difficiles. Les boss savent qu'elles sont le cheap labor le plus soumis (comme les immigrés): quel que soit le salaire qu'on leur donne, elles restent par nécessité. Et il y a toujours une réserve suffisante pour assurer un bon roulement. Un des contremaître ne se gêne pas non plus pour afficher le mépris qu'il leur porte: "Les femmes, c'est comme la lotto, y'en a partout!"



\* "Grossesse: Si vous êtes enceinte au moment de faire votre demande de prestations ou êtes enceinte alors que vous recevez des prestations, (...) il se peut que vous ayez droit à des prestations pendant les 9 semaines qui précèdent et les 6 semaines qui suivent l'accouchement (...)" Renseignements aux prestataires, Commission d'assurance-chômage, 1971

Si la nouvelle loi de l'assurance-chômage est amendée, comme le gouvernement Trudeau veut le faire, la clause - grossesse - disparaîtra. Motif: c'est une des largesses de la loi qui coûte trop cher!

## un instrument: le journal

Maintenant que le syndicat est installé, un groupe de 5 militants/tes (un peu différent de l'exécutif parce qu'il y a certaines dissensions) se rencontre: il est composé de 3 femmes et de 2 hommes.

Ce groupe de militants/tes s'occupent surtout de faire sortir un journal pour rejoindre plus encore, l'ensemble des travailleurs/euses. Ils ont constaté que c'était leur meilleur instrument parce qu'il est lu et apprécié par les travailleurs/euses. Le contenu du journal concerne surtout les batailles internes de Coleco et aussi d'une façon plus générale les batailles de St-Henri. Les militants/tes qui font le journal se sont rendus compte qu'il est plus important à l'heure actuelle de montrer aux travailleurs/euses que leurs luttes à l'intérieur de Coleco est aussi politique; ils se sont en effet aperçus qu'il est encore trop tôt de mentionner les luttes qui se mènent à l'échelle nationale ou internationale. Un des objectifs du journal est que les travailleurs/euses prenant de plus en plus conscience de la lutte à mener au sein de l'usine, s'impliquent plus dans cette lutte et prennent complètement leur syndicat en main. Il est très important que les travailleurs/euses dépassent la lutte syndicale.

Ce texte a été écrit à partir d'une rencontre avec une militante de Coleco.

L'équipe de QUEBECOISES DEBOUTTE peut maintenant dégager des caractéristiques communes à Lumiray et Coleco (cf. Lumiray Bilan d'une lutte- Q.D. no 5) traitant des luttes auxquelles les femmes participent en usine; et aussi des traits communs aux travailleuses de St-Henri, d'une façon plus générale, en ce qui concerne les conditions de vie et les conditions de travail en usine à St-Henri.



# conclusion: — les —

Dans les quartiers comme St-Henri, on retrouve des problèmes communs à toutes les femmes qui travaillent en usine.

Pour les jeunes femmes:

Elles voient comme une "libération" (!) le jour où elles vont sortir de l'usine pour se marier.

En général, elles doivent donner une partie de leur salaire à la famille.

L'autre partie sert à s'habiller et à se décorer pour se trouver un mari.

Pour les mères de famille:

Nombreuses sont les femmes qui assument seules la tâche de faire vivre leur famille. Il y a beaucoup de femmes séparées ou abandonnées et les cas de veuvage ne sont pas rares (à cause de l'usure rapide des travailleurs... et des accidents de travail fréquents.).

Les mères de famille qui travaillent en usine le font par nécessité. Ce que pourrait leur offrir le bien-être social, ne suffirait pas à la survie de la famille. Elles sont donc obligées d'accepter n'importe quel ouvrage.

Elles ont à assumer une double journée de travail, le travail ménager étant aussi épuisant que le travail à l'usine. Elles sont dans la crainte continue de se faire mettre à la porte, vu qu'il y a une grande concurrence:

"Les femmes, c'est comme la lotto, y'en a partout!" dit un contremaître, chez Coleco.

Les femmes en général, jeunes ou moins jeunes, ont un niveau de scolarisation très bas. Ceci leur enlève donc tout espoir d'être autre chose que des "jilles de shop".

Dans les usines, les femmes sont très difficilement solidaires entre elles: -les jeunes qui ne veulent pas vivre ce que leurs mères ont vécu, ont l'impression que les problèmes des mères de famille ne les concernent pas. Elles communiquent donc assez peu avec les plus âgées.

Sur les chaînes de montage, il est difficile d'établir une solidarité entre les femmes, car il faut sans cesse augmenter les cadences et les patrons favorisent la compétition entre elles.

D'autre part, les femmes d'usine ont en général peu confiance en elles. Ceci explique un peu le fait qu'elles ne se proposent qu'aux postes les moins importants dans un travail d'organisation.

## L'ORGANISATION DES TRAVAILLEUSES DANS LES USINES

Il y a de nombreuses difficultés à organiser les travailleuses dans les usines. Mais même si des travailleuses, décident de s'organiser pour revendiquer de meilleures conditions de travail, elles rencontrent différents obstacles tels:

-l'attitude des hommes à leur égard:

les maris ou les "chuns" à cause de leur éducation, n'ont pas l'habitude d'accepter que les femmes fassent autre chose que les tâches familiales.

Ils refusent que leur femme aille aux assemblées, ils leur reprochent de s'occuper de "ce qui ne les regarde pas" (i.e le syndicat). De plus, ils sont souvent très jaloux, et ils manquent de confiance dans leurs femmes.

# travailleuses — à St-Henri

Toutes ces attitudes découragent souvent les femmes prêtes à s'organiser, et elles préfèrent sauvegarder la "paix" familiale plutôt que de s'engager dans une lutte à l'usine qui leur occasionnerait de nombreux problèmes familiaux. Quant aux hommes qui travaillent dans les mêmes usines que les femmes, ils ont des attitudes pleines de suspicion, face à leurs compagnes de travail qui manifestent le désir de faire un travail d'organisation pour le syndicat. S'ils les acceptent dans leur rang, il est bien rare pourtant qu'ils acceptent de leur donner des postes importants dans le syndicat (même si l'usine est à 70 % de femmes!). En général, ils considèrent que la place des femmes est d'abord à la maison. Et en cas de luttes importantes ou de grèves, ils laissent aux femmes des rôles secondaires (faire des affiches, les cafés, sandwiches...).

-l'attitude des syndicats:

la mentalité des syndicats face aux travailleuses a quelque peu évolué ces dernières années, mais en général les syndicats exercent la même discrimination vis-à-vis les femmes, que la société en général. On dirait qu'ils acceptent encore difficilement que les femmes ont autant le droit au travail que les hommes. De plus, ils acceptent encore - de moins en moins pourtant - que les femmes aient un salaire inférieur aux hommes pour un même travail. Quant aux revendications propres aux femmes (congé de maternité payé, garderies sur les lieux de travail) elles ne sont jamais poussées de l'avant (dans les cas où les femmes ont pu les formuler!)

Les travailleuses ont donc une bataille à mener à l'intérieur même de leur syndicat - quand il y en a - pour revendiquer leurs droits et faire reconnaître que la lutte est aussi leur lutte, et qu'elles ont aussi leur mot à dire.

-les travailleuses sont aussi ménagères:

On oublie souvent que les femmes en usine sont aussi ménagères et dans le travail d'organisation dans les usines, il est très important de considérer que les travailleuses ont 2 lieux de travail: l'usine et la maison. Il faut donc mettre de l'avant le fait que les luttes à entreprendre doivent l'être sur 2 fronts: l'usine et la maison. Car le militantisme des femmes à l'usine dépend des conditions de travail qu'elles vivent à la maison. Ainsi les revendications mises de l'avant à l'usine doivent toucher des points spéciaux concernant les femmes: parce qu'il faut le dire les femmes sont moins "libres" que les hommes et il est beaucoup plus difficile pour elles de sortir du cadre familial.

D'autre part, il est devenu une nécessité de lier les luttes des travailleuses et des ménagères; car les travailleuses sont aussi des ménagères à leur sortie de l'usine et tant que les ménagères ne seront pas organisées sur la base de leurs revendications spécifiques (prise en charge collective des enfants, socialisation des tâches ménagères, etc.), les travailleuses en usine auront toujours une double journée de travail à assumer. Et il sera de plus en plus important pour elles, que leurs luttes à l'usine visent non seulement leur condition de travailleuse mais aussi leur condition de ménagères: ces 2 luttes sont interdépendantes.

MÉNAGÈRES ET OUVRIÈRES  
SOYONS ENFIN SOLIDAIRES!



# LOGGA FEDERALISTA

ANNO XI - N. 3 - 4 1973 - UNA COPIA L. 200 - 70 %

BIMESTRALE PER GLI STATI UNITI D'EUROPA

SPEDIZIONE IN ABBONAMENTO POSTALE - GRUPPO IV

## "La storia è nostra e la fanno i popoli,"

*"Questa è una pausa, ma il domani sarà nostro..... evviva il Cile, evviva il popolo, evviva i lavoratori - Ho la certezza che il mio sacrificio non sarà vano - Loro hanno la forza ma non la ragione,"*

Salvador Allende

Quanto è avvenuto in Cile è stato variamente commentato e deprecato su tutta la stampa del mondo. Però non ci sembra che il dramma — la violenza bestiale del potere militare, la morte volontaria di Allende — sia stato esaminato dal giusto punto di vista, che se ne sia compresa la vera natura ed identificate le profonde radici.

L'equivoco drammatico, la vera origine della tragedia sta nella contraddizione umana tra un individuo — Salvador Allende che, quali gli errori commessi nella gestione del proprio mandato, era impegnato a dare dignità e responsabilità di uomini a masse umane abbruttite da secoli di sfruttamento — e la società che di questo sfruttamento godeva i frutti e le regole della quale lo stesso Allende intendeva rispettare; ciò nell'intento di sanare dal suo stesso interno, pacificamente, autonomamente, la tragica atavica situazione, lasciando conseguentemente ogni libertà alle opposizioni, fornite di tutti i mezzi di comunicazione e di propaganda in misura assai maggiore dello stesso governo.

Era il ragionamento del vero democratico o, meglio, dell'anarchico di fondo che salvaguarda i diritti propri e delle proprie idee

mente per dimostrare ai suoi seguaci, ai fautori dei diritti dell'uomo, intenzionati a battere la strada della cosiddetta lotta democratica per il potere, per dimostrare a se stesso ed a loro che, quando democrazia è lotta per il potere, non si affermeranno mai i diritti fondamentali degli uomini, si avrà sempre e soltanto la vittoria del più forte: il potere al più forte; il quale se oppressore, diverrà ancor più oppressore; se oppresso, si farà da oppresso oppressore, più nefasto del precedente, come la storia degli ultimi decenni dimostra senza possibilità di equivoci in ogni parte del mondo.

Allende non volle farsi oppressore in un gioco spietato in cui non esistono che oppressi e oppressori; questo è il suo dramma, questa la nostra responsabilità. Una morale, la sua, che denuncia al di là di ogni possibile ambigua interpretazione, la falsa democraticità di ogni potere, anche di quelli considerati « legittimi »: perché ogni potere sta alle regole del gioco democratico, che esso stesso ha creato, soltanto finché gli fa comodo starci; perché ogni potere, in quanto imposizione di minoranze su maggioranze o di maggioranze su

ri Salvador Allende: il diritto dell'uomo e delle sue libere comunità a disporre di sé in piena assoluta autonomia da qualunque potere.

E' probabile che Salvador Allende (trovandosi nell'occhio del ciclone, fiero oppositore degli estremisti di destra e del M.I.R. di sinistra, ma chiuso nella morsa degli stessi, capace solo di valutare gli odi reciproci e quelli contro di lui) abbia compreso tutto questo. E' probabile che abbia voluto, con la propria morte, dimostrare a quanti veramente credono al progresso dell'uomo, che altra è la strada da battere, altre le sfere di lotta, se si vuole uscire vittoriosi non in nome di questo o quel potere, di questa o quella classe — per quanto legittime ne siano le rivendicazioni — ma in nome dell'uomo, qualunque uomo e delle sue libere comunità di base. Appello alla ragione, dunque, mai alla forza come le sue ultime parole esplicitamente confermano, come dimostra il suo rifiuto di « armare il popolo » cioè che, oltre a causare inutili massacri, avrebbe compromesso la legittimità delle richieste del popolo cileno stesso che esce oggi



uomini; è la fedeltà a tutti gli uomini (persino agli avversari, la cui presunta lealtà si impose giustamente di rispettare fino in fondo) e con ciò la più vera fedeltà a se stessi.

Salvador Allende, con la propria morte si è voluto volontariamente erigere a pilastro sulla strada del progresso dell'uomo; pilastro sul quale e attorno al quale invano schiumeggia ora la fiumana fangosa e fetida degli interessi conservatori di qualunque natura: di casta, di proprietà, di partito, cioè di potere e violenza.

Su quel pilastro, sugli altri eretti da coloro che, come lui

## Resistenza contro violenza

*Perché i sacrifici dei resistenti di tutto il mondo non siano perduti - Il coraggio di intraprendere una strada da inventare.*

In alcuni momenti, come gli attuali, può sembrare che il cammino degli uomini verso la propria liberazione si arresti o retroceda.

Ma non è così. Sono i Solgenitsin, i Sakharov e i combattenti cileni che lo dimostrano con il loro coraggio, con i loro sacrifici.

E non sono i soli: assieme a loro ve ne sono tanti altri, alcuni noti, altri che rimarranno sconosciuti, che nei loro e negli altri paesi si battono per la stessa finalità.

Sono i « RESISTENTI » di ieri, di oggi, che mostrano che tra la massa del genere umano vi è vitalità.

Sono i resistenti a far sentir vivi anche noi.

Resistenti, perché? Perché sono uomini e come tali vogliono e devono vivere. Rifiutano di essere considerati e usati come strumenti e mezzi di produzione nella loro attività fisica e intellettuale.

Manifestano senza cedimenti e senza interruzioni i propri diritti e li difendono con tenacia e sacrificio pur se sottoposti alla rappresaglia di crimini e nefandezze.

Resistenti, a chi? Alle classi al potere, a tutti coloro che li detengono in schiavitù, in soggezione.

Le condizioni e le dimensioni della schiavitù nelle quali sono tenuti non sono funzione della maggiore o minore brutalità di chi esercita la soggezione. La condizione e la dimensione sono sempre quelle, massime, che il momento storico, i rapporti internazionali, la situazione interna permettono alla classe al potere di esercitare.

Resistenti, come? Ognuno come può e come sa e sempre con un coraggio, con una abnegazione, una fermezza, una continuità che mo-



salvaguardando anzitutto i diritti degli altri; ma era anche il ragionamento di chi — in ciò sbagliando — spera che la rivendicazione dei diritti dell'uomo, e l'affermazione delle basi popolari, delle autonome comunità degli individui stessi, possano sortire da un gioco di poteri, essere inserite in un gioco di poteri, attribuendo ad essi (gerarchie conservatrici di destra e di sinistra, partiti e gruppi politici centralizzati ed autoritari costituiti in difesa di mafiosi interessi di classe) valori di vera democrazia di fondo che questi certamente non avevano; perché *qualunque potere* di destra, di sinistra o di centro si costituisce ed esiste in funzione della difesa di interessi mafiosi di classe e di gruppi.

Illusione? Non fu un'illusione. O, quanto meno, se illusione vi fu, essa fu limitata alla speranza che determinate categorie popolari ed operaie, dopo decenni di un tipo fuorviante di lotta di classe — mirante *solo* ad un miglioramento delle condizioni economiche ed alla conquista del potere a questo fine — potessero e volessero lottare in favore della emancipazione di tutta una comunità, anziché accettare qualunque compromesso (da chiunque proposto, anche dalle forze più reazionarie) che salvaguardasse loro i benefici acquistati e ne garantisse altri. Lo provano, solo per citare uno dei tanti esempi, i 75 giorni di scioperi consecutivi dei minatori contro Allende, il 40 per cento di assenze usuali « per malattia » degli stessi minatori nelle giornate di lunedì, con il danno al successivo rendimento settimanale, ben facilmente intuibile da chiunque abbia anche solo una superficiale conoscenza di gestione mineraria. E ciò nonostante le reiterate raccomandazioni di Allende per un aumento della produzione: unico possibile sistema per salvare la costosissima emancipazione del sottoproletario cileno e la sua trasformazione in comunità autonoma di uomini, ciò a cui il presidente aveva dedicato tutta la sua vita.

Conoscendo Allende, si può facilmente arguire che l'uomo sapeva quel che faceva, conosceva i rischi che correva.

Perché l'ha fatto? Probabil-

mente per le sue minoranze (NON VI E' DIFFERENZA, SE NON CONVENZIONALE, FRA QUESTE DUE SITUAZIONI) è illegittimo, né valgono ad avallarne la pretesa « democraticità » questioni di trascendenza dogmatica, quali la origine divina (lotta per il potere religioso: religione di stato), il diritto delle nazioni (lotte nazionalistiche: affermazione della nazione) il diritto di classe (lotta di classe: dittatura del proletariato) o il semplice diritto di maggioranza (lotta per la maggioranza: potere alla maggioranza) tutti aspetti nefasti del medesimo volto nefasto del potere: antinomia assoluta ed inconciliabile con l'unico valore valido per cui solo val la pena di battersi, per cui si batté e mo-

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## Federalismo e lotta di classe

### Autogestione: le esperienze della LIP e della FEDA

Il tema dell'autogestione operaia è stato trattato più d'una volta dalle colonne di questo giornale, come espressione concreta del metodo federalista applicato alla produzione (« Lotta Federalista » n. 1-2 1971).

Già allora avemmo modo di sottolineare come sia estremamente difficile inquadrare in una precisa categoria teorica quella che potrebbe essere definita una intuizione sulla realtà del lavoro, concepita e attuata dagli stessi lavoratori.

Oggi, dopo la profonda revisione critica a cui la mutata natura della conflittualità operaia ha costretto tutta la sinistra italiana ed europea, il dibattito sull'autogestione ci appare come un tentativo necessario per superare l'impatto attraverso la proposta di un modello alternativo, in cui l'esigenza unitaria ed organizzativa della lotta di classe sia mediata con l'obiettivo imprescindibile della partecipazione democratica al processo produttivo.

Allo stato attuale della discus-

sione, tuttavia, ci sembra che regni ancora molta incertezza su alcuni termini fondamentali del problema: il ruolo della proprietà, privata e pubblica; i rapporti tra strutture produttive autogestite e strutture sociali in cui, verosimilmente, l'influenza di organismi centralizzati (primo fra tutti lo Stato) sarà ancora per molto tempo determinante; le possibilità e i modi di sopravvivenza di un apparato produttivo autogestito in un contesto internazionale neocapitalistico, ecc.

Queste considerazioni possono forse contribuire a spiegare perché si siano avuti giudizi così contrastanti sulle esperienze della LIP e della FEDA, che hanno riproposto recentemente in termini reali e pressanti il tema dell'autogestione. Malgrado tali divergenze riteniamo intatta la validità di queste esperienze e la loro importanza per l'affermazione dei principi federalisti.

Riconosciamo che, nei due casi, la conduzione diretta della produzione da parte dei lavorato-

ri è stata prevalentemente simbolica, limitandosi alle fasi finali della lavorazione e alla vendita del prodotto. Tuttavia — e qui è il punto — sia a Besançon che a Cinisello le maestranze hanno rivendicato la priorità del diritto al lavoro e all'autodeterminazione sui diritti della proprietà, con un'azione dichiaratamente eterodossa rispetto ai classici dettami sindacali e apertamente contraria a schemi politici e legislativi ritenuti desueti.

Ciò che conta, pertanto, è che attorno ad un'azione di questo tipo si è mobilitato uno schieramento massiccio delle forze di sinistra, a cui l'opinione pubblica ha fatto eco con un'approvazione indiscriminata. Questo dimostra fino a che punto gli argomenti da sempre sostenuti da « Lotta Federalista » e considerati onirici fino a poco tempo fa, sono entrati a far parte della coscienza collettiva e che peso essi potranno avere nella costruzione di un progresso civile democratico.

G.L.d.B.

(Segue a pag. 2)

pro quanto e inimita la loro vitalità.



L'operato dei resistenti è un patrimonio di tutto il genere umano e non del singolo paese nel quale essi vivono. Una loro sconfitta o vittoria ci appartiene e ci riguarda tutti in prima persona. Le lotte dei resistenti hanno un valore internazionale poiché sono tutte battaglie che fanno parte di una più ampia lotta per la liberazione globale del genere umano da ogni forma di angheria, sopra, potere. Sono battaglie e lotte che generano vincoli di fratellanza e di solidarietà fra tutti gli sfruttati e gli emarginati.

Ogni battaglia ha un suo immediato avversario da abbattere, una sua meta immediata da raggiungere, diversi di volta in volta secondo le condizioni storiche nelle quali viene ingaggiata.

Ovviamente i resistenti cileni e i resistenti russi operano in due contesti diversi e la loro lotta ha obiettivi immediati diversi: gli uni lottano per la propria sopravvivenza e per ristabilire le proprie istituzioni legittime, gli altri lottano non per sovvertire le proprie legittime istituzioni ma perché nelle stesse venga ristabilita la libertà che era a fondamento dei Soviet. Obiettivi diversi ma finalità identiche nell'affermazione dei diritti dell'uomo.

Nessuna correlazione vi è invece tra i loro avversari. Tra la classe usurpatrice cilena e la burocrazia politica sovietica vi è, tra le tante, una differenza sostanziale: una sfrutta un popolo a proprio esclusivo beneficio, l'altra ha affossato e tradito la affermazione dei primi Soviet, amministrando il patrimonio di tutte le forze produttive — di proprietà dello Stato e non più di una classe — secondo direttive e fini ormai estranei agli interessi dei lavoratori di tutto il mondo, compresi quelli russi.



Infine una riflessione che nasce da una panoramica globale dei vari movimenti di resistenza e che non ha un preciso riferimento a quelli presi in esame. E cioè: quasi tutti i movimenti di resistenza tendono alla presa del potere. L'esperienza, dove tale evento si è verificato, ci mostra che i nuovi « governanti » non sfuggono, prima o poi, o all'insuccesso (se mantengono fede alle istanze per le quali hanno lottato) o alla necessità, per sopravvivere, di creare o potenziare organismi quali la burocrazia, l'esercito, la censura, la polizia, la galera, (e ciò per le loro singole, oggettive condizioni: interne — reazione delle classi soccombenti, difficoltà economiche per tamponare e riorganizzare la pesante situazione ereditata, diverse impostazioni tra i gruppi al potere, deviazionismo etc. — e soprattutto internazionali — reazione violenta, in tutte le forme, del blocco avverso, difficoltà che la nuova situazione crea con gli interessi degli altri stati, opportunità di alleanze contrarie agli interessi internazionali dei lavoratori, legame e ingerenza non disinteressata del blocco alleato, etc. —).

Nel giro di pochi lustri o decenni la metamorfosi si attua: da progressisti ad affossatori delle libertà, da uomini vitali a burocrati di bassa lega, da resistenti ad oppressori.

Se questa dinamica è vera, non « serve », per la liberazione del genere umano, prendere il potere: vengono variati i rapporti economici e politici tra classi, capitale e stato ma viene mantenuta al collo degli uomini la catena, forse un pò più lunga ma certo non meno rigida.

M. MARIANI

(Segue a pag. 2)

A. ME.



# FEMMINISMO E RIVOLUZIONE

A seguito dell'articolo di Mario Mariani, pubblicato nel numero precedente, « Liberate la donna per liberare la società », Annette Zillich, nostra collaboratrice, ha raccolto l'invito ad affrontare su queste colonne il problema, inviandoci l'articolo che segue.

Caro Mario,

da femminista, ti ringrazio vivamente per l'attenzione che hai voluto dedicare, sul giornale, al nostro movimento. Visto però che accenni a vari « gruppi e movimenti », pur non disconoscendo che tali gruppi esistono, devo precisare che il femminismo è uno solo e, se me lo consenti, entro brevemente nel merito.

Ci sono cose che si sottraggono a una definizione e una di queste sembra essere il femminismo. E' mancata finora una individuazione precisa del fenomeno. Inoltre, come sempre accompagnata alla confusione, si nota una certa aggressività da parte dei profani. Mi è capitato spesso di sentire sostenere, da persone non molto riflessive, che le femministe sono delle pazze scatenate, isteriche, se non addirittura ossesse. Una specie di Menadi, insomma. Il paragone è davvero affascinante. Chi sa che le Menadi non fossero le donne esasperate, le femministe dell'antichità? Non fa meraviglia che i poveri uomini siano spaventati e ci guardino con un misto di curiosità e, perché no, di ribrezzo. Ma noi non vogliamo dare questa impressione, non vogliamo fare paura, perché la paura è l'elemento su cui gioca il potere, anzi vogliamo abolirlo, in tutte le sue forme, per fare nascere una società veramente di eguali.

Verrà il momento in cui anche gli uomini riconosceranno che il femminismo è anzitutto un fatto politico di portata generale, gestito in prima persona dalle donne, ma esteso a tutta la società. Come la lotta di classe, il femminismo si considera protagonista della storia e indissolubilmente lega la propria affermazione storica all'esigenza di cambiamenti radicali.

E' necessario chiarire che il femminismo è rivoluzionario e non può essere che tale. Come

antitesi di qualsiasi definizione, come rifiuto di qualsiasi punto fermo imposto dall'esterno, esso non può infatti essere riformista. Inoltre, nei confronti del processo rivoluzionario globale, esso è componente, perché prospetta e esige una serie di obiettivi primari, ma è anche, trascendendo apparentemente la propria origine, obiettivo finale fondamentale. Le donne non sanno (come non lo può sapere nessuno) e non vogliono predire quale sarà la società futura che uscirà dalla rivoluzione, finché non sarà attuata la totale eliminazione dei rapporti di potere. Nel modello logico dominante, che è fondato sulla divisione dei ruoli e sul concetto di proprietà, le donne identificano il principale responsabile della propria oppressione e quindi della struttura complessiva della società ivi connessa.

Ben venga, certamente, il confronto col capitalismo insieme agli uomini, ben venga anche lo apporto dei federalisti, purché, sia chiaro, su un'identità di obiettivi. Ma sta di fatto che tutte le volte che le donne si sono scontrate con il capitale, lo hanno fatto per obiettivi prettamente maschili e il contrario non si è mai verificato finora. Quando mai si sono viste masse di uomini scendere in piazza per la libertà di aborto? Il primo oppressore della donna, non c'è dubbio, è sempre l'uomo, che non soltanto trasmette su di lei lo sfruttamento capitalistico, ma esercita un'oppressione ancestrale, un diritto di prelazione, legato, com'è stato analizzato, all'istituzione della proprietà. Questo è un fatto politico. Devo perciò dissentire, nella maniera più rigorosa sia sul fatto che una società più giusta possa essere costituita sulla base di un nuovo rapporto familiare, sia che i gruppi femministi si battano per il rinnovamento di tale rapporto. Se così facessero, i gruppi femministi non elaborerebbero che un più

raffinato strumento di annichilimento delle donne.

Non esiste che una sola famiglia, indissolubile e patriarcale, che serve da cinghia di trasmissione, usufruendo delle stesse donne, dei valori mediati dal potere costituito, nonché da luogo di produzione e di manutenzione di forza lavoro per il capitale. Volendo essere lapidari, si può dire che la famiglia è il migliore strumento escogitato non solo dal nostro sistema, ma da tutti i sistemi, per « oggettificare » le persone. Neppure quando il rapporto sarà liberato dall'asservimento al capitale, e l'uomo e la donna saranno egualmente responsabili, uniti nella costruzione della futura società socialista, tale rapporto potrà essere considerato meno che transitorio, funzionale e quindi vincolato da leggi se non scritte, almeno formali. L'esistenza della famiglia risponde a esigenze esclusivamente politiche e, come tale, è sempre stata considerata da tutti i regimi.

Tutto ciò che ha a che vedere con la donna è politico in modo eminente. Per rivendicare questo fatto, le femministe hanno rielaborato il concetto di *casta* rispetto a quello di classe. Il concetto di *casta*, presumendo la *parità di condizione di tutte le donne tra loro*, vuole far emergere quello *specifico femminile* che, ergendosi contro le istituzioni, è già di per sé carico di elementi rivoluzionari. Cessa così di esistere la distinzione puramente funzionale tra pubblico e privato che ha emarginato la donna sin dall'inizio della storia.

Gestendo in proprio la lotta, le donne ridefiniranno, all'interno della *casta*, la classe, scoprendo, come i negri d'America a cui non a torto si accumulano, nuove e più incisive forme di lotta di classe operaia.

Certo, la battaglia sarà lunga. Si tratta nientemeno che di svegliare alla propria condizione metà dell'umanità, restituendole dignità di essere politico. Nella stessa classe media, da cui provengono per il momento le punte più avanzate del femminismo rivoluzionario, il risveglio alla coscienza della propria condizione significa anzitutto sottrarsi ad un comodo stato di servitù dorata che è il compenso offerto dall'uomo alla rinuncia alla competizione. Le donne sono costrette a vivere fin dall'infanzia in un tale stato di privazione della responsabilità che davvero la propria vita può paragonarsi a quella di un popolo sotto un regime fascista. E' nel profondo di questa consapevolezza, nel rifiuto di essere ulteriormente complici nel trasmettere quei « valori » che conducono l'umanità alla schiavitù, che il femminismo elabora la propria dinamica rivoluzionaria. Rovesciando una frase ben nota, le donne infatti dicono: senza liberazione della donna non può esservi rivoluzione.

Grazie dell'ospitalità. ANNETTE

**L'autonomia politica di Lotta Federalista esige una partecipazione diretta e responsabile dei suoi lettori. Solo il numero degli abbonamenti potrà aumentare proporzionalmente diffusione e periodicità del giornale, e garantire una sempre più vasta piattaforma politica al nostro impegno federalista.**

La logica del potere

GUERRA ARABO - ISRAELIANA

## RESISTENZA CONTRO VIOLENZA

(Segue da pag. 1)

E allora quale altra soluzione?

Nessuna pretesa di svelare la strada, ma solo un'indicazione che poi non è nuova: valorizzare l'uomo, non un metodo, una teoria, un sistema.

Condurre lotte e battaglie seguendo questa discriminante — molte lotte e battaglie coincideranno con le attuali, altre dovranno essere inventate — ma soprattutto rifiutare di produrre per i bi o tripolarismi e i loro gregari contro gli interessi di tutti i lavoratori e gli sfruttati di tutto il mondo.

Se non daremo una inversione di tendenza al sistema tra non molto, sempre a mio avviso, il genere umano sarà distinto in resistenti, alienati e vegetanti, oltre ai « soliti sfruttatori » che continueranno con le solite ragioni di blocco, di stato, di classe, di *casta*, di pace sociale, sindacale, religiosa, ideologica ad orchestrare il tutto.

Se l'uomo non scoprirà un nuovo modo di essere « felice » nel lavoro, nella vita associata, in tutte le sue azioni, se non stabilirà, con se stesso e con gli altri, rapporti autentici, non riusciremo a sbarazzarci dei soliti « padroni del vapore » vecchi o nuovi.

Se con la presa del potere non si riesce a raggiungere tale fine è necessario escogitare qualcosa di nuovo, avere il coraggio di affrontare l'UTOPIA.

Durante la contestazione del '68 su un muro di Nanterre c'era scritto: « mancanza di immaginazione significa non immaginare ciò che manca ».

## SALVADOR ALLENDE

(Segue da pag. 1)

ti a vedere ancora una volta questa moralmente miserabile società di potere e di privilegi apparentemente trionfante, a noi spetta ora il dovere di non cedere alla tentazione del pessimismo, di voler rimanere ottimisti, pur nella tragedia. Solo così, infatti, si può costruire: con la fi-

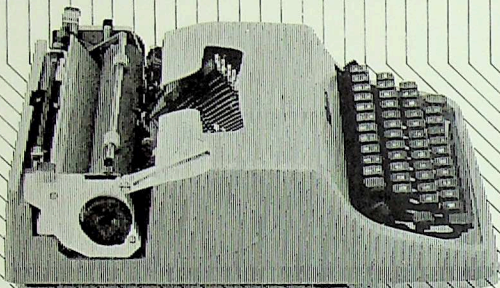
ducia nella nostra costruzione futura. Perché questa sorgerà su fondamentazioni capaci di sopportare qualsiasi peso, cementate, fra l'altro, dall'esempio di un uomo che ha accettato e cercato la propria morte per denunciare il vero volto della società nella quale siamo tutti inseriti, ed il rifiuto assoluto che è indispensabile farne.

Salvador Allende indica oggi con chiarezza assoluta una strada, l'unica strada da seguire: ecco il vero profondo significato della sua vita e della sua morte: coscienza, autonomia, volontaria testimonianza di una verità amara ma allo stesso tempo di esaltante conforto per noi: Salvador Allende è morto. Viva Salvador Allende!

**Il comitato di direzione e tutti gli amici di « Lotta Federalista » desiderano**



Non solo una portatile ma una completa macchina per scrivere.



## Olivetti Lettera 32

La Lettera 32 è veramente completa; ha tutte le prestazioni delle macchine di classe superiore: frizione, interlinea a 4 posizioni, regolatore del tocco a 3 posizioni, incolonnatore di parole e cifre, liberamargine e capoverso automatico, passo e mezzo passo nastro bicolore.

Carattere Pica o carattere Eletto.

Elegante valigetta per custodirla e trasportarla.

**olivetti**

Ancora una volta e ancora una volta «realista» dei poteri e degli interessi ha trascinato alla guerra ed al massacro reciproco le popolazioni arabe ed israeliana.

Ancora una volta sui cadaveri di migliaia e migliaia di innocenti soldati — eccitati gli uni contro gli altri, come galli da combattimento per mezzo di droghe gradualmente inoculate a cura di poteri e interessi di Stato, economici o fanatico-religiosi — si scatena la faida degli stessi interessi.

Tutti gli sciacalli delle mafie borghesi dell'Ovest o delle mafie statali dell'Est stanno ingrassando a spese degli uomini mandati a sterminarsi sulle colline di Golan e sul deserto del Sinai.

I poteri dell'Est esultano sul successo della campagna di riarmamento ed imbestialimento nazionalistico dei popoli egiziano e siriano e sul «valore» politico di tale successo. I poteri dello Ovest centellinano gli aiuti agli israeliani, nel macchiavellico tentativo di non perdere quella grossa «testa di ponte» economica in Medio Oriente, senza al contempo offendere i grassi potentati arabi fornitori del petrolio, chiave del benessere borghese dell'Occidente.

Fornitori di armi di ogni categoria lavorano e guadagnano a tutto spiano, troppi giornalisti infine impazzano e imperversano esultanti, accumulando succulenti articoli che ne garantiscono la brillante carriera ed il successo delle agenzie di appartenenza, speculando sul desiderio della borghesia occidentale di eccitanti diversivi a spese altrui.

Nel Sinai, su Golan, restano gli uomini morti, fatti a pezzi nei loro aerei, bruciati nei loro carri, dilaniati da ogni più moderno elettronico strumento di strage, collaudato da altri a prezzo della loro vita.

Sono la testimonianza più inequivocabile della validità del principio di lotta anarchica — o federalista integrale — che vuole il rovesciamento del concetto di politica come si era finora inteso e come alcuni pseudo-federalisti ancora l'intendono. Non si tratta più infatti di conquistare il potere, né di federare gli sta-

sa dell'uomo mentre da sempre agisce in difesa dei soli interessi che l'hanno costituito, a spese della vita di milioni di uomini.

Occorre mettere finalmente in pratica, in termini organizzativi sociali e politici, gli ammaestramenti che un lontano profeta, senza nazione e senza patria, duemila anni fa andava diffondendo tra questi stessi deserti dove oggi infuria più tragica la tracotanza dei poteri e più perversa la loro volontà di sterminio in favore di gruppi privilegiati:

«Voi sapete che quelli che sono reputati principi delle nazioni, le signoreggiano; e che i loro grandi esercitano il potere sovr'esse. Ma non è così fra voi; anzi, chiunque vorrà essere grande da voi, sia vostro servitore; e chiunque tra voi vorrà essere primo sia servo di tutti; perché anche il Figliuolo dell'uomo non è venuto per essere servito ma per servire e per dare la vita sua come prezzo di riscatto per molti».

FEDERALIST

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la loro più comossa partecipazione alla scomparsa di Vittorio MAZZOCCHI, padre di Annamaria, nostra stimata collaboratrice e segretaria redazionale.

«Lotta Federalista», per garantire in modo assoluto la propria indipendenza politica e finanziaria e la propria caratteristica di voce di base, s'è data una nuova organizzazione che comprende il gruppo dei «promotori» del giornale ed un Comitato di Direzione.

I promotori, che non sono iscritti ad alcun partito politico nazionale, curano l'autofinanziamento del giornale e ne garantiscono e fanno rispettare l'assoluta indipendenza da qualunque partito o ideologia nazionale.

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"Within the women's movement, therefore, we reject both class struggle as subordinate to feminism and feminism as subordinate to class struggle. Class struggle and feminism are for us one and the same thing, feminism expressing the rebellion of that section of the class without whom the class struggle cannot be generalised, broadened and deepened."

from the Statement of the International Feminist Collective

### Introduction

The draft of this report was shown to a few women for their comments, and one or two, though they agreed with much of it, were against its circulation. They felt that there was some bitterness at the conference which was better left alone than stirred to life. Also that to present so controversial a view of the conference might be seen as sectarian.

That there was bitterness at the conference the report attempts to account for politically. But we had other reasons for acting against the advice of our readers in circulating the report.

First, it has not been the habit of the women's movement to sweep feelings under the carpet.

Second, many women in the movement, we among them, have complained strongly from time to time that women who are neither liberals nor members of the male left have to shut their mouths for the sake of avoiding controversy, for the sake of "sisterhood" as it is not uncommonly defined. The price of our peace is being subjected to a politics which we had hoped to escape by leaving the male left. We feel the conference liberated us from this restraint and that sisterhood, like charity, begins at home.

Third, we as a movement are in the habit of shying away from articulating political controversy, especially with those we love, women or men. But if we are unable even within the movement and among those closest to us to articulate firm political positions, then we are not prepared for the new situation in Britain. This situation demands more than articulation of political controversy in words.

Increasingly the State in Britain is more repressive, the class confrontations bolder and vaster. If we are unable to discover and invent a political practice which is both effective against the State and feminist, we can become politically irrelevant, even helpful to that State, and drive women back into the arms of the male left. This is what is happening to some degree in the United States where a massive movement could not find an autonomous mode of thought and action which was anti-capitalist and anti-sexist as one totality.

We wrote the report to help that process of discovery and invention, and for another closely connected reason. That reason is this: we, as a movement, do not take ourselves seriously enough. In London on November 3-5, two thousand people from Britain and a number of other countries, not only European, gathered to discuss the condition of women and, as women, what we could do about it that nobody else could, that nobody else had ever been able or wanted to. That is a major political event. The report tries to give a context to that event and to describe it as a moment in the process of our development as women and as a movement.

The point of view is one which sees women and their movement as objectively part of the class struggle, and which is trying subjectively to ensure that the line between women "in" the movement and "out" of it, from the most to the least powerful among us, is continuous and unbroken - a lifeline.



If it were a report for the Guardian, it would be a different report. The Red Mole published a different kind of report too (even though the conference had decided that no report should appear except within the movement). It was written by two women of the male left and therefore suffered from the limitations of its source, limitations which this report will try to define and illustrate.

Which brings us to our final point. Perhaps the reader will be surprised that we have spent so much time discussing the left. We are working in a long tradition. Of disentangling our struggle as women from the meshes of the left. Remember Beverly Jones' response to the SDS in 1967, "large Piercy's "grand coolie dam" of 1969, and Robin Morgan's goodbye to the "counter-left, the counterfeit left" in 1970. Many of us have hoped that not too many more statements of that sort would have to be made. But for this conference the Radical Feminists wrote: "Absent physically / the left / remain directors with their female representatives" and "they have made the Women's Movement, to a large extent, a branch of the male left". The difference between the Radical Feminists and us is that we take that charge seriously enough to try to wrest the movement from the left's hands.

It must have struck others besides ourselves that at the conference the organisations of "the left" could not be distinguished one from the other. To conclude that they are all sexist merely is to state a truth to hide a bigger truth. Of course they are sexist. At present, every organisation in which both men and women work together must be dominated by men. This is why we don't allow men in our movement, and we have never heard another reason given. But the question is: are they against what we are against? The Black left is. And the white left?

We are in a tradition in a profounder sense. As the revolution advances, the enemies of the class seem to be buried deeper and deeper within it. The cooption of the Social Democracy, an organisation built step by step by class action, announced itself in 1914 when it supported the war. The sixty years since 1914 have seen many other organs and institutions created by the class coopted, and other hands will trace how even shop stewards now play, at best, an ambiguous role in the struggle.

To see the left today as being "on the other side" - however fine individuals among them, especially but not only working class women - to see it as being not only against us but not against what should be our common enemies, this too is part of a tradition. When we speak so much of women in left organisations it is because we are deeply concerned about the cooption of our movement, about the mediation they can offer to our enemies.

One specific and obvious example is the Communist Party, whose international record on "the woman question" (as on every question) does not bear examining. The power of our movement gives CP women the courage to fight the men in their organisation on this question. They will succeed in making the party adjust its line on women, the better to influence our movement and gain more women members. ("Grandma, what big teeth you have!" "The better to eat you with, my dear.")

So it is that a struggle for power between women and men brought about by our movement's autonomy becomes a means, ironically, of creating a greater threat to our autonomy. But there we see a clear example of a tradition of cooption and attack on cooption that describes the condition of our life, of our movement, of our struggle.

We hope that sisters will consider the report. We hope too that when they are involved in action, they will not put that action aside to discuss the report. (One reason why this report is so late is that we have been involved in actions.) We hope some people will be very angry. But we hope others will find it, angry or not, useful in sorting out their own politics and taking them seriously enough to organise to



fight like hell for them. The last sentence of this report is meant to point to a new beginning which, owing to historical circumstances to some degree peculiar to Britain, it has devolved on our movement to spearhead.

### The Background

No single mass event provided a general background for the London National Conference of Women's Liberation in 1972, as had for the national conference in Manchester the previous spring. The Manchester conference had reflected the high level of struggle that the mining community had reached in its strike, when it succeeded in ignoring a threat by the State to remove its livelihood. The militant actions of this community opened the way for a freer and wider expression of revolt in all sections of the exploited population. It opened up possibilities of struggle. The mining strike was directly responsible for the pamphlet introduced at Manchester, Women, the Unions and Work, or what is not to be done, which, all agree, has changed the character of discussion and actions in the women's movement. The excitement it generated in Manchester was due to a new appreciation of the importance and power of women's struggles and of their centrality in the class struggle.

After the mining community, the dockers took on the State, and the long campaign waged by the Night Cleaners of London, mostly women, burst into a strike. The threat of violence posed by 10,000 workers converging on the Saltley coal depot to support the mining community became actual violence during the strike of the dockers. The reaction to this growing violence was repression on the part of the State; and on the part of the unions and, to a certain extent, the left it was disavowal. The unions discouraged, denied, and where they could not deny, condemned the violent acts of their members in defence of their struggle. The State had already rounded up eight people in the Stoke Newington area of London to use as scapegoats and warnings to working class militancy. The established left gave the Stoke Newington Eight virtually no support while it condemned in its press "violence and terrorism". The trial of the Eight, which included four women, was going on at the time of the London conference. All of these factors, within the context of high unemployment with inflation, confronted the continuing struggle of the class. All these were operating on our minds at the London conference whether we articulated them or not.

We did not leave the Fourth National Conference with the same unmixed enthusiasm we felt on the way back from Manchester, even if it was a demonstration of our growing forces (1500 to 2000 women were present), even if the crèche run by men and the social without men proved again to be great successes. This conference was more oriented towards action and mass organisation, which meant also it was more than any previous conference an arena for theoretical debate on the politics of the movement. After years of ideological drift, a recognition of the need for theoretical clarity in the movement bespeaks a new stage of its development. On the brink of new and different struggles, women wanted naturally a firmly based perspective.

The two possibilities were: to discuss a political perspective beginning with women's struggle and our movement in particular; or beginning outside of the movement and incorporating ourselves into an already worked-out male-oriented perspective. To do the former is the most difficult task a movement of women can set itself; it is to posit its own power and its own revolutionary perspective against all the male-dominated groups with dozens if not hundreds of years of history behind them. In terms of this conference we failed. Which is to say that the conference became an arena dominated by the ideology of the organised left.

Since Manchester, the Women's Liberation Movement has seen its potential go beyond the specific struggles for free abortion and contraception. The six demands published in Women, the Unions and Work have been the impetus for the political heightening of the women's movement, but also, because the "general struggle" was under the hegemony of the organised



left, which had already established its "revolutionary" strategy, the demands aroused violent reaction from them - CP? Maoist or Trotskyist.

Since the six demands presented at Manchester were so much discussed, they deserve full quotation here.

1. WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO WORK LESS. A shorter work week for all. Why should anybody work more than 20 hours a week? Housewives are hesitant to ask men after a week of at least 40 grinding hours to see after their own children and their own underwear. Yet women do just that, for themselves and for men. When women are threatened with redundancies, the struggle must be for a shorter work week. (Maybe men will take our lead for a change.)
2. WE DEMAND A GUARANTEED INCOME FOR WOMEN AND FOR MEN? WORKING OR NOT WORKING? MARRIED OR NOT. If we raise kids, we have a right to a living wage. The ruling class has glorified motherhood only when there is a pay packet to support it. We work for the capitalist class. Let them pay us, or else we can go to the factories and put our children in their fathers' laps. Let's see if they can make Ford cars and change nappies at the same time. WE DEMAND WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK. All housekeepers are entitled to wages (men too).
3. It is in this context that WE DEMAND CONTROL OF OUR BODIES. If even birth control were free, would that be control? And if we could have free abortions on demand, is that control? What about the children we want and cannot afford? We are forced to demand abortion and sterilisation as we have been forced to demand jobs. Give us money and give us time, and we'll be in a better position to control our bodies, our minds and our relationships. Free birth control, free abortion for whoever wants them (including our sisters from abroad who are denied this right - sisterhood is international). WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN.

But childbearing is not the only function of our bodies that capital controls. At work we make them do what they don't want to do: repeated jerks on an assembly line, constant sitting or standing, breathing fumes and dirt. Work is often painful and dangerous. It is always uncomfortable and tiring. After work your body is too numb for you to feel it as something you can enjoy. For this reason it cannot develop sexually. Our physical feeling is further destroyed by the limited kinds of sexuality and the shallow relationships this society promotes, and by the scarcity of times and places where we can make love. Our bodies become a tool for production and reproduction and nothing else.

4. WE DEMAND EQUAL PAY FOR ALL. There is a rate for girls and a rate for boys, and a rate for women and a rate for men, a rate for "skilled" and a rate for "unskilled" and a rate in the North and a rate in the South. Whoever works deserves a minimum wage, and that minimum must be the rate of the highest grade.
5. WE DEMAND AN END TO PRICE RISES, including tax, rent, food and clothing. There is a battle brewing on housing. As usual, with tenants' struggles, women are going to be at the heart; they are the ones who will refuse the rent collector when he knocks on the door in a rent strike. But our intervention can help guarantee that the women will lead it, instead of being confined to making the tea in the back of the hall while men make speeches in front.
6. WE DEMAND FREE COMMUNITY CONTROLLED NURSERIES AND CHILD CARE. We are entitled to a social existence without having to take another job out of our homes. Mothers too have a right to work less. Young children as well as women are imprisoned in their homes. But we don't want them to go to a State institution instead. Children, women and men must be able to learn from each other and break the ghetto existence to which they are each confined. We will then begin to destroy the State's authority over our children and our possession of them.



In the same way as children are to be wrested from the State, so old people and the mentally and physically ill must come back to the community's care. We need time and we need money to destroy the prisons in which our children, our grandparents and our sick people are confined.

\* \* \*

The earliest version of these demands was first discussed in one workshop at Manchester and revised there. When the discussion was reported in the full session, an even larger (300 women) second workshop on the demands resulted. In full session again the conference decided that the first day of the next conference should be devoted to the six demands. This spontaneous response came from women who on the whole had no experience in left organisations. Many of them were in the Claimants Union, whose demand for a guaranteed income and wages for housework had already organised women to confront the State. Or they were like the women of the "Tough and Tender Collective", whose response to the pamphlet is described in their booklet, A Plan for Action:

"The group of us writing have read the two pamphlets 'Women, the Unions and Work, or what is not to be done' by Selma James and 'Women and the Subversion of the Community' by Mariarosa Dalla Costa.\* For us the pamphlets started huge discussions and meetings and sorted out a lot of our ideas. It was a good opportunity for us to get together more. But still our ideas were too theoretical, too vague and woolly. The idea of this pamphlet is that we are trying to get an overall picture of the situation. Not only the condition of women in our society, but how this system controls all of us and what this means, and how we as women can fight it . . . Our emphasis is on Action and organisation. Having understood and agreed with Mariarosa's description of the housewife's fundamental role in capitalist society and taken Selma's point that we don't have to 'go to work' to be part of the working class and that Trade Unions are not and never can be the pivotal point of 'revolutionary consciousness', we now know what perhaps we have been leaning towards in the past two years: that we can and should be organised in the communities we live in, around the things which oppress us most, financially, emotionally, psychologically."

Women of the political organisations (CP, IS, I'G) were left behind by a movement which had gone beyond their ideological control. They had expected the women's movement to be subsidiary to the "general struggle", to be confined to "women's problems" such as contraception and abortion and in a purely ideological struggle against sexism. They were the first to ask for further discussion. Soon after Manchester they recovered from their surprise and prepared to do battle.

For the left the issue was singular. It was not any one demand which cut to the quick, but that we should be so presumptuous as to premise demands based on the movement's autonomy from them and from the unions. For if this were permitted, then they were out of a job: there was no need for them as vanguard parties, which represent the "generalisation of the struggle" and are the "political" counterpart of what the unions represented to the class "economically". This issue never clearly emerged at the conference. Yet by their presence in every discussion of the demands during the eight months between the conferences, by the literature they wrote for the London conference (or that men of their organisations wrote for them), by their attempt to isolate the demands from the movement by speaking of them as one individual's, they were able to control or at least sidetrack meetings before and during the conference and by attrition wear down the confident enthusiasm that Manchester had sparked. Such behaviour has always been characteristic

\* Published in The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community by Dalla Costa and James. Falling Wall Press, 79 Richmond Road, Bristol 6, England. 25p.+4p postage or \$1 post free.



of the "vanguard". At London they expected that a vote on the demands would be taken which would finally dispose of them. A large part of the literature of the conference must, we think, be read in this light.

### Conference Literature

The movement has always refused the initiative of actions offered by the organised left. Where the left dominates is in ideological debate, holding back action by insisting on theoretical discussion and thus preventing an autonomous move forward on a national and co-ordinated level. For that reason conferences like this one are not representative of local groups in Women's Liberation and their autonomous actions. The conference overflowed with publications full of theoretical debate. Access to publication is a power that women's sections of male-dominated groups derive from them. (The question of why women cling to men for power is much wider and has been continually discussed in the movement.) The Maoist women, because they refused to accept the feminist basis of the movement, had been expelled at Skegness (the second national conference) where they had brought men and where they had come in control of the then-existing Women's National Co-ordinating Committee. However, they were present at the London conference with a 50-page document ("A Reply to the Reactionary Selma James") and an open letter which they circulated proclaiming that they were not taking part and that they would not take part until the movement acknowledged the correctness of their political line. They also presented a resolution in the last session of the conference, but in speaking for it their spokeswoman gave her political identity away; the middle-class women there, she said, were concerned only with their "bloody orgasms". When its failure became obvious, they saved face by withdrawing the resolution.

The penetration of the left has not always been so blatant - or so inept. Other groups, though giving their first loyalty to male-dominated left organisations and participating in Women's Liberation on carefully defined and independent grounds, espouse the idea of an autonomous women's movement and at conferences or other large meetings act as part of it. Whatever differences they have, inherited from the political line of the male organisation, these groups (and we can include the Maoists here) have an essential similarity when it comes to the "woman question". Because their political line is essentially reformist, whatever the bombast of their rhetoric, the left women have found allies among liberal women, whose feminism finds expression in egalitarian sentiments or lobbying in Parliament Square, who have a distaste for revolutionary theory or struggle (but not for its rhetoric apparently), and some of whom consider themselves "apolitical". Although they are integral to Women's Liberation as women from the various male groups are not, together their liberalism forms a crust against the eruption of revolutionary ideas. In the literature of debate and in the workshop reports, you could hardly tell one from another in their basic approach. Whether they attacked the pamphlet for its "primary concern with sexism" or for its "primary concern with capitalism" (and they did both), their own views on women, on unions and on work were notably alike. Using the topics of their debate against the six demands, we can summarise their positions.

### The Demands as Demands

Both the Leicester statement which asserted that demands "distort" and an insiged Libertarian "Reply to Selma James" which rejected demands because they "restrict thought by tying it down to something too immediate and specific", chose to attack the six demands, which had been brought to the movement for discussion, without mention of the four demands that had been foisted on the movement earlier without any discussion and without any vote by the membership. (The four demands were for: equal pay, equal education and job opportunities, 24-hour nurseries, and free contraception and abortion on demand.) Or perhaps their sudden opposition to demands as such was a recognition of the newness of the six. In this they differed from the writers in Red Rag



who saw the first, second and fifth demand as new, but identified the third, fourth and sixth with the old four demands (as they wondered why the demand for equal education and job opportunities had been left out of the six). Equating three of the six with three of the four was quite wrong, of course, for the scope and content of the demands were different. For example, the demand for equal pay for women bears little resemblance to the demand for "equal pay for all". The latter attacks all disparate rates, for regions, skills and age as well as for sex, and in doing so attacks the objectification of human beings which is the heart of capitalist wage relations. But paradoxically most of those critics or "repliers" were too busy explicating Lenin to notice a detail of this sort. In the process they demonstrate that they knew nothing of the nature and use of demands, little if anything of actual struggle, and still less about the real conditions of most women. They were joined by a chorus from the left, who had been responsible for the four demands, who called the six demands "divisive" of the women's movement. (One recalls that this was the charge levelled at the whole women's movement - by men - at its beginning.) They were against the six demands. What they were for emerged as they stated their own positions on unions, work and wages.

### The Unions

On the subject of trade unions there was almost universal agreement among the repliers. Though nobody denies the record of the unions in regard to women especially, they conclude nevertheless that women must join trade unions to "democratise" them and to rid them of "sexism". Instead of seeing unions as a historical creation of the working class coopted, like the Labour Party, they see the unions as identical with it - from which one can only infer their low opinion of the class. For if trade unions are admittedly reformist and if they express the spontaneous aspirations of the class, then the class must be seen as fundamentally reformist. (Cf. Marx's statement that the working class is revolutionary or it is nothing.) For a woman to join a trade union means, of course, that she must join the ranks of waged labour, and for most women, at the lowest, most sweated rank. Obviously their opinion of women is even lower than their opinion of the rest of the class. For low as they say the class is in its "consciousness" of its revolutionary tasks, women can only learn and participate in this low consciousness through the trade unions. Indeed they speak frankly of the "backwardness" of housewives. A telling verbal exchange illuminated this attitude in one of the workshops on the six demands. In answer to a left woman who had been describing the backward attitudes of "ordinary housewives", a Black woman asked, "Who the hell is this ordinary woman? And what makes you so special?"

We must interject here that many women who opposed the pamphlet's analysis of unions, however, did so on an entirely different basis. Workers, male and female, continually take action against their unions, but only the ruling class seems to articulate this when they say with increasing frequency: the unions have lost control over their workers. However, those who traditionally attack unions attack from the right. To express the actions of the class by attacking in words what workers attack in action (and also in words if you are there to listen) is new in Britain, frightening - and vital.

### Work

The only people in Britain who are as worried as the capitalist class about workers' rejection of work are those dominated by the ideology of the organised left. This concern is demonstrated by the writers in Red Rag. Speaking about the absenteeism of women, Sheila Rowbotham wrote, "I don't see how we can stop the Tories (sic!) cheating us out of equal pay if we never turn up for work." Sue Cowley worries that work might be identified with capitalism (though she shows her opposition to the "work ethic" if not to work). Micheline Victor, in a condescending apology for the Unsupported Mothers for demanding wages for their work, relates their demand to the fact that they "don't have a job" and are forced to "choose between two forms of insecurity" (husband or State). Her



assumption, a very privileged one, is that a job equals security (and also, by the way, that men in "private" employment are not also working for the State). Caroli Mullen says that "the minimal pre-requisite for any degree of equality must be economic independence: the fact that a woman's job is in itself not liberating or is even quite awful, does not invalidate that point." The ease with which these women consign other women to double slavery, to "quite awful" jobs, is notable, whatever its rationale. The pamphlet of the IMG women tells us: "THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IS BASED ON ITS ECONOMIC POWER AS A RESULT OF ITS ROLE IN PRODUCTION" and "A LIVING WAGE TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO SELL THEIR LABOUR (sic!) WOULD CONTRADICT THE NATURE OF CAPITALISM." (With the last we completely agree, but then we thought contradicting the nature of capitalism was what the class struggle w-s all about.) Finally the "foists conclude in their list of charges, "Not only is /Selma James/ anti the unions, she is also anti-work." One can see that these planners of the future society would be hard taskmasters.

### Wages

For those who approach the ongoing struggles of the working class in terms of some blueprint for the future socialist society and who define demands under the categories of "transitional" or "ultimate", depending upon how closely they fit into the ideal plan, the concept of wages for housework is anathema. Immediately they see visions of a State where housework is paid for, where time-study men follow a woman around her kitchen to calculate on the boiling of an egg; the issue of Shrew from London's Arsenal group actually says this. They worry that housework wages would be unrealistically high, since the housewife works an 80 to 90-hour work week. To this vision they prefer the reality of unwaged housework, which is not, according to them, institutionalised. Indefatigably planning, they think in terms of "fair wages" and also of differentials, though they want no disparities by sex. This is the epitome of trade union consciousness and what the demand "equal pay for all" was designed to undermine.

Finally and most important of all, they do not see housewives as productive, that is, they do not see housework as work, as part of capitalist production. Housework is "not at the point of production", and therefore, in the capitals of IMG, "A CALL FOR REMARKING THIS WASTEFUL USE OF HUMAN LABOUR IS POSSIBLE ONLY IN THE IDEOLOGY OF PETTY BOURGEOIS SOCIALISM." Their more revolutionary demand (if they made it) would be for the abolition of housework and the institution of public canteens and nurseries. "Backward housewives" are not to be trusted with a wage (or even a demand for one), but capitalism can be trusted to create canteens where we can collectively eat shit and nurseries where Mrs. Thatcher, the Minister of Education, can imprison babies at an earlier age.

### The Workshops

The first day of the conference was organised in workshops. Sixteen workshops went on, some throughout the day, some beginning in the afternoon. Reports on them were given in plenary session at the end of the day, and it is from these reports that we have a general view of the workshops. Their division by subject is significant. Two workshops on old campaigns: anti-discrimination and abortion-contraception. Six which focussed on particular topics, interests and actions: sixism in textbooks, a literary anthology, women in media, women's studies, self-help therapy, a "guide for brides". The other eight workshops drew their impetus, openly or implicitly, voluntarily or unintentionally, from Women, the Unions and Work and the six demands. A few were organised to answer the pamphlet, a few to find an alternative revolutionary line. One which tried to ignore it found the discussion "abstract" and had to turn to the concreteness of the pamphlet. No attempt will be made here to describe each workshop, but several will be remarked on for their approach to the basic questions of the conference.

A workshop called "plan for action" discussed women's role in the tenant and rent struggles. And they saw the need for national conferences on particular issues affecting women, and called one on housing for Dec. 9-10.



A workshop organised by the Northeastern Paper (another "Reply") group proposed to work at developing an analysis, to engage in socialist education either in Women's Liberation or "other left groups". Another similar workshop aimed especially at "uneducated women" called itself "women's voice". They wish to start a magazine written in simple language and to "work around rent struggles and factories".

"Women and the State" workshop was organised on a statement almost identical with the report that came from the workshop. It held as foremost in importance the taking of "social wealth" by squatting and shonlifting, without mediation by unions as in factory struggles, but in direct confrontation with the police and the State. Struggles for wages, this workshop felt, are reformist because to use the medium of money does not undermine the basis of capitalism.

The workshop on "Capitalism and Sexism" found a similar contradiction in the demand of wages for housework. The question was asked, "how can we demand a wage for something we want to get rid of?" Sexism was divorced from women's wagelessness: "wages do not define a relation" (our italics). By this logic, of course, no wage labourer should take wages from capitalists unless it's her intention to remain a wage slave in a factory.

Two workshops (Plan for Action and Family Allowance) actually got to work on new campaigns, but the workshop on the six demands and actions flowing from them found itself hampered in following its subject by women from the left who insisted on a theoretical discussion. An attempt to split the large workshop into two groups, each of which could follow its own bent, failed because those who wanted to discuss actions were joined by those who wanted theoretical debate.

The reports from the workshops often seemed a single-voiced statement, too neat to reflect development within a workshop. Indeed some reports were almost identical with the statements which had proposed the workshops.

Thus the plenary session became on the whole a platform where political lines could be pushed - and unprecedentedly dull. But it reached a high point of tension suddenly when the microphone was snatched from Selma, as she spoke in sympathy with a feminist who had called the whole session a "male charade". She asked why we had not heard from the Claimants. After the mike was taken from her by one of the chairwomen of the day, there were shouts of "let her speak!" and a group of women at the side of the hall offered her another microphone. As she spoke she was interrupted once more, this time by a CP woman who grabbed the mike at the front of the hall and delivered a personal attack on her. The explosion had been building for the whole day, and it had historical echoes. No attempt (aside from Skegness) had ever been made before in the movement to prevent any woman from speaking, but the tactic of removing the microphone from a speaker is well known in left circles.

### Radical Feminism

At Manchester it had been decided to devote the morning of the second day of the next conference to a discussion of Radical Feminism. Although these workshops were not reported on in plenary session, the general impression was that they were a relief. Many of us thought that these workshops "saved" the conference because for the first and last time in the two days we spoke about women on the basis of our individual experiences as women. Some women in one workshop expressed their frustration after two years in the movement, saying, in effect, "we know only what we don't want; we don't want only consciousness-raising groups. We would like to organise on actions with other women, but not if that means, like yesterday, to depart from the reality of our female experience, from what we feel we want in our bodies and minds." The insistence on a feminist view was like coming home.

The Radical Feminists have always rejected male politics explicitly and they have given an analysis of the relations between left women and the



movement which, in our view, expresses their dilemma. In Thoughts on Feminism, a series of feminist essays presented at the conference, a woman writes:

"The fact that many women come to ML thro the male Left, that is, having been politicised first on issues of concern to men (i.e. class, homosexuality) and because they continue to identify with the Left, has made the Women's Movement, to a large extent, a branch of the male Left. While the men get on with the real revolution (concerning economics), the domestic side of the struggle (abortion, childcare) is left, traditionally, to the women. Progressive men have coopted revolutionary potential.

"The left, of course, understands that their male presence is not feasible in ML. Absent physically, they remain directors with their female representatives in the Movement reminding 'non-political' sisters of the bigger struggle outside, preventing women from concentrating too much on themselves."

Despite this strong statement characterising the functions of the left women, in practice the Radical Feminists accommodate themselves to the presence and politics of women whom they charge with being agents of men. There is a logic behind this accommodation. For it was the left women who first split the struggles against capitalism and against sexism. With their emphasis on the "general struggle" they demoted women's struggle to a subordinate, supportive role. It was the working class (white, male and over 30) who would make the "real revolution", and class was therefore the more central division of forces than sex. Capitalism was the "main enemy"; sexism was merely an ideology, a superstructure of the system. Many women rejected this political line; many rejected the "class analysis" on which it was based. Ignoring class and putting their emphasis on sex alone, the Radical Feminists have made an ideology based on anti-sexism. When they fail to defend the movement from attack by left women (as at the plenary the day before - though it was a Radical Feminist who called the plenary a "male charade"), they are expressing a political logic: the split of capitalism and sexism has given them a foundation for their rejection of class politics. And accepting that split, they, like the left, end up characterising the working class as male.

The Radical Feminists seem not to have a perspective of a mass movement - so far as their document allows us to generalise their attitude:

"If we really, sincerely want to change society and be rid of sexism, capitalism in all their subtle and not so subtle forms, we have got to change our living - which doesn't mean just spending hours talking about possessions of people/property, free love/sex, etc. - it means withdrawing from our male-oriented lives, living, trusting, working, playing, sexing, loving, hating WITH WOMEN - giving up all heterosexuality - really putting into practice what we've talked about for ages - SISTERHOOD."

Though such a perspective envisages fundamental changes in individual lives, they are no substitute for a political perspective. Nor can they have impact on the development of the movement in its present attempt to relate to other women through action, organisation and through writing about women. Where they could be of help to women in individual struggles against men, in schools, in the kitchen, in the bedroom, the Radical Feminists' effect is limited. For their only answer to the problems of the mass of women in their daily struggles is separation. Their advice is to leave, get out of the oppressive situation. Ignoring the clear impossibility for most women of following such advice, failing to see how oppression is in fact the ideology of exploitation (attitudes that express and reinforce capitalist power relations), they leave the mass of women to the tender mercies of the left, the unions, "private" employers and their State, who propose doubling the exploitation of women more generally.



Whatever virtues of the Radical Feminists in their rejection of the left mode of politics and in their emphasis on women's autonomous struggle, they may well be on the way to making themselves irrelevant by cutting themselves off from the actual conditions of the mass of women, of their struggles in realistic terms. One has only to look at another document circulated at the conference to appreciate the contrast between their approach and the actualities of women's lives. This document, a narrative by a woman from the Motting Hill (London) group of her attempt to organise with factory women, entitled Scrooge and Stodge: Company and Union v the Workers of Chesebrough Ponds, gives a picture of real conditions. No single article or document on women's oppression and exploitation - young women or old, married and single, Black women and white, women with kids or without - has been written with the depth and richness of this document. It has the reality of life seen through a woman's sensibility and understanding of the relationships between life at home and in the factory, between men and women, of their attitudes towards work and the unions and the difficulties of the struggle. It is a very Radical document. It is a very Feminist document.

### The Claimants Union

In contrast to other occasions and to the previous conference, in London the voice of the Claimants, particularly of the Unsupported Mothers, was not heard. Women from the CU, which also includes the unemployed, the sick and the aged - all those living on Social Security pittance - had been active participants at Manchester. They had behind them the strength of the organisation that they were instrumental in founding, an organisation directly confronting the State. A few weeks before the London conference, the CU had had a national conference in Birmingham, whose tone had been depressed. Part of this depression resulted no doubt from the fact that their sisters in Women's Liberation had given not even lip service support to their activities, and no support of substance, no links with the struggles of women dependent on the wage given directly by a capitalist or through a man. Indeed quite the reverse, since the organised pre-conference discussions for the most part undercut the Unsupported Mothers. The battle about the six demands was particularly hot on the subject of wages for housework; next to the question of trade unions (with which it was linked), this demand infuriated the left-dominated women. But the demand had originated with the women in the Claimants Union, in their handbook for Unsupported Mothers, not as ideology, the coinage of the left, but as political direction for struggle, in the most positive sense a political line. Not only had they demanded wages for themselves - for their work in producing and caring for the labour-fodder of the future - but they had called on women who have men supporting them to join them in the demand, since these women too are wageless for the work they do for the State. The left women's antagonism to the demand reflected the policy of their organisations, one of which had been so careless as to let leak its intention to turn the CU into a union of the unemployed, leaving behind the sick, the old and the Unsupported Mothers. This intended manipulation of the Claimants' organisation was totally subversive of the Unsupported Mothers, and so it is no accident if their conference was depressed and that the Claimants did not find their voice at the London conference.

It must be left to other articles and documents to place politically the potential and actual importance of an organisation, central to which are women, whose struggle against the State is not mediated by trade unions, by individual employers and by individual men. But here we must make it clear that for us there is not a feminist movement and by its side somehow related some Unsupported Mothers who are poor and to be pitied. The Unsupported Mother as she has organised herself and as she gives leadership to the rest of the class poses for us our future directions.

Claimants were in attendance at the conference. And a workshop on their activities was suggested. But what seems to have happened is that the Claimants dispersed to try to follow their interests in the various



workshops debating the six demands. The workshop on Claimants was combined with the workshop on the Family Allowance. Their particular and unified voice was thus lost. Ironically, in the heated or bored atmosphere of the plenaries, their presence was graphically represented in the huge feminist paintings by Monica, a Bristol woman, who is active in the CU; the paintings lined both walls of the auditorium.

### Abortion and Birth Control

One campaign which has been active, popular and effective of change concerns the rights to abortion and birth control - of all the campaigns first launched by women in the movement. Not only in Britain, but internationally this is true. At the three international meetings of this conference, women from France, Holland, South Africa, Canada, Spain, Ireland, all emphasised their work on these subjects. The only delegate announced as "official" from the United States was not from Women's Liberation but from MONAAC (Women's Organisation for National Action on Abortion and Contraception, a Trotskyist-led organisation), and she reported only on MONAAC's activities, especially on the international tribunal which is being organised in New York City. In Britain, the abortion and birth control campaign is the only one flowing from the four demands of 1971 which got off the ground.

Women's need for control over their bodies, over their sexual and reproductive functions, is immediately obvious to all. The demand for this right to individual control supplies an outstanding example of how the personal is political and the political is personal, a basic premise of our movement. But this need and this demand also brought out some of the contradictions that our campaigns encounter.

At the first international meeting the woman from South Africa expressed her fears about the way abortion and sterilisation (the ultimate in birth control) are being used in the Black hospitals of South Africa. Later, during the international reports at the conference itself, Bobby Sykes denounced the active genocidal policy of the Australian State against the Aboriginal population, by means of abortion and sterilisation - in addition to malnutrition and starvation. So the conference reports immediately exposed the issue of population control. The danger of capital's plan to coopt our campaigns for its own purposes was posed by a leaflet circulated by a group of women from Richmond, London (but unsigned), entitled, "Fertility Control - Control for Whom?" By its allusion to Paul Erlich, the leaflet made the connection between both the exploitation of fears of overpopulation and the ecological repressive notion that women are polluting the earth with children, both useful to capital at this historical moment. The reminder of the two sides of the choice, the right TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN, was timely, since some of the campaign literature, in concentrating on abortion and birth control only, has sometimes played into the hands of ecologists and others working for the State. (One niece from MONAAC in fact equated choosing with abortion.) By echoing the phrase as it appeared in the six demands, the Richmond women supplied the broader context of the issue necessary for it to be truly woman-liberating, truly revolutionary, and truly non-cooptable at this time.

### The International Meetings

The international meetings had a life, a mode and a development almost independent from the conference. Since they were organised as an after-thought (by women from Notting Hill), this was inevitable. But even if their integration had been planned, they would have been different because the international women necessarily reflected different conditions of women, different situations and organisations, and different possibilities of struggle. Another distinction was that, after the first, these meetings were not the arenas for battles between feminists and women of left organisations that other meetings of the conference were.



If there was a political division among the international women, it was not like the British split. Some women, in flight from male political domination, were concentrating on "consciousness-raising" as opposed to "political action". This division took various forms. A group in Milan concentrates on a study of sexism and patriarchal institutions and relations. A larger group in France works to link politics and psychoanalysis. The Dutch male-led Dolle Minas were opposed by women who are forming an organisation which excludes men and which concentrates on exploring the female experience. Two French women, one a night cleaner of Algerian parentage, oppose the MLF; the situation in post-1968 France is illuminated perhaps by the fact that they now belong to no women's group. But none of the international women spoke for male organisations of the left. That the emphases of some on "consciousness-raising" keeps them for the moment from active public struggle and cuts them off from the mass of women in their countries may be helpful to the left parties, but it is not their willing intention to help these groups. In the last analysis, this may be the only basis of autonomous female politics - as many of us now politically active can testify, though we must also testify that it is in itself no guarantee.

The large number of women from Italy (Padua, Milan, Ferrara, Venice, Naples and Florence) gave great life and depth to the international meetings. (When even the Guardian recognises the immanent possibility of insurrection in that country, this fact is hardly surprising.) Most of them were from an autonomous women's organisation called Lotta Femminista, and they set a high level for discussion. The woman who reported from Padua began not with the internal affairs and ideas of her group, but with a detailed description of the objective conditions of women in Italy and of their struggles. Against this background full of hard data, she utilised the ideas and campaigns of her organisation.

Another woman, from Fascist Spain, where a meeting of more than 20 persons must be registered with the police and where in spite of this a women's movement is beginning, used a like pattern for her report. In passing she remarked that the clandestine CP has had a harmful effect on the women's movement in Spain, by arousing guilt feelings in some women about the martyrs of the working class and making them doubt the legitimacy of their own movement. We were moved by the situation she described and at the same time we were deeply impressed with the calm and firm approach. Her feminism found its solid base, its index to the condition of all women, in the lives of working class and peasant women.

Despite brutal repression, despite being cut off from international currents, the women of Spain begin their movement with Marxism and feminism already integrated, because of the experience of that class, which has behind it the revolution of 1936. That experience was dramatised once more as the meeting climaxed in the reading of a letter from "Mujeres Libres, an organisation of refugee Spanish Anarchist women which has lived for 36 years and maintained a newsletter in three languages for women refugees on three continents, keeping touch and taking care of each other. Their representative at our conference, reluctant to speak to us in English, gave us this letter:

"Dear Sisters in Struggle:

"I bring to your conference the most hearty greetings in the name of the Federacion 'Mujeres Libres' de Espana en Exilio - Spanish Federation of Women for Freedom in Exile.

"We hope that through your deliberations you find the right way to fulfil the aim of liberation not only for women, but for all human beings.

"In these crucial and critical moments, when humanity suffers the traumatisation of political immorality and material ambitions, we must struggle to conquer a society based on human rights under the motto of the mutual respect and solidarity between equals.



"On these principles 'Mujeres Libres' initiated 36 years ago their struggle in Spain, struggle that to this day we maintain in Spain and in exile.

"The world looks to women in revolt!

"We must give the right answer.

From "Mujeres Libres"

The letter provided a high point and all the greater impetus for the next meeting, which was decided upon spontaneously.

The third and last international meeting occurred as the conference ended and it was held not at the hall in Acton, but at the South London Women's Centre. There the international women who remained were even in number with local women, and this fact, along with the more intimate quarters which were not rented for the occasion but belonged to us, created a closeness that the other meetings had lacked. The discussion was fiery with enthusiastic debate over the questions and problems raised by the conference. Every woman spoke and not as "international" or representative of a group but as individual member of an international movement. Even the Anarchist woman found her English tongue and plunged into the discussion. One of the subjects raised was the problem of the left-dominated women and their obstruction of feminist politics, beginning with Spain in the thirties where the Anarchist women had struggled against the stranglehold of the CP. This account gave us a deeper insight into where the two generations of Spanish women were coming from and explained further their political sophistication. Our conclusions open a new perspective for all of us. And they will be useful as a conclusion to this report.

#### Conclusions and Perspectives

The final session of the conference was devoted to the posing of resolutions. By their nature, resolutions are not generally subjects of debate. They express an opinion or feeling on a question that affects the general welfare of women that all can agree on. And they rarely entail a commitment to action. Most of the resolutions posed were of this nature. But posing resolutions can be used to push an extraneous political line, and there were a few such instances at the London conference, one of which we have alluded to above. But in general the conference passed all and only those resolutions that spoke to them as women on a general and basic level.

Among them was one of important and immediate concern: that denouncing the British State's plan to eliminate Family Allowance payments. The subject of this particular resolution, the subject of a workshop as well, will also be the subject of actions. Already women have mobilised to fight the cutting off of the only sum of money that goes directly into the housewife's purse, that affects her welfare as well as her children's, that changes the level of power between men and women in their households. We believe that Family Allowance is for a woman a wage, that is, a wage from the State that we all serve. Other women are against wages directly from the State but know it would be suicidal not to oppose the government's taking this money away from women. It can be expected that many left women, particularly those of the CP, will join the campaign to keep the Family Allowance. It is possible that they may try to narrow or diminish it, try to turn it from a mobilisation of women into a charity lobby. For the latent or instinctive feminists among them, to do this will not be intention, but the product of a political perspective infused with a notion of the incapacity of the class, and most especially of women, to fight and win. Only such a notion can explain the attempt to narrow and diminish the demands of the Unsupported Mothers of the Claimants Union and when the attempt failed, to ignore them.

This subject brings us to our conclusion and to the perspectives alluded to above. There is good reason to believe that the London conference



will be the last of its kind. Although it was a large organisational success, it appears not to have accomplished much, hamstrung as it was by the organised left. Aside from the international meetings, it showed little immediate development or growth from the coming together of nearly 2000 women - though that fact in itself was an inspiration to many women. And yet nothing has been quite the same since. Perhaps the conference, by demonstrating the organised power of the male organisations' influence and their animosity to feminist politics, made feminist politics more urgent and even more accessible.

Since there is no way to prevent the left women exercising their male influence in any movement gathering which is not itself an action, what will probably happen within the movement is a crystallisation of forces on an issue-oriented and/or political perspective-oriented rather than a geographical basis. The frustrations over inaction and the desire for action will burst forth, no doubt, in the form of campaigns. One important one will be the ongoing campaign to keep and to extend Family Allowance. Its implications have not yet all been discovered and its relation to fundamental issues of our struggle as women and as class against capital has yet to be posed. As we move on a mass scale these will emerge.

Only in contrast to the potentials of the situation, of the ingredients present in numbers and ideas, and to the enormity of the tasks ahead do we say the conference accomplished little. In another sense it accomplished a great deal politically, and even its shortcomings must be seen in proportion to the great tasks and issues posed. For what we discussed, directly at times, obliquely at others, were basic questions of our time: how to avoid slavery to capitalist work and yet make a living; how to get control over our bodies and our lives; how to get back the value of our work, past and present, from those who control it; how to make our social relations human instead of objectified; how and why to build a mass movement.

It is no accident that these basic questions underlay our discussions, for in women's lives they define themselves most clearly. It is women with jobs outside the home who bear a double burden of work; it is the housewife who by her unwaged labour must question the whole content and nature of work and her dependence on men as a dependence on capital. Finally women in the persons of the Unsupported Mothers must daily confront the ultimate master, the State, without the mediation of a man, a trade union, or even a boss. For them the power relation is laid bare.

The questions were posed, positions taken, and no resolution arrived at. But it is to the credit of our movement that these questions, destined to be at the heart of every movement and struggle of the working class and of the building of a left in Britain integral to and expressing that class, were posed at the London conference by women.

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The Significance of Maria Rosa Dalla Costa's "Women and the Subversion of the Community"

What made this article exciting for some of us in Bristol was that it placed its emphasis firmly on the housewife, not as someone merely ideologically oppressed, not as mere consumer, but as a worker as well, and that it described the importance of her work to capitalism in economic, not merely psychological and ideological terms. It identifies the housewife, rather than the woman working outside the home, as the "central figure" in "the female role as it has been created by the capitalist division of labour". It probably had this effect on us because we ourselves had been feeling our way towards a similar position since the paper we wrote for the Skegness Conference.

This is not to say that the article adequately analyses the economic function of women in the home in the sense of providing a properly worked out theoretical framework for it. It, and Selma's introduction to it, sometimes uses different concepts interchangeably without analysing the relationships between them- (production/reproduction, surplus labour/surplus value for example) or uses terms sometimes in the sense defined by Marx, sometimes metaphorically or in their more common sense- (eg "productive" sometimes means producing a commodity/surplus value, sometimes means "useful").

- The theoretical points raised are very important ones. They are:
- + Is the economic function of women in the home "marginal" to Capitalism?
  - + Are they serving an economic function which is vital to the production of surplus value?
  - + Are they producing surplus value directly?

Here the special character of labour power as a commodity has to be considered (as Selma points out, Intro p7) and the special position of women at home who do not present their own labour power directly to be exchanged for wages but use their labour power and their reproductive functions to produce and nurture the future worker and to provide for the needs of the man so that he can daily exchange his labour power for wages to support both of them and their children.

Selma and Maria Rosa themselves are not always consistent here (partly because the article, the introduction and the notes in the Falling Wall pamphlet were not all composed at the same time and therefore represent different stages in the development of the argument) eg on p. 31 the text says "domestic work is an essential function in the production of surplus value" but the note says "housework as work is productive in the Marxist sense, that is, is producing surplus value". The same kind of problem arises as to whether the work of the housewife is "central" to production. At one point (Intro p.6, text p.26) her work is social production yet on p 45 she is "peripheral" "at every stage in the struggle the most peripheral to the productive cycle are used against those at the centre, so long as the latter ignore the former"

These problems arise out of the subject itself, they are not mere errors of reasoning. Our real theoretical tasks arise out of the need to work out the problem, that women are at the same time apparently central and peripheral to the productive process, do, I believe, in their work at home serve an essential function in the production of surplus value, yet do not, I think, produce surplus value themselves directly by that work. The solution to these problems will not be easy because there has been so little discussion of it. There have been a handful of articles, Margaret Benston's, Peggy Moreton's, and the joint work of Selma and Maria Rosa-little else.

We won't solve it by talking of women producing "simple use values" as if the family under capitalism were really like a self sufficient peasant household. Nor will we solve it by separating production and reproduction into two distinct spheres - or by discussing reproduction only in a purely biological sense as for example Juliet Mitchell did in "The Longest Revolution".

Marx himself by passed the problem, presumably because it seemed in his time that capitalism was on its way to breaking down the functions of the family completely. It seemed that women and children would become industrial workers in the same way as men having simply to reproduce their own labour power outside of working hours in order to present it again for sale in the capitalist workplace. Although he traced the beginning of the limitation of working hours particularly for women and children- and the beginning of the process of moving them out of the kinds of job which seemed inconsistent with their function as wives and mothers, he did not really consider the effect of an extension of this process. His focus was chiefly the male worker-



at least for as his theoretical formulations:

"The labour of women and children was the first thing sought for by capitalists who used machinery. . . Compulsory work for the capitalist usurped the place, not only of the children's play, but also of free labour at home within moderate limits for the support of the family" (Capital Vol 1, Ch xv, p 391) . . .

"The value of labour was determined, not only by the labour-time necessary to maintain the individual adult labourer, but also by that necessary to maintain his family. Machinery, by throwing every member of that family on to the labour market, spreads the value of the man's labour-power over his whole family. . . It thus depreciates his labour-power. . . Previously the workman sold his own labour power, which he disposed of nominally as a free agent. Now he sells his wife and child. He becomes a slave dealer." (ibid p 393)

One problem here seems to be that Marx underestimated the extent of women and children's participation in the direct production of goods before the era of machinery - and for women therefore the extent to which their "free labour in the home" had been integrated into the economic system.

The other problem is that he was unable to see the extent to which the state, in the interests of the morale and health of the "nation" would compel the capitalist class to place limits on their employment of women, and the ability of the trade union movement to win wage and hour concessions which enabled women once more to have time, even if they also worked outside the home, to reassume their "free labour at home" - although he does describe the beginning of this process.

What women have now begun to analyse is this situation and we have landed immediately in an argument about the status of this work in the home - is it the "production of simple use values" as Ernest Mandel and Margaret Benston say, is it "reproduction" or "reproduction" or is it "Production and reproduction"? I have already said that we have a long way to go before we sort these things out but there are a few important preliminary points which arise from Marx's analysis of Reproduction in Capital Vol 1 (6hxxiii), where, although he was mainly considering how capital itself was reproduced and accumulated he did touch on points relevant to our problem.

Firstly it is clear that for Marx production and reproduction are not separate but interconnected as part of the same process:

"Whatever the form of the process of production in a society, it must be a continuous process. . . Society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed therefore as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time a process of reproduction.

The conditions of production are also those of reproduction. . .

If production be capitalistic in form, so, too, will be reproduction. . . . (opcit p.578) .

"Variable capital is therefore only a particular historical form of the fund for providing the necessaries of life, or the labour fund which the labourer requires for the maintenance of himself and his family, and which, whatever be the system of social production he must himself produce and reproduce (note the assumption, built into the language that the labourer must be a man and the not so automatic assumption that he himself "produces and reproduces" his labour power)

Marx, it is clear, considers production and reproduction of capital not as separate processes but as two aspects of the same process. It is also clear that the production and reproduction of labour power is vitally connected to that process. However the passages in which he considers the production and reproduction of labour-power as such are rather more difficult because they are entered by way of a discussion of consumption, on the one hand the worker's "productive consumption" of the means of production, on the other his individual consumption of the means of subsistence. The two are initially described as distinct:

"In the former he acts as the motive power of capital, and belongs to the capitalist. In the latter he belongs to himself, and performs his necessary vital functions outside the process of production"

It seems clear from this that the process of production and of reproduction of labour power are "quite distinct". But Marx then proceeds to recall how "in treating of the Working day we saw that the individual was often compelled to make his individual consumption a mere incident of production" . . . "he supplies himself with necessaries in order to maintain his labour power, just as coal and water are supplied to the steam engine and oil to the wheel . . .



his individual consumption is directly productive consumption" (ibid p.584). "This however" Marx then says "appears to be an abuse not essentially pertaining to capitalist production" But with typically Marxian irony what appears to be exceptional provides the clue to the full appreciation of the phenomenon. He goes on to say that if we look not at an isolated process but at "capitalist production in full swing and on its actual social scale . . . The individual consumption of the working class is . . . the reconversion of the means of subsistence given by capital in exchange for labour into fresh labour-power at the disposal of capital for exploitation. It is the production and reproduction of that means of production so indispensable to the capitalist, the labourer himself. The individual consumption of the labourer, whether it proceed within the workshop or outside it, whether it be part of the process of production or not forms therefore a factor in the production and reproduction of capital: just as cleaning machinery does, whether it be done while the machinery is working or while it is standing. . . The maintenance and reproduction of the working class is, and must ever be, a necessary condition to the reproduction of capital. But the capitalist may safely leave its fulfilment to the labourer's instinct of self-preservation and of propagation" - and this work as Maria Rosa and Selma ought never to have even had to point out, this "production and reproduction" or "maintenance and reproduction of the male labourer is done by women - mother, wife, or paid female worker. According to Marx therefore Commodity production and the production and reproduction of labour-power itself are not separate but part of the same process.

This why the work of women in the home can appear to be outside the process of production while actually, at this historic moment, being essential to it and therefore part of it.

As to the question whether this work is directly productive of surplus value or not, there is a debate going on on this topic and about the whole question of what is "productive" and "unproductive" labour in the Marxist sense: According to Ian Gough in New Left Review No. 76, modern developments have highlighted the unresolved ambiguities in Marx's own statements and analysis. I don't feel competent to resolve these ambiguities, but I do feel that I have to accept the main thesis of Maria Rosa Dalla Costa on the economic importance of women's work in the home to capitalism and of the centrality of the housewife to the understanding of the position of women in present-day capitalism, and to understanding how to get women into action to change both that position and the system that demands it.

It is very important that we do not get too bogged down in the theory itself. What seems to me the most important thing at the moment is that we are for the first time discussing the economic importance for capitalism of the work of women in the home and examining the kind of strategy that flows from it. It is clear, for example, that if that work had to be purchased with wages it would be very expensive - that the unpaid work of women in the home allows workers, men and women, to be paid much less than they would have to be if they were all having to pay for meals already cooked, for laundry, for child-care, care, for cleaning etc. So we are not merely discussing an area of ideological and psychological oppression, though that is important too, which will all be taken care of when women all get jobs outside their homes and participate on an equal footing with men in making the socialist revolution.

Such a conclusion has important consequences for our movement. What does it mean?

That we are saying that we ought to ignore the problems of women working outside the home? I don't think so. Rather it means that most of those women will also have many of the same problems as housewives because they are also housewives - or if they are single women have to reproduce their own labour-power a lot more cheaply than male workers, sometimes also looking after dependents without any financial recognition of that work because it is the work that women are always expected to do for nothing.

It means that women who work in shops and factories or offices or who teach in schools will also be interested in the question of Family Allowances, as will housewives.

Of course such women will also have specific problems to organise around like pay and conditions of work and that any gains they make will affect housewives as well, but they are not two separate species of women - the "housewife" and the "worker" although they may have learned to think of themselves that way.

Nor do I think we ought to get hung-up in an argument as to whether we ought to demand "wages for housework" or "socialization of housework" - as Margaret Benston pointed out - what we will get under capitalism is the same form of "socialized housework" as we have "socialized industry" - ie



"capitalized housework" which is just as much and no more socialized as capitalist industry itself.

I think we must realize that the demand for women to be paid for the work they do has not come out of the heads of theoreticians but from the mouths of housewives themselves - and that the anger at the threatened withdrawal of the Family Allowance Book is seen as the withdrawal of the only financial recognition of the work done by women in looking after children.

Nor does there seem to me to be any necessary contradiction between saying "pay us for the work we do now" and saying "we want to change our work" any more than, say, a demand for higher wages by a factory worker necessarily means that he or she does not want to end the wages system.

Maria Rosa when she wrote her pamphlet put forward the perspective of "refusing the role of housewife" - this seemed to me a good perspective - but it could become merely Utopian, except for a few pockets of women here and there, renouncing home for "the struggle itself" is only possible if we see what we are struggling for. It is capable of becoming more concrete and the demand "pay us for the work we do" could be one of the things that makes it so. (see Wages for Housework by Giuliana Pompeii of Moderna)

A week or so ago a West Indian woman at a Family Allowance meeting said to a couple of us. "We work very hard and we get no money. Housewives should go on strike but we too coward" Noone at the meeting had mentioned wages for housework!

Obviously there is no single demand that will work like a magic wand. We have to be aware though of what women themselves want because only those things will build a movement that can succeed.

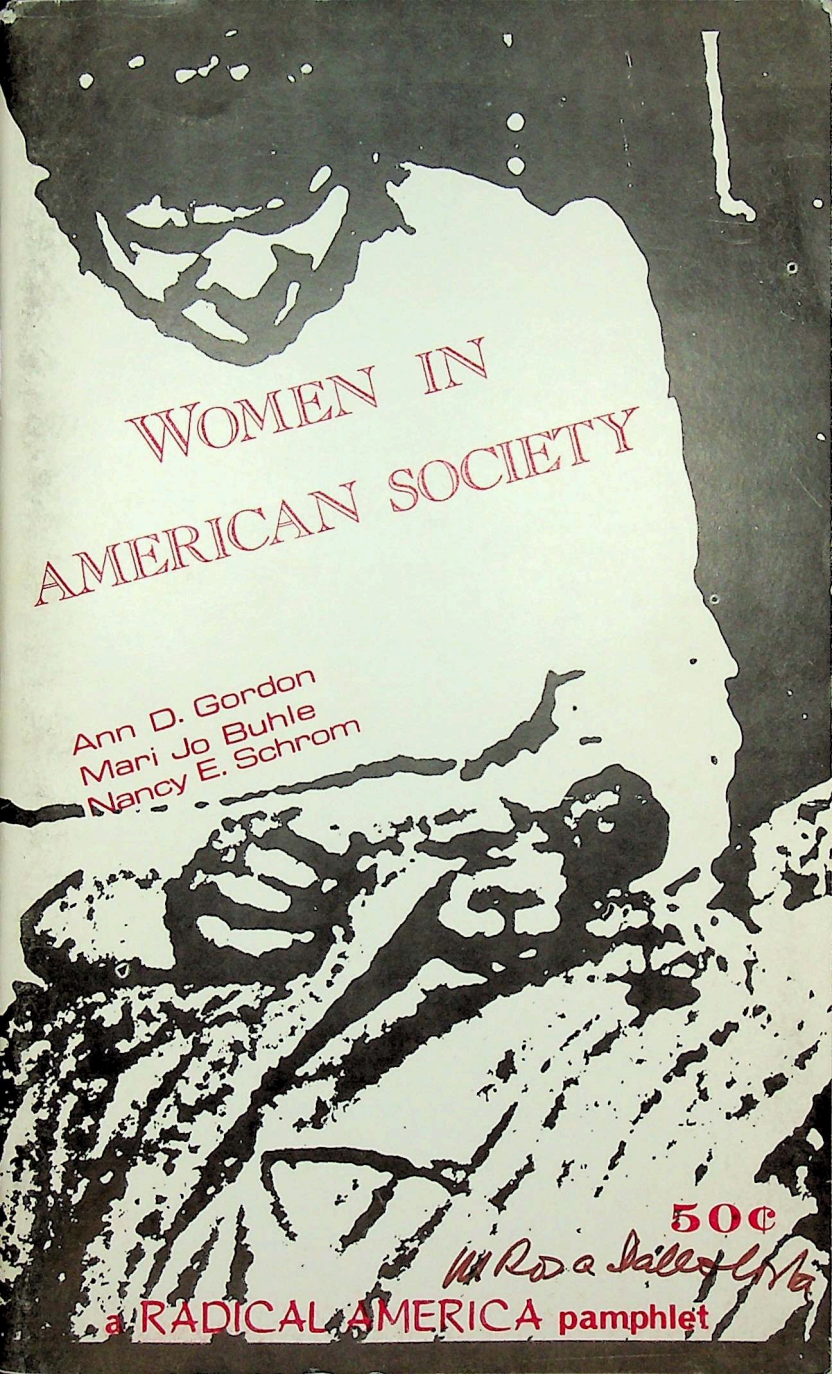
Ellen Wlos  
 Maria Rosa Dalla Costa, The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community  
 &

Selma James

Falling Wall Press Bristol

Karl Marx, Capital vol 1 (Edward Aveling Trans) International Publishers New York





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# Dalla Costa/James and the Subversion of Marxism: A Critique

giornale della Commissione femminile dello Lega Spartachista

## The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community

contains

"Women and the Subversion of the Community" by Mariarosa Dalla Costa

"A Woman's Place" and "Introduction" by Selma James

The pamphlet, "The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community," by Mariarosa Dalla Costa (published jointly by the Falling Wall Press and a group of individuals from the Women's Liberation Movement in England and Italy, 2nd edition, February 1973); with a lengthy introduction by Selma James, has been the source of much controversy within many women's organizations, particularly in Europe and England. (See for example the latest issues of *Radical America*, Vol. 7, Nos. 4 and 5, which are entirely devoted to the questions raised by it.)

"The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community" is basically an attempt to go beyond the simple "Third-World" redefinition of class—i.e., that the most oppressed, the "wretched of the earth," are the new revolutionary forces. Abandoning this line, which formerly sufficed for radical feminists, and citing Marx's analysis of capitalism, the pamphlet attempts to prove that women play a central role in capitalist production and must therefore play a central role in the proletarian revolution. In this attempt it fails miserably—or rather, succeeds only through totally distorting Marx's analysis of capitalist production.

In terms of its theoretical contributions, this pamphlet is unworthy of serious consideration by Marxists, but since many subjectively revolutionary women are now searching for ways in which their feminism can be integrated with Marxism through some programmatic "missing link," it is important to refute this work's fraudulent claim to be a Marxist analysis, which, if believed, will only lead women down one more blind alley. The fact is that there is no "missing link" between feminism and Marxism! The two outlooks are fundamentally and implacably counterposed!

In addition to this pamphlet, there are two other works which are important expositions of Dalla Costa/James's theories. "Women, the Unions and Work, or What is Not to be Done," by Selma James (first printed by Crest Press, London; reprinted by Canadian Women's Educational Press, Toronto), is an explicit attack on the left and particularly the trade unions as narrow, divisive organizations which must be opposed by women. "Wages for Housework," by Giuliana Pompei, with contributions from discussion at a feminist conference in Padova, 1972 (Cambridge

Women's Liberation, translated by Joan Hall and reprinted by Canadian Women's Educational Press, Toronto), takes up Dalla Costa's central theme of housewives as productive workers and emphasizes the demand "wages for housework" (which Dalla Costa herself does not stress).

It is rather frustrating for a Marxist to attempt to grapple with these works, because they are so full of internal contradictions. Despite this, however, we have attempted to summarize below some of the more important aspects of the theory. (Although James gives Dalla Costa credit for the new discovery, both developed it, and James has in fact arguments for it other than Dalla Costa's.)

## The Theories of Dalla Costa and James

1. Women are vital producers for capitalism, even when they do not work outside the home. "What we meant precisely is that housework as work is *productive* in the Marxian sense, that is, is producing surplus value."

2. They produce a commodity "unique to capitalism: the living human being—"the labourer himself". This laborer, by selling his labor power to a capitalist, allows the capitalist to use his labor to produce more than his wage is worth, thus producing surplus value. But women are the ones who really produce this surplus value, because they produce the workers and their labor power.

"The ability to labor resides only in a human being whose life is consumed in the process of producing. First it must be nine months in the womb, must be fed, clothed and trained; then when it works its bed must be made, its floors swept, its lunchbox prepared, its sexuality not gratified but quietened, its dinner ready when it gets home, even if this is eight in the morning from the night shift. This is how labor power is produced and reproduced when it is daily consumed in the factory or the office. To describe its basic production and reproduction is to describe women's work."

"The labourer himself" is thus equated with his "labour-power" as the commodity produced.

3. This discovery that the family is a center of capitalist production has been obscured because Marxists have traditionally concentrated on the working class (which James and Dalla Costa constantly equate with men). However, this vital role has also been obscured because women have not been paid a wage for their work. "Inside the home we have discovered our *invisible work*... the invisible—because unpaid—foundation upon which the whole pyramid of capitalist accumulation rests" (Pompei, "Wages for Housework"). This leads to the demand "wages for housework" as a way to expose women's role.

4. This division of the proletariat into waged (men) and unwaged (women) created by the transition from



feudalism to capitalism was the fundamental break between men and women and the alienation of both from their children. This waged versus unwaged distinction must be broken down.

5. "Capital established the family as the nuclear family and subordinated within it the woman to the man...Capital constructed the female role, and has made the man in the family the instrument of this reduction." The creation of wage labor completed the subordination of women, who appeared to be excluded from social production by not being paid a wage.

6. Women must refuse to accept this role any longer. James says, "if your production is vital to capitalism, refusing to produce, refusing to *work*, is a fundamental lever of social power."

7. Women must oppose membership in trade unions, because "like the family, these protect the class at her expense. . . ." The unions, because they exclude non-wage-earners, divide the class against itself and make any common struggle impossible. Also, capitalism uses the unions specifically to hold down the workers' militancy.

8. The left, too, must be rejected because it is "male-dominated." Moreover, the left sees the solution for women as simply acquiring "trade-union consciousness" or adopting "the forms of struggle men have traditionally used," i.e., the forms of the organized labor movement.

9. James and Dalla Costa offer "social existence to housewives other than another job—we can offer them the struggle itself." So women must refuse to work outside the home, and inside the home as well, and instead participate in "the struggle itself." "Those who advocate that the liberation of the working class woman lies in her getting a job outside the home are

part of the problem, not the solution." How will women survive? The growth of the women's movement will provide their support.

## Why Housewives Are Not Productive Workers

Two key concepts form the basis of Dalla Costa/James's theory of women as productive workers—their production of the laborer/labor power (i.e., child-raising and servicing the husband/worker) and their role in "consumption as part of production"—shopping, cooking, etc. The argument that these two aspects of housework are productive of surplus value ignores two crucial distinctions made by Marx. These are: 1) the difference between industrial and *private* consumption (i.e., family consumption) and 2) the difference between productive labor under capitalism, that is, wage labor for a capitalist generating surplus value, and simple work, which produces only use value.

James, after noting that "...so-called Marxists said that the capitalist family did not produce for capitalism, was not part of social production...," admits that "Marx himself does not seem to have said anywhere that it was." James is a classic revisionist; that is, she wants to use Marx's tremendous authority yet has the problem of trying to twist his words to fit her theories. She explains away his peculiar oversight in not explicitly stating her theory:

"Suffice it to say that, first, he is singular in seeing consumption as a phase of production: 'It is the production and reproduction of that means of production so indispensable to the capitalist: the labourer himself.' (*Capital*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1958, p. 572). Second, he alone has given us the tools to make our own analysis. And finally, he never was guilty of the nonsense with which Engels, despite his many contributions, has saddled us."

## Private Versus Industrial Consumption

There are two kinds of consumption under capitalism—industrial and private. Marx writes:

"The labourer consumes in a two-fold way. While producing he consumes by his labour the means of production. . . . On the other hand, the labourer turns the money paid to him for his labour-power, into means of subsistence: this is his individual consumption. The labourer's productive consumption, and his individual consumption, are therefore totally distinct. In the former, he acts as the motive power of capital, and belongs to the capitalist. In the latter, he belongs to himself, and performs his necessary vital functions *outside the process of production*." [our emphasis]

—Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Chapter 23

Of course this private consumption is taken into consideration by capitalists, as it is necessary in order to maintain and reproduce the labor force, without which capitalism could not exist, and as such it is considered to be "a necessary factor in the process of production." "But," as Marx noted, "the capitalist may safely leave its fulfilment to the labourer's instincts of self-preservation and of propagation." The fact that it is necessary to eat, to live and to reproduce does not make the family a "center of social

*continued on next page*

# Women and Revolution

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## ... Dalla Costa, James

production." These things take place *regardless* of the form of social production. Individual consumption in the home is not capitalist production, because the capitalist does not own the family. The worker *owns himself* and *sells* his labor power to the capitalist. The capitalist does not have to concern himself with how the worker reproduces and lives (except to ensure that workers will be forced to continue to sell their labor power). So, while in the broadest sense, this individual private consumption is a "factor" of production, i.e., is taken account of, mainly in the calculation of wages, it is in no sense capitalist production. That is why Marx said individual consumption takes place *outside the sphere of production*.

### Productive Labor

The Marxist concept of "productive labor" is violently abused by Dalla Costa and James. It is not clear for *whom* this "productive labor" in the home is done, since the capitalist does not own the nuclear family. Clearly, Dalla Costa does not intend us to believe that the housewife is either a slave owner (since she "produces living human beings" which are commodities) or a mini-capitalist (since she owns the "means of production," her reproductive organs). Dalla Costa says women "produce" people. In the biological sense, this is true. But this "production" is not "productive labor" in the Marxist sense, as she claims.

James says that the commodity women produce is "the living human being." Elsewhere, this commodity is referred to as "labor power." But a distinction must be made. Under capitalism, human beings are not commodities (as they are in slave societies). Under capitalism workers are "free" to sell their labor power. It is precisely the alienation of the workers' from their labor power and their sale of that labor power as a commodity on the market which characterize capitalist production:

"...labour-power can appear on the market as a commodity only if, and so far as, its producer, the individual whose labour-power it is, offers it for sale.... In order that he may be able to do this, he must have it at his disposal, must be the untrammelled owner of his capacity for labour, i.e. of his person."

—Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Chapter 6

But the other work women do in the home—the care, feeding and general maintenance of workers (husbands) is not Marxist productive labor either. The important question to ask about this domestic work is: Does this work produce value, and if so, how is the value of this "labor power" determined? Because if housewives' work produces value, it must be embodied in the commodity—labor power, according to Dalla Costa—which this housework supports.

The production of labor power is simple commodity production. Labor power is produced and sold in order to get use values in exchange, for the immediate satisfaction of human needs. Ira Gerstein, in "Domestic Work and Capitalism" (in *Radical America*, Vol. 7, Nos. 4 and 5), contrasts this simple commodity production to capitalist production:

"Production is limited, because the quantity produced is bounded by the finite human capacity, necessity and desire to consume. On the other hand, the aim of the capitalist is to continually increase his surplus-value. This has nothing to do with his personal consumption.... Labor-power does not increase without limit as an independent way of piling up wealth."

Marx analyzes the value of labor power as follows: "The value of labour-power is determined, as in the case of every other commodity, by the labour-time necessary for the production and consequently also the reproduction, of this special article. So far as it has value, it represents no more than a definite quantity of the average labour of society incorporated in it.... the sum of the means of subsistence necessary for the production of labour-power must include the means necessary for the labourer's substitutes, i.e. his children, in order that this race of peculiar commodity-owners may perpetuate its appearance on the market.... The value of labour-power resolves itself into the value of a definite quantity of the means of subsistence."

—Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, Chapter 6

Labor power is created by the consumption of material things (food, clothing) and of services (medical care, education). The sum of the value of these means of subsistence is the value of labor power. The domestic work done by housewives in processing these commodities is clearly *not* considered when adding up this total. Housework does *not add value* to the commodity labor power. This does not mean that women do not work inside the home—but this domestic drudgery is not *capitalist* production and is not considered therefore in analyzing capitalist productive relations.

### The Production of Labor Power

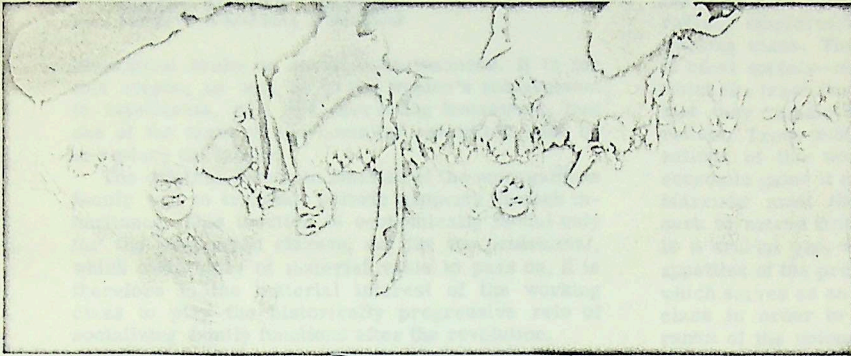
According to Gerstein, "Labor-power is the single and unique commodity in capitalist society whose general production does not take place in a capitalist manner." However, there are other commodities which are not produced in "a capitalist manner" under capitalism; for example, natural raw materials such as fish caught from the sea. These exist and reproduce themselves, although not in a capitalist manner. And the production of human beings, who possess within themselves the capacity for labor, must be seen in the same way as these other natural products because the propagation of the human species is a natural act. The *self*-production of services and things consumed by the worker and his family lies *outside* capitalist political economy altogether. It is, moreover, a *universal* activity of living creatures ("the instincts for self-preservation" which Marx noted). James, by stubbornly insisting that "there is nothing in capitalism which is not capitalistic," covers up this crucial difference between the production of labor power and capitalist production.

In designating propagation a "natural act," it must be made clear, however, that the organization of the propagation of the family is not determined simply biologically, but socially.

### Origins of the Family

How did women come to be enslaved in the home? This domestic slavery was not created by capitalism





Demonstration of Chilean housewives in 1972 against Allende government.

SIPAHIOGLU

but has far more ancient origins stemming from the development of private property and the social surplus accumulated by men from their work. According to Engels in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, land in the stone age belonged to all members of the tribe in common. While there was a division of labor between the sexes, there was also equality, for each took part in productive labor and contributed to the economy. With the eventual increase in the capacity of human beings to produce, it became profitable to employ slaves—the first form of private property. Herds, land and other forms of property also became privatized for the first time, bringing about a revolution within the family. Men had always been responsible for procuring the necessities of life, but now, although the division of labor within the family remained essentially unchanged, the domestic labor of women no longer counted for much alongside the economic power of men. Engels concluded that women could achieve equality with men only when they took part once again in general economic production on a par with men.

James claims that Marx was "never guilty of this nonsense" of Engels. But if this is true, it is simply because he died (1883) a year before Engels' completion of this book which was intended as a joint work. Engels in fact states in his preface to the first edition that, "The following chapters are... the execution of a bequest... Karl Marx had made it one of his future tasks to present the results of Morgan's researches... I have the critical notes which he made to his extensive extracts from Morgan, and as far as possible I reproduce them here."

Dalla Costa and James hold differing views of the question of the origins of women's oppression—and both are wrong. James claims that primordial sexism is the root cause of women's oppression. Dalla Costa, on the other hand, argues that it is the result of capitalist economic relationships, a thesis which leads her to assert that woman's position in feudal society was in some ways more progressive:

"To the extent that men had been the despotic heads of the patriarchal family... the experience of women, children, and men was a contradictory experience... But in pre-capitalistic society, the work of each member of the community of serfs was seen to be directed to a purpose; either to the prosperity of the feudal lord or to our survival... The passage, from serfdom

to free labor power separated the male from the female proletarian...."

Dalla Costa/James's insistence on the importance of the productive labor of housewives as central to their revolutionary potential contradicts the assertions: 1) that women were forced out of productive labor with the transition from feudalism, and 2) that feudalism was *less oppressive* to women than capitalism, because women were recognized as productive workers under feudalism.

Capitalism in fact laid the basis for the liberation of women because: 1) it opened the way for the participation of women in social production once again, creating opportunities for the development of social consciousness and for organized struggle against oppression outside the isolated single-unit family structure; 2) the rise of the bourgeois concept of the free individual—as opposed to medieval notions of bloodlineage, aristocratic privilege and religious domination which codified the belief that women were inferior—laid the intellectual groundwork for the recognition of women as full human beings with rights equal to those of men, a concept totally foreign to the medieval mind (and apparently irrelevant to Dalla Costa).

Capitalism created the basis for the emancipation of women through the development of the productive forces, but it has long outlived its progressive historical role and is now a barrier both to the further development of the productive forces and to the emancipation of women. Women cannot be free until scarcity is eliminated, classes are abolished and the family is replaced. In other words, women cannot be free prior to the establishment of socialist society.

### The Family Under Capitalism

The perpetuation of the monogamous family unit under advanced capitalist society is not the result of some fiendish capitalist plot to extract ever more profit from the working class. Even the family as it exists today costs the capitalist more in dollars and cents than it would if its functions were socialized. The value of the family for the bourgeoisie does not lie in its *efficiency* in producing labor power, but rather in its usefulness as a reservoir of small private property and petty production which serves as an

*continued on next page*



## ... Dalla Costa, James

ideological brake on social consciousness. It is for this reason, as well as to end women's enslavement to repetitious, dull and enervating housework, that one of the tasks of the socialist revolution must be to replace the family.

The original economic function of the monogamous family was to transmit private property through inheritance. This function is economically useful only for the propertied classes, not for the proletariat, which owns little of material value to pass on. It is therefore in the material interest of the working class to play the historically progressive role of socializing family functions after the revolution.

But aside from this, the reactionary ideology of the nuclear family also renders possible the organizing of working-class housewives for reactionary ends, since their consciousness tends to be centered around defending and extending whatever small private holdings the family has. Thus in 1971 in Chile the opposition Christian Democrats and the National Party were able to successfully organize large demonstrations of housewives (as housewives) against the Allende regime. There is nothing in the family structure which can lead one to assume, as do James and Dalla Costa, that "when it comes to a showdown, [housewives] just go ahead and do what they know is right" and that what they consider "right" is aimed at overthrowing capitalism and not at maintaining it.

Dalla Costa/James's answer to women's oppression is that women should withdraw from capitalist society entirely, thereby bringing about its collapse. If they are working in a factory they should get out, because the recruitment of women into the workforce is a capitalist plot designed to ward off revolution. "The government, acting in the interests of the capitalist class..., has created unemployment" so that "...we will be glad for the crumbs that the master lets fall from his table." This theory of history as a fiendish plot assumes that capitalists are totally free to do what they please regardless of the laws of motion of capitalist economy. The fact is, however, that it is impossible to provide full employment in conditions of decaying imperialist society, whether the capitalists want to or not!

And the workers—far from being simply dupes—have an economic compulsion to work! But James and Dalla Costa ignore this. Their conception of why people do things is grounded not in the material world but in an idealist conception of reality.

### Trade Unions and the Left

Dalla Costa/James further argue that since working is exploitative and hence to be avoided, those organizations which center on organization at the workplace, i.e., the trade unions, are also bad. The trade unions are "divisive" because they take account only of wage workers and ignore the rest of the "proletariat" (such as old people, sick people, babies, housewives). This is nothing more than the old New Left practice of equating the most oppressed with the most revolutionary.

It was not the trade unions, however, which created

the hostilities among different social sectors—sexual, racial, employed/unemployed—which weaken the working class. These hostilities are part and parcel of *class society*—manifestations of bourgeois ideology which the trade unions do not create but (to the extent that they remain under conservative leadership) do reflect. Trade unions are basically defensive organizations of the working class to protect whatever economic gains it can wrest from the capitalist class. Marxists must therefore defend trade unions and seek to extend their protection to all workers. There is a crucial gap, which James ignores, between the appetites of the present-day trade-union bureaucracy, which serves as an agent of capital within the working class in order to maintain itself in power, and the ranks of the unions, who have neither soft jobs nor fancy pension plans to protect them nor the opportunity for class collaboration with the ruling class.

Marxists have never said that trade-union organization or "trade-union consciousness" is sufficient in itself to make a revolution. There would be no need for a revolutionary vanguard party if that were so. James misleads her audience when she writes:

"We are told that we must bring women to what is called a 'trade union consciousness.' This phrase is Lenin's and it comes from a pamphlet called 'What is to Be Done?'"

This clearly implies that for Lenin trade-union consciousness is "the answer." But the whole point of *What Is to Be Done?* is precisely the need to transcend simple trade-union consciousness! Lenin writes:

"The spontaneous working-class movement is by itself able to create (and inevitably does create) only trade-unionism, and working-class trade unionist politics is precisely working-class bourgeois politics."

—V.I. Lenin. *What Is to Be Done?*

It is true that some left and even ostensibly Trotskyist organizations opportunistically tail uncritically every "left" bureaucrat and adapt to the most backward aspects of working-class consciousness, but this is a *betrayal* of Marxism, which we in the Spartacist League have consistently exposed. Dalla Costa's blanket charge that "the left" is "male-dominated" is particularly insulting to female revolutionaries, for it assumes that men will automatically dominate any organization, that no matter what level of consciousness they attain, women are really incapable of speaking up for themselves. This accusation is also insulting to male revolutionaries, because it is predicated on their incapability of transcending a chauvinist worldview and making a common struggle with women. It all boils down again to a New Left dictum: that "only the oppressed can really understand their own oppression."

### Conclusions

There exists in many women's organizations much confusion over the conclusions to be drawn from the works of Dalla Costa and James. This is because their rhetoric about "class struggle" partially obscures their real hatred of that struggle and their hostility to the proletariat. In truth, Dalla Costa and James have no program for women's liberation. Their "program" is solely one of *rejection*: women must reject work, must reject the left, must reject the



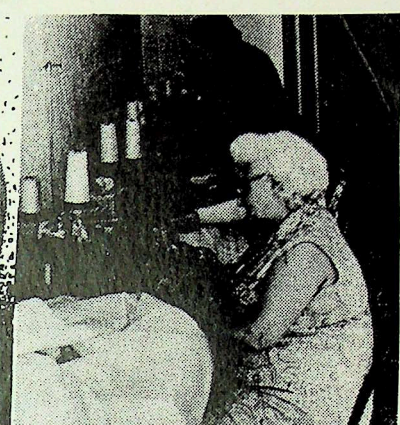
must reject their husbands, etc. And what substitutes do they propose? Only the purposely vague struggle itself." Struggle for *what*? Pompei replies, "What we want is not to become more productive, not to go off and be exploited better somewhere else, but to work less and to have more opportunity for social and political experience." Certainly a legitimate desire, and one shared by all the oppressed and exploited. But to dream of its achievement apart from the smashing of capitalist class society is sheer utopianism. Without an understanding of how capitalism operates and of how it can be overthrown, all concrete programmatic demands become mere cosmetic reforms, whose effect is to buttress not overthrow the system.

At the heart of Dalla Costa/James's theses is the belief that women *can* withdraw from capitalist society, *can* find their own unique road to salvation outside capitalist relations. And why try to fit housewives into the capitalist economic system at all if their strength really lies outside it? This is the most glaring contradiction of all.

The reason Dalla Costa/James attempt to fit housewives into the mold of Marxist "productive workers" is simply because they cannot cope with the challenge of Marxism to their feminist worldview in any other way. This thin veneer of "Marxism" is simply a cover for the same old New Left ideology that anyone who *works* has already sold out, in total ignorance of the

iron necessity, faced by most of the world, of working or starving. It is a reflection of the worldview of those privileged few, the petty-bourgeois "radicals" who have glorified primitivism to the extent of hailing the starving, diseased subsistence farmers of the "Third World" as the new revolutionary force. And while these armchair radicals refine their theories in air-conditioned comfort, the peasants whom they idealize are slaughtered *because of* their primitive resources. While it is nice that James is trying to "get over this guilt about having wall-to-wall carpeting," that is not the problem of most women (and men), who face the struggle to eat, to eke out a living somehow and to find a way to overcome the real material oppression they face, an oppression created by a society from which they *cannot* escape. James tells these working-class women to stop working, to reject their husband's wages and live on—what? Air? Or are they all supposed to come and sleep on her wall-to-wall carpeting? Is this what she means by "the movement will support them"? All of Dalla Costa/James's theories are mere playing at revolution without any real intention of actively seeking to smash capitalism. As Marx said, "All the philosophers have done has been to *interpret* the world differently, what matters is to *alter* it." And the point is not to walk away from capitalism or to create an alternative for the petty-bourgeois drop-outs within it—but to smash it forever and begin the construction of socialist society. ■





# QUEBECOISES DEBOUTTE!



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## BON DE COMMANDE

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Selma James & Mariarosa Dalla Costa, LE POUVOIR DES FEMMES ET LA SUBVERSION SOCIALE, Editions Adversaires, Genève, 1974.....\$2.00  
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# POURQUOI UN JOURNAL ?

Dans un texte d'introduction à l'enquête les buts de Québécoises Deboutte! étaient comme suit: servir d'outil de travail autant pratique que théorique, servir de plate-forme pour traiter de certaines questions importantes pour le mouvement de femmes, à savoir: l'autonomie de l'organisation des femmes, le travail ménager (en tant que travail productif pour le système capitaliste), le rôle de la répression sexuelle à l'intérieur de l'idéologie dominante.

Québécoises Deboutte s'adressait, y dit-on, aux femmes en lutte et à celles qui commencent à prendre conscience.

Tout cela est extrêmement important sans doute et justifie amplement la décision de lancer un journal. Mais ce dernier a-t-il atteint ces buts? Étaient-ce ceux qu'ils devaient se donner? Il aurait été téméraire de notre part d'essayer de répondre à ces questions sans consulter les lectrices au moins pour avoir quelques indices nous permettant d'amorcer le débat. Ce fut l'objet de l'enquête auprès des abonnées de juillet dernier, ainsi qu'auprès des militantes rencontrées au cours des derniers mois.

Toutes les raisons mentionnées plus haut sont excellentes mais il apparaît important à l'heure actuelle de continuer à faire un journal tel que Québécoises Deboutte, bien sûr, par nécessité - il n'y a aucun autre journal féministe de cette nature - pour le développement de la conscience des femmes dont il pourra servir à briser l'isolement vivement ressenti par les ménagères, comme appui aux luttes des femmes. Nous voudrions aussi que le journal facilite l'échange, la prise de contact entre nous toutes, première étape d'une organisation des femmes dont nous posons l'autonomie en principe de base.

Nous avons pris conscience de l'ambiguïté qui était entretenue à l'intérieur des articles, à savoir, s'adresse-t-on à des femmes isolées ou à des femmes déjà engagées dans une lutte quelconque. Nous avons donc pris la décision de faire des textes moins théoriques.



Le journal avait cessé de paraître depuis septembre dernier dû à la longueur imprévue d'une période de réflexion, d'orientation politique du groupe connu sous le nom de Centre des Femmes dont une des tâches étaient de le publier. Cette période est maintenant en partie terminée et nous commençons la réorganisation du groupe, du travail qui s'y faisait et l'organisation de celui qui s'y fera.

Vous comprendrez que dans ces conditions il nous sera impossible de ne pas retarder à nouveau la parution du journal d'environ deux mois. Nous sommes confiantes que vous ferez preuve encore d'une grande compréhension et votre intérêt pour le journal n'en sera pas amoindri. Il nous faut souligner à ce sujet que malgré le long retard mentionné plus haut nous avons enregistré environ 200 nouveaux abonnements, ce qui est pour nous d'un grand encouragement.

Donc, le journal Québécoises Deboutte! se réorganise. Nous pensons mettre sur pied une équipe stable dont la première tâche consistera à aller chercher la collaboration nécessaire à la rédaction et à la distribution sur laquelle nous mettrons des efforts particuliers. Il nous paraît souhaitable que de plus en plus de femmes à l'extérieur de Montréal puissent se procurer plus facilement le journal.

Déjà nous pouvons dire qu'une place sera prévue pour les lectrices, soit sous forme de Chronique aux lectrices qui ne sera pas un courrier du coeur, soit sous une autre forme. Nous espérons recevoir des lettres sur des sujets d'actualité, des problèmes que vous rencontrez, des réflexions sur des textes parus dans notre journal ou ailleurs, sur ce qui se passe chez-vous dans votre quartier, votre région, etc..

Des textes sur des sujets controversés ou qui vous intéressent seront bienvenus. Nous ne nous engageons pas à tout publier mais nous écrirons aux femmes qui nous auront envoyé des textes afin de les mettre au courant de nos décisions que nous gardions les manuscrits ou non. Si vous désirez conserver l'anonymat, nous le respecterons. Notre propre politique à ce sujet reste à clarifier et nous vous en ferons part dans la prochaine livraison du journal.

Nous comptons vraiment sur votre collaboration car la bonne volonté d'une équipe, si grande soit-elle, ne saurait suffire à rendre le journal plus accessible car il ne pourrait traduire que la conscience d'une minorité.



## Enquête auprès des abonnées

Il ne s'agissait pas, bien entendu, d'une enquête scientifique, beaucoup de questions étaient trop générales pour cela. De plus elles s'adressaient plutôt à des militantes, à des femmes regroupées. Il serait plus réaliste de parler d'un sondage d'autant plus que la période estivale ne favorisait pas de nombreux retours de questionnaire.

Toutefois et compte tenu des remarques qui précèdent nous sommes assez satisfaites des résultats du moins par leur qualité sinon par leur nombre.

L'intérêt manifesté par les répondantes qui nous ont fait d'excellentes remarques nous a aidé à repenser la formule du journal.

Dans l'ensemble, il n'y a pas de désaccord politique exprimé par les répondantes. Cependant, une critique revient tel un leitmotiv: les textes sont trop théoriques et s'adressent à une minorité de femmes conscientes. La même remarque nous fût faite par des militantes qui pour cette raison ne pouvaient diffuser le journal.

Certaines chroniques comme Femmes en lutte, Sexe et Politique ont soulevées des remarques fort intéressantes quant à l'importance de la première qui rend compte de luttes menées par des femmes et à la seconde qui renseigne et développe la conscience des lectrices au sujet de l'exploitation sexuelle des femmes.

Quant à la chronique Humour noir les avis sont partagés. Certaines pensent qu'il est bon de rire de nos propres travers et de situations où on se trouve alors que d'autres pensent le contraire.

Quelques répondantes se disent gênées par l'anonymat du journal. L'une d'elles faisait remarquer qu'il est difficile de s'identifier à des fantômes, et j'ajouterais encore moins de leur écrire.

## Collaboration

De nombreuses offres de collaboration nous ont été faites auxquelles nous n'avons pas toutes répondues jusqu'à maintenant. Toutefois, nous comptons reprendre contact avec toutes celles qui sont prêtes à nous aider.

Il nous a été suggéré de créer une Chronique des lectrices ou encore une Tribune dans laquelle il serait possible à celles qui le désirent d'écrire sur un sujet contreversé.

Plusieurs sujets et des plus variés nous ont été proposés - il serait trop long de les énumérer ici - ce qui nous aidera sans doute à mieux répondre aux désirs des lectrices.



# LA JOURNEE INTERNATIONALE

## DES FEMMES

Dans chaque partie du globe, il y a des millions de femmes de toutes races, de toutes nationalités qui subissent la même discrimination et exploitation.

Le sens que revêt notre journée, doit être la solidarité que dégage cette fête avec l'union de nos forces afin de vaincre.

Nous québécoises: travailleuses, ménagères, étudiantes de plus en plus on a pris conscience de notre condition. Le premier pas est fait. A nous de prendre contact avec notre entourage. Soit dans nos quartiers, usines, bureaux, villages où tous les jours on commence à s'organiser entre nous pour prendre en main nos revendications.

Les luttes amorcées se clarifient d'année en année et nos ennemis ne peuvent plus rester indifférent. Ils sont solides et nous combatives.

En 1973-74, ici au Québec, plusieurs groupes de femmes se sont mis sur pied. Et d'autres ont avancé dans leur bataille. Mais malheureusement nous ne pouvons que faire un bref éventail des luttes qui se sont menées.

POUR NOUS TOUTES, LE 8 MARS C'EST UNE JOURNEE DE SOLIDARITE.





## ceq : une prise de conscience

Au dernier congrès de la CEQ tenu au mois de juillet (du 3 au 6 juillet 1973), des enseignantes ont présenté quelques résolutions concernant la situation des femmes. Ces résolutions touchaient de près le problème des garderies, de la contraception, de l'avortement, de la discrimination et de la surexploitation des femmes sur le marché du travail; il était aussi question de l'image discriminatoire de la femme dans les manuels scolaires et des lois ou articles de lois aussi discriminatoires à l'égard des femmes.

Pour ces enseignantes, il devenait urgent que les déléguées (és) se penchent sur certains aspects particuliers de l'exploitation des femmes, cette centrale regroupant un peu plus de 46,000 femmes c'est-à-dire 66 2/3 % de ses effectifs. Le travail amorcé par les enseignantes au congrès ne s'est pas limité à ces quelques résolutions, heureusement adoptées. Il s'est poursuivi, mais de façon différente. Un comité sur la condition féminine a été formé au mois de septembre, et, libérées à demi-temps, cinq enseignantes ont pu entreprendre un travail d'information et de sensibilisation à travers les différents syndicats locaux de la province.



Jusqu'à maintenant, elles ont rencontré des femmes de Thedford Mines, de Québec, des Laurentides, de la Côte-Nord, du Lac St-Jean, de Sherbrooke, de Victoriaville, De Montréal, etc... Et chose nouvelle, dans les centrales, ces rencontres n'étaient pas réservées uniquement aux enseignantes mais étaient ouvertes aux ménagères, étudiantes et autres travailleuses. Cela a permis, dans certaines régions, le regroupement de femmes, jusqu'ici isolées, mais pourtant bien motivées à se battre autour de certaines revendications qui concernent les femmes.

A l'heure actuelle, 28 comités travaillent activement sur différents sujets relatifs aux problèmes des femmes dans leur région. Le comité sur la condition féminine, en plus d'organiser des rencontres avec des femmes, essaie de développer des instruments d'analyse et de travail comme la documentation, la recherche et l'information.





# La lutte pour l'avortement

Le 29 janvier 1974; à la suite de l'acquittement du Dr. Morgentaler, la Couronne fait appel et demande que le verdict d'acquittement soit cassé et que le Dr. Morgentaler soit condamné. On attend le jugement de la Cour d'appel d'ici quelques mois...

Le 12 février 1974, l'infirmière du Dr. Morgentaler est accusée de conspiration pour avortement.

Le ministère de la justice demande une "enquête privilégiée" dans le cas du Dr. MacHabee, arrêté le 4 juillet '73 et accusé d'avoir commis plusieurs avortements: cela signifie, que, comme pour le Dr. Morgentaler, le ministère veut qu'il y ait un procès, automatiquement, et le plus rapidement possible.

Le 21 février 1974, (un an jour pour jour après la perquisition au Centre des Femmes!) le Dr. Robert Tanguay ainsi que son infirmière et sa secrétaire sont arrêtés. Le docteur Tanguay a été accusé d'avoir commis 8 avortements.

Il est clair que le gouvernement n'a pas digéré l'acquittement du Dr. Morgentaler, et qu'il continue ses attaques contre les femmes en empêchant que des avortements médicaux soient pratiqués à Montréal.

Mais arrêter des médecins, c'est renvoyer les femmes chez les charlatans au risque d'y perdre leur vie. Ce n'est pas trop grave, puisqu'évidemment ce ne sont ni les femmes de juges ni les maîtresses des banquiers qui auront à subir de tels avortements.

Formé en septembre '73, le "Comité de Défense du Dr. Morgentaler et pour la contraception et l'avortement libre et gratuit" a entrepris quelques actions au début de l'hiver pour appuyer le Dr. Morgentaler, en particulier (lignes de piquetages devant le Palais de justice, assemblées publiques).

Tout dernièrement, une partie de ce comité (dont les militantes du Centre des femmes, de l'A.D.D.S., de la C.E.Q., du CRPS) s'est séparée pour former le "Comité de lutte pour la contraception et l'avortement libre et gratuit".

Par la création de ce comité de lutte pour la contraception et l'avortement libres et gratuits, nous entendons dépasser l'aspect juridique de la lutte. Nous ne voulons pas que notre lutte devienne uniquement une lutte pour le droit des médecins à pratiquer des avortements mais une lutte véritable et organisée des femmes pour le droit à une sexualité libérée des contraintes d'une grossesse non désirée. Le contenu de notre lutte implique des revendications qui nous concernent spécifiquement en autres le droit des femmes à choisir librement la maternité.



Afin d'élargir la lutte à des milliers de femmes, ménagères et travailleuses, nous ne voulons pas nous restreindre à des actions telles que assemblées générales, lignes de piquetage, manifestation, (actions jusqu'ici employées par le comité de défense du Dr. Morgentaler). Nous croyons toutefois important de maintenir des liens avec le comité de défense et d'envisager la possibilité de travailler ensemble sur des projets précis considérés importants pour la lutte des femmes.

Nous publierons prochainement un livre concernant le problème des femmes face à la contraception et à l'avortement au Québec; ce livre sera distribué largement dans tous les kiosques et librairies. De plus, le comité de lutte prendra en charge le service d'information et de références (du Centre des femmes) permettant aux femmes d'obtenir un avortement médical. Il s'agit, pour nous, d'améliorer ce service afin qu'il réponde mieux aux besoins des femmes, afin aussi qu'il nous permette d'élargir notre lutte dans le sens des intérêts véritables des femmes.

Notre lutte est loin d'être terminée, et nous devons être de plus en plus nombreuses à nous y impliquer, si nous voulons vraiment gagner le droit au contrôle de nos maternités, par la contraception et l'avortement libres et gratuits.

## Les garderies: un outil nécessaire.



- Novembre 1973: Coupure de budget.
- 27 novembre : Manifestation au bureau P.I.L.
- 30 novembre : Occupation du MAS à Montréal et rencontre avec le ministre Forget.
- 10 décembre : Occupations des bureaux de P.I.L. à Montréal.
- 11 décembre : Nous retournons occuper les bureaux de P.I.L.
- 13 décembre : Manifestation au Parlement.

Lors de cette manifestation, M. Poisson, chef de cabinet du ministre déclare que P.I.L. est prêt à subventionner dans la mesure et à la condition que les promoteurs de ces projets aient en leur possession un document indiquant qu'une source alternative de financement continu est disponible à compter du 1er mars 1974... Pendant ce temps, à Montréal, on fait signer des pétitions dans les comtés.  
(tiré de "Le Bulletin", janvier 1974)

La lutte dans les garderies se continue, afin que le gouvernement réalise l'importance de ce besoin, y consacre une part de son (notre!) budget mais surtout qu'il en laisse le plein contrôle aux usagers.



# EST-CE QU'ON VEUT VRAIMENT DES GARDERIES ?

Si vous aviez le choix, aimeriez-vous mieux envoyer vos enfants à la garderie ou le garder avec vous à la maison?

Si on posait cette question aux femmes québécoises, celles qui travaillent à l'extérieur comme les ménagères à plein temps, la majorité répondrait: "les garder à la maison".

Pourquoi alors certaines femmes (et aussi certains hommes) luttent-elles pour que le gouvernement crée partout au Québec des garderies populaires, gratuites et contrôlées par les parents? Pourquoi alors tout ce bruit dans les journaux et à la télévision sur le problème des garderies? Pourquoi tant de tapage si au fond les mères québécoises ne veulent pas des garderies?

Pourtant, le problème des garderies existe et s'il existe, c'est parce que des femmes, de plus en plus nombreuses, sentent et expriment leur besoin pour ce service.

Dans ce dossier, nous allons essayer d'expliquer ce "fameux" problème des garderies:

- Pourquoi beaucoup de femmes ne veulent pas des garderies?
- Pourquoi 'autres sont-elles prêtes à manifester dans les rues et jusqu'à Ottawa pour en avoir?

Ce sont des questions auxquelles il faut répondre si on veut avoir des idées plus claires sur certains problèmes des femmes et sur l'éducation des enfants.





## Madame Lemieux

Pour Madame Lemieux qui travaille à l'extérieur, et qui doit faire garder ses enfants, il n'y a pas mille solutions:

- soit qu'elle puisse les confier à une parente ou une voisine fiable...en payant.
- soit engager une gardienne à la maison, solution pratiquement impossible pour la majorité des femmes, vu le coût de ces gardiennes.
- soit qu'elle les place dans une garderie privée, quelquefois loin de chez-elle, et...en payant très cher, c'est-à-dire en moyenne \$25.00 par semaine, par enfant. (Quand on sait que les femmes au Québec forment une main-d'oeuvre sous-payée, les garderies privées c'est pas une solution pour tout le monde.
- soit, si ses enfants sont plus vieux, les habituer à se débrouiller tout seuls. Ca coûte pas cher mais... c'est inquiétant.

Quelques fois, Madame Lemieux ne pourra recourir à aucune de ces solutions et elle devra rester à la maison. Tout est bien vous me direz. Des Madames Lemieux c'est fait pour rester à la maison, faire le ménage et s'occuper des enfants.

Mais le problème, c'est qu'il y a de plus en plus de Madame Lemieux au Québec sur le marché du travail (plus d'un tiers de la population féminine en âge de travailler...).

Ces femmes ont les meilleures raisons du monde pour aller travailler. Certaines doivent faire vivre leur famille. D'autres y vont pour arrondir le budget parce que le salaire du mari est insuffisant. Beaucoup y sont obligées pour réussir à payer les dettes, ou du surplus, ou simplement les études des enfants. Et enfin, certaines y vont parce qu'elles ont besoin de sortir de la maison, de voir des gens, de se créer un milieu.

Ce sont toutes de bonnes raisons. Les femmes qui le veulent ont le droit de travailler à l'extérieur et de recevoir un salaire.



Mais notre société leur accorde ce droit seulement en paroles. Dans les faits, les Madame Lemieux doivent payer très cher ce droit au travail: les patrons profitent d'elles en leur donnant des jobs plates, mal payées et surtout en les obligeant à payer sur leurs salaires le coût des gardiennes ou des garderies. (Sans compter qu'en plus de leur travail, les femmes doivent aussi s'occuper de la maison).

Ces Madame Lemieux auraient donc tout intérêt à réclamer du gouvernement des garderies populaires dans leur quartier, gratuites et où elles pourraient placer leurs enfants avec confiance parce qu'elles auraient leur mot à dire sur ce qui s'y passe. Beaucoup d'entre elles, d'ailleurs, commencent à le faire.



## Madame Tremblay

Il y a aussi le cas de Madame Tremblay.

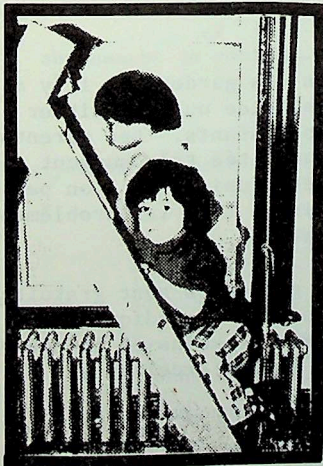
Madame Tremblay travaille à la maison à plein temps. Et quand on dit à plein temps, il n'y a rien de plus vrai. Le travail ménager n'est jamais fini. C'est toujours à recommencer et surtout, il n'y a pas d'heures, pas de fins de semaine, pas de vacances. C'est un travail que chaque femme fait toute seule, dans sa maison, avec personne à qui parler à part les enfants, le mari qui rentre le soir fatigué, et peut-être une voisine ou une amie de temps en temps.

Beaucoup de femmes sont devenues des Madame Tremblay parce qu'elles n'avaient pas le choix et qu'elles n'ont toujours pas le choix. Sans qualification, elles peuvent difficilement trouver un travail intéressant et payant. Si elles pouvaient avoir un travail, n'importe lequel, elles feraient face aux mêmes problèmes que rencontrent les Madame Lemieux. Elles préfèrent donc rester à la maison.



Mais il y a rester à la maison et rester à la maison. Beaucoup de Madames Tremblay aimeraient avoir du temps pour elles, un ou deux jours par semaine pour faire ce dont elles ont envie. Certaines aimeraient travailler à l'extérieur à mi-temps. D'autres voudraient s'engager dans la vie de leur quartier et participer aux activités organisées par des groupes populaires (cliniques médicales, juridiques etc.) Elles retrouveraient dans ces groupes le sentiment d'être utiles et appréciées, sentiment que souvent elles ont perdu en restant toujours à la maison. Mais à qui confier les enfants sans que ça coûte trop cher et sans qu'on doive toujours s'inquiéter?

Pour Madame Tremblay comme pour Madame Lemieux, le problème des garderies se pose avec la même urgence. Pourtant Madame Tremblay comme Madame Lemieux, les ménagères comme les travailleuses, continuent dans leur majorité à ignorer ce problème et à ne rien faire pour le résoudre. Pourquoi?



## Pourquoi ?

Chaque femme a sûrement ses raisons personnelles (la famille jaserait, le mari veut pas en entendre parler etc...) mais il y a au moins deux raisons qui sont générales à presque toutes les femmes.

En effet, beaucoup pensent que c'est bien mieux pour les enfants que ce soit leur mère qui les élève. Mais est-ce bien vrai?

A ce sujet, les femmes sont souvent contradictoires. D'un côté, elles affirment que c'est à elles seulement que revient le travail d'élever des enfants. Mais d'un autre côté, il arrive qu'elles soient dépassées par les événements... Et souvent on peut entendre ce genre de réflexions:

"En tout cas, je les élèverai pas comme ma mère m'a élevée..."

"J'ai toujours voulu être une amie pour mes enfants, mais je me prends toujours à crier après eux autres..."

"Je sais pas ce que je donnerais pour avoir une heure à moi, rien qu'une heure!..."

"Si c'était à refaire, peut-être que je recommencerais pas. Je savais pas ce qui m'attendait..."



En effet, bien des femmes ne savent pas ce qui les attend quand elles décident d'avoir des enfants. Toute leur vie, on leur a répété qu'elles étaient faites pour être mère mais on ne les a pas préparées à l'être et on ne les a surtout pas informées de ce que seraient vraiment leurs conditions de mère.

On n'a qu'à écouter les "hot lines" à la radio pour se rendre compte à quel point bien des femmes se sentent inquiètes et souvent malheureuses dans leur vie de mère et de ménagère.

"Je m'ennuie- J'ai pas une minute à moi - Je me sens toute seule - je sais pu quoi faire avec les enfants - Je me sens coupable de travailler pis de laisser les enfants - C'est pas irôle d'être enfermée à la maison!"

Est-ce que ces femmes seraient toutes dénaturées? Peut-être que non. Peut-être qu'elles se plaignent de problèmes qui existent vraiment et qu'elles ont raison de le faire. Peut-être que si elles allaient au fond des questions qu'elles se posent, elles verraient les choses qui ne tournent pas rond dans leur vie. Et peut-être qu'elles penseraient aux garderies comme un moyen de les libérer d'une partie de leurs soucis. Car les garderies leur permettraient certainement d'avoir du temps pour elle, du temps pour faire autre chose, du temps pour sortir des quatre murs. En tout cas, c'est un pensez-y bien.

Mais voilà, il n'y a pas de garderies, ou si peu. Et de plus les femmes s'en méfient. Elles ont peur que si jamais il s'en créait, leurs enfants y soient entassés comme dans une espèce de "parking" où personne ne s'occuperait d'eux vraiment. (Il y a déjà assez de problèmes à l'école où les enfants sont "paquetés" à trente dans une classe avec un seul professeur!)

Certaines femmes ont même déjà fait l'expérience des garderies et elles y ont reçu un très mauvais service...ce qui les a rendues encore plus craintives.

Pourtant, il y a des garderies où les enfants ne sont pas traités comme de petits animaux qu'il faut dresser mais où on pense que ce sont des êtres humains qui ont le droit d'être aimés, d'apprendre et d'être heureux.

Dans ces garderies, il y a une monitrice ou un moniteur par sept enfants. Les parents sont consultés très souvent dans des réunions où l'on peut discuter de tous les problèmes d'éducation.

Ces garderies sont gratuites (ou à prix très modique) et pourtant les soins et la nourriture y sont excellents.



Les enfants, même très jeunes apprennent à jouer ensemble, à partager leurs jouets et ils participent à toutes sortes d'activités (bricolage, artisanat, dessin etc...) Très souvent, ces enfants y sont mieux qu'à la maison où la mère, (peut-être la gardienne) partagée entre le ménage et les enfants n'a pas toujours le temps de leur accorder beaucoup d'attention. Ce qui n'empêche pas bien sûr les enfants d'être très contents quand leur mère ou leur père vient les chercher. D'autant plus contents qu'ils ont eu le temps de s'ennuyer un tout petit peu...

Ces garderies qui ne sont pas comme les autres (les privées où tout ce qui intéresse les propriétaires c'est de faire de l'argent) on les appelle les GARDERIES POPULAIRES.

Si on y regarde de plus près est-ce que ces garderies ça serait pas le début d'une solution?

Pour être plus en mesure de répondre à cette question, nous aurons dans le prochain numéro de ce journal un article sur les garderies populaires: comment elles sont nées, ce qu'elles sont maintenant, la lutte qu'elles ont menées contre le gouvernement, simplement pour pouvoir survivre.

Tiré du Droit Populaire  
Volume 11, no. 3  
signé: Danièle Lamoureux

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# Le pouvoir des femmes

et la

## subversion sociale

Les lectrices de Québécoises Deboutte! se souviendront sans doute d'une interview de deux féministes, Mariarosa Dalla Costa et Selma James, recueillie lors de leur passage à Montréal en mai dernier et publiée dans le no 6 du journal.

Nous avions annoncé alors la traduction française d'un petit livre qu'elles avaient signé. Il vient de paraître sous le titre: "Le pouvoir des femmes et la subversion sociale". Il est sans contredit le résultat de la rencontre de deux féministes dont les expériences se complètent à merveille pour notre bénéfice. M.-R. Dalla Costa docteur en droit, assistante à l'Institut des Sciences politiques et Sociales de l'Université de Padoue (Italie) et Selma James d'origine américaine, ménagère et ouvrière, vivant en Angleterre depuis 1960, sont toutes deux très actives dans le mouvement féministe.

Mariarosa et Selma qui se définissent elles-mêmes comme féministes-marxistes se sont donné pour tâche d'éclairer la vraie nature du rôle de la ménagère qui n'apparaissait pas clairement chez Marx.

Les hommes sont trop compromis dans le rapport de pouvoir qui sous-tend leurs relations avec les femmes. C'est pour cette raison que seules les femmes peuvent se définir elles-mêmes, aller de l'avant et lutter. p.64

Dans son introduction à l'édition anglaise Selma James dit du texte de M.-R. Dalla Costa, à juste titre, qu'il est une contribution majeure à la question que pose l'existence d'un mouvement international des femmes en pleine croissance: quel est le rapport des femmes au capital, et quel type de lutte pouvons-nous effectivement mener pour l'anéantir?



Afin de répondre à cette question Mariarosa commence l'analyse de l'exploitation des "sans salaire" de ce qu'elle appelle "l'usine sociale" dont le quartier général est la maison. Alors que nous parlons de plus en plus du salaire à la ménagère, par exemple, il me paraît nécessaire de prendre conscience du rôle de ce travail dans le monde actuel et des nouvelles possibilités de lutte qu'offre aux femmes, ménagères à temps plein ou ménagères-travailleuses, une analyse marxiste qui tienne compte du travail ménager qui selon Mariarosa est un travail productif au sens marxien du terme.

Le texte de Selma, "La place de la femme" publié pour la première fois aux Etats-Unis en 1953 exprime les difficultés éprouvées par les femmes ménagères et ouvrières en tant qu'immigrantes du Sud et de l'Est à destination de l'Ouest et décrit en termes simples la vie des femmes à partir d'expériences vécues.

La célibataire, la femme mariée, la famille, les enfants, le mari, la femme travailleuse, les déléguées syndicales, quelque soit la place qu'une femme occupe elle se reconnaîtra quelque part dans ce texte que le temps n'a pas usé et qui apporte un éclairage direct au texte plus théorique de Mariarosa.

Même s'il faut bien l'avouer, il ne s'agit pas d'abord d'une oeuvre littéraire - la traduction française laisse à désirer à maints endroits - ce petit livre demeure très important pour toutes les femmes désireuses de réfléchir sur leur condition d'êtres doublement exploitées et de travailler à briser l'isolement dans lequel nous maintient la société capitaliste. A lire et à relire.

Le pouvoir des femmes et la subversion sociale, Librairie Adversaire, Genève, 147 pp. disponible à la fin de mars au Centre des Femmes, 4319 Saint-Denis, au prix de \$2.



POUR CELLES QUI DEMENAGENT:

étant donné que le prochain no de Québécoises Deboutte! ne vous parviendra pas avant le 1er mai, nous vous prions de nous faire part de tout changement d'adresse au plus tôt.



# SPECTACLE .....

Chanson du boss (air: "Le Frigidaire".)

Tant que les femmes resteront ben isolées  
J'f'rai mon profit, j'ferm'rai ma gueule,  
pis j's'rai l'patron  
Mais y a quéqu'chose qui m'dit qu'ça tourne  
pas rond  
Les ménagères commencent à r'mettre ça en  
question

Avant ça marchait ben  
Les femmes comprenaient rien  
Y dev'naient des p'tites mères  
A partir de 16 ans  
Y m'faisaient des enfants  
Quasiment en série  
C'tait d'la vraie production  
D'main-d'oeuvre à bon marché

(refrain)

Avant a s'avortaient  
Mais au moins y en crevaient  
Pis celles qui survivaient  
En mouraient de chagrin  
A z'allaient s'confesser  
A mon chum le curé  
Qui les faisaient pleurer  
Sur leur âme damnée

(refrain)

J'ai t oujours mes curés  
Pis mes docteurs bornés  
En plus j'ai la TV  
Pis la loi d'mon côté  
Pourtant ça suffit pas  
A mettr' les femmes au pas  
A parlent de liberté  
De leur droit d'décider

(refrain)

J'sais qu'a veulent des enfants  
Mais à leurs conditions  
Pas n'importe comment  
Pis pas n'importe quand  
Ca y en est pas question  
Si j'veux garder pour moi  
L'contrôle d'la production  
Pis d'la reproduction

(refrain)

Y m'faut des travailleurs  
Pis des consommateurs  
Y m'faut du monde aussi  
Pour les entretenir  
C'est les femmes à maison  
Qui me font c'te job-là  
Si ça s'met à changer  
Mon système va casser

(refrain)

Les p'tites mères rêvez pas  
J'vous ferai pas d'cadeau  
La loi j'la chang'rai pas  
Que ça vous plaise ou non  
Mais, j'peux dormir tranquille  
J'vous ai d'jà isolées  
Pis du fond d'vos cuisines  
Vous pouvez pas lutter

(refrain)



Chanson des femmes

(air "M. le Président")

Partir pour la famille  
Quand tu l'veux c'est ben beau  
Mettre un enfant au monde  
Ca t'emplit l'coeur de joie  
Mais quand tu n'en veux pas  
Qu'est-ce qui te reste à faire  
Le garder malgré tout  
Ou ben t'faire avorter

Décider d'avorter

Décider d'avorter  
C'est ben facile à dire  
Mais pas facile à faire  
C'est pas légalisé  
Tu peux tout essayer  
Te r'trouver chez l'boucher  
Ou t'avorter toi-même  
Mais tu risques d'en crever

C'est ça le choix des femmes  
C'est ça la liberté  
Faire l'amour tant qu'on veut  
Mais payer toute not'vie  
Avorter (sans danger)  
C'est ça que l'on demande  
Mais pour être un sécurité  
Où c'est qu'on va aller

Finale

Face à toute répression  
Nous développons nos armes  
bis {Combattons notre exploitation  
Il est fini le temps des larmes

C'est à nous de décider  
Des enfants que nous voulons  
C'est aussi à nous de lutter  
Pour changer notre société  
Pour faire un monde où ils pourront  
Connaître enfin la liberté

Note: ces chansons sont une création collective des femmes  
ayant participé à la pièce de théâtre présentée lors  
de la fête du 8 mars à Montréal.



opinion

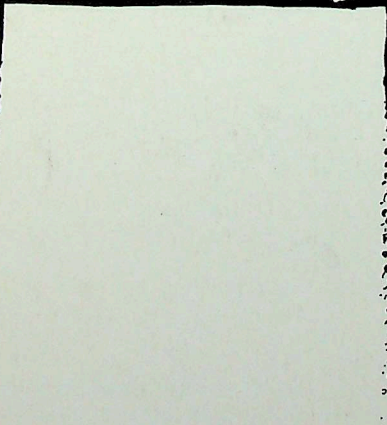
des

lectrices

Note : Nous attendons vos lettres , opinions pour le  
prochain numéro avec beaucoup d'impatience.



de: Québécoises Deboutte!  
4319 St-Denis,  
Montréal,  
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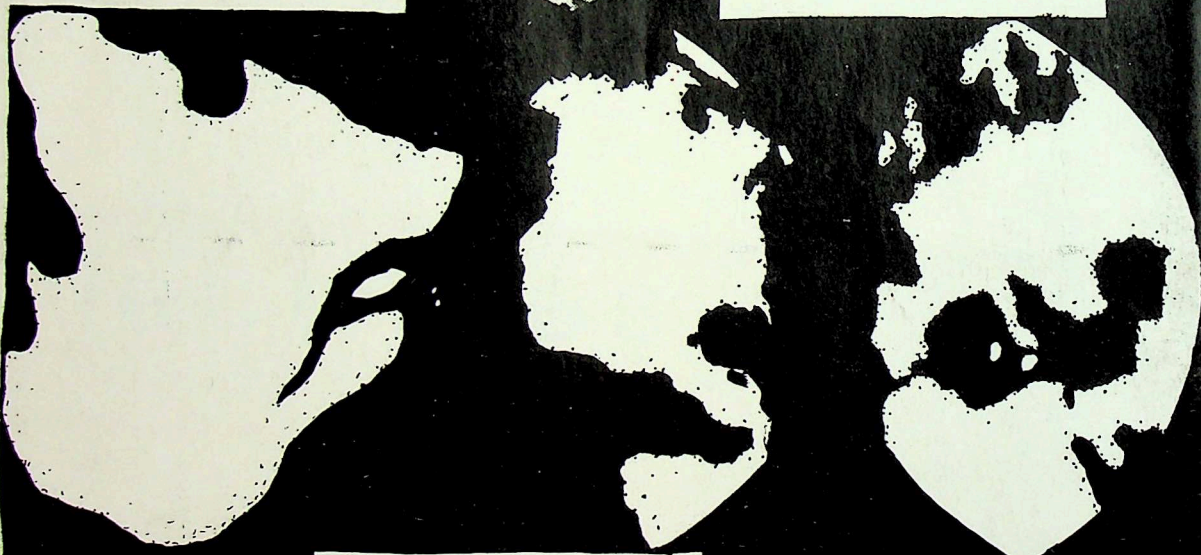


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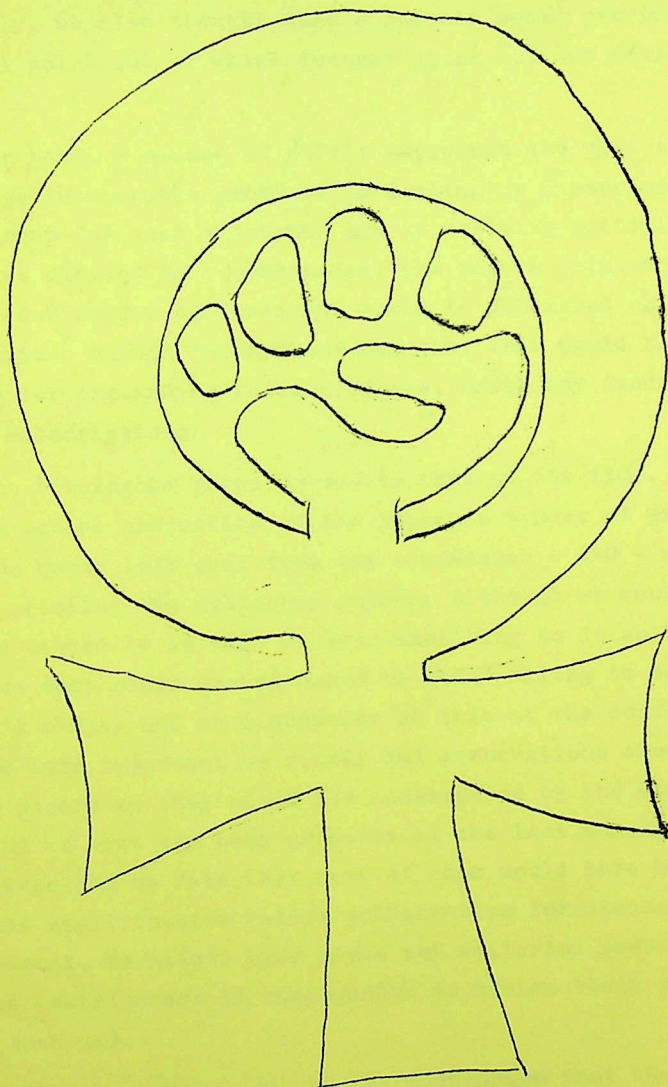




Suz Rosa

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THE FAMILY AND CAPITALISM + STRATEGY FOR THE  
WOMEN'S MOVEMENT



collection of papers from the Women's Conference on Women's  
Liberation and Socialism - Birmingham, March 17th/18th 1973.



ON THE QUESTION OF A JOURNAL

At the first Marxist Feminist conference in Birmingham there was some discussion about the possibility of our setting up a journal. There was widespread support for the idea in principle since in the first place, most people felt the need to continue and develop some kind of systematic discussion of theoretical and strategic questions, and, secondly, we also thought that a journal would provide us with a common focal point out of which further joint actions could arise in the future.

On the other hand, a number of people expressed the view that there was at this stage insuperable problems in setting up a representative editorial group for such a journal and in defining editorial policy. In the end we decided on a compromise: the papers written for the conference (and future conferences) would be published as a collection for distribution within the rest of the WLM. This would be done by the group responsible for organising the conference, using any funds left over from conference subscriptions.

Although the Birmingham group agreed to this at the time, as soon as we came to the actual production of the papers a number of problems emerged. Firstly, the money left over from the conference - £40 - was quite inadequate for printing the collected papers. Although we could have raised the extra money needed to do this we were unwilling to do so because we had no guarantee that other groups would be able/willing to meet any financial losses. (We'd simply had no discussion of this at the conference). Secondly, and perhaps more important we simply had reservations about producing the conference papers as they stood for consumption by the movement as a whole. The majority of them had been produced at the last moment for discussion at the conference and we felt that many of them would have benefited from revision and amplification before presentation for discussion to the rest of the movement. We hadn't been given any editorial powers by the conference so we asked contributors if they wanted to revise their papers, which one or two of them did.

In general though we have come to the conclusion that the kind of papers produced for conferences are not necessarily going to be the same as those which we would like to present for a wider discussion. We also feel that



DALLA COSTA\*

This is not an attempt to summarise Dalla Costa's article: she covers too much ground for that to be possible in two pages. I've just picked out what I think are some of the main points of her analysis, and said why I think her analysis is important.

The key to Dalla Costa's argument is the fact that the work that women in the home is basic to the production of the commodity labour power. If you accept this, it has a lot of important practical as well as theoretical implications.

Since the question of women producing labour power is so fundamental, I'll quote in full Selma James's description of what labour power is (p.7 of her introduction to Mariarosa's article in "The Power of Women" cited below). Labour power, that is, the ability to work, is a saleable commodity in capitalism. The only way most people can earn any money is by selling this commodity.

"This is a strange commodity for it is not a thing. The ability to labour resides only in a human being whose life is consumed in the process of producing. First it must be nine months in the womb, must be fed, clothed and trained; then when it works its bed must be made, its floors swept, its lunchbox prepared, its sexuality not gratified but quietened, its dinner ready when it gets home, even if this is eight in the morning from the night shift. This is how labour power is produced and reproduced when it is daily consumed in the factory or the office. To describe its basic production and reproduction is to describe women's work."

and she goes on from this

The community therefore is not an area of freedom and leisure auxiliary to the factory, where by chance there happen to be women who are degraded as the

personal servants of men. The community is the other half of capitalist organisation, the other area of hidden capitalist exploitation, the other, hidden source of surplus labour."

The point is quite simply that in capitalism, people have to sell their labour power to an employer, who makes profit out of the fact that he gives you less in your wage packet than he makes out of you. The basis of capitalism is this wage relation, and the whole system can't function unless labour power is being produced and reproduced - that is unless women are giving birth, and someone is making sure that the new baby is trained over the years so that she or he is fit to work, while at the same time those people who are working are refuelled, if you like, so they are ready to work again each day.

Do housewives have social power?

Now although it may seem pretty obvious that all this is the work that's going on in the home, 'Marxist' analyses usually miss it out. What they say is that women in the home don't produce directly for capitalism, because they don't produce directly anything that is bought and sold on the market (i.e. they don't produce a 'commodity'). They say that in the home women are providing certain services for the family, but the only time they produce directly for capitalism (i.e. produce a commodity) is when they go to work in an office, factory or shop. If you accept that, a lot of things flow from it. When you are producing something that capitalism needs, then you have social power. If you say that women in the home don't produce commodities, you're saying that housewives have no social power. So if you're saying that women are producing directly for capital only when they 'go out to work'

Birmingham Study Group.



then you're saying that if women are to have any social power, they can get it only by going 'out' to work.

This analysis lies behind the familiar line which says that we should concentrate on organising with 'working' women (i.e. those who work outside the home), because women who go out to work will be more militant than women working in the home and more powerful. Thus organising round factories is thought to be, by definition, the most important and most 'political' thing to do. This misses the point that in the home, women produce the most basic commodity of all, labour power, and essentially denies the need for an autonomous women's movement whose task is to destroy the material basis of women's oppression (the fact that women are forced to produce labour power) and so destroy the whole 'feminine' role that goes with it. The destruction of the wage system on which this society is based means destroying both the wage system of the factory, and the production line of the home which produces wage labourers.

#### The implications of the Dalla Costa analysis

Firstly, she is saying that work crucial to capitalism is going on in the home, and that women work directly for capital as housewives - whether we like it or not. The work women do contributes to capital's ability to make profit both because it produces the commodity on which the whole system is based, and because it is not directly paid for. When the employer pays the male worker a wage, that wage buys not only the labour power of the man, but also the labour power of his wife working in the home. If all this 'invisible' work had to be paid for directly, not only would the housewife have some money of her own, with all that that implies for her independence, but there would be

more money coming into that household, and less profit for capital. Hence the demand - let them pay us for the work we do.

Secondly, she is saying that the 'feminine virtues' that are demanded of us as women can all be traced back to the role we are forced to play as producers and reproducers of labour power. In her article Dalla Costa develops this by showing the 'productivity' of the female role in all its aspects. She holds that the situation of every woman in this society springs directly from the situation of the housewife, and that even women who work outside the home are housewives as well and are defined as such outside the home as well as in, before marriage (as potential housewives) as well as after.

Thirdly, she is saying that women can be united as a group round the fact that they produce labour power, and round the social power this gives them.

Fourthly, she says that women as a group form a crucial link between the factory and the community outside it because only they are in both places, working in the home and out of it.

The immediate implications of this analysis for the women's movement are obvious. If the situation of the housewife determines the situation of all women, then we have to find ways of reaching women in the home, of doing something about that situation of housewife. We have often shied away from organising with housewives as a group because it seems so difficult, each woman isolated in her home. (This is one reason why the idea of going to factories, where women are already together, has been given a lot of emphasis. This is important too if we see that the peculiar discrimination that women suffer when they work outside the home is based on



Firstly it is clear that for Marx production and reproduction are not separate but inter-connected as part of the same process:

"Whatever the form of the process of production in a society, it must be a continuous process ... Society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed therefore as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time a process of reproduction. The conditions of production are also those of reproduction. If production be capitalistic in form, so, too, will be reproduction..." (op cit p.578).

"Variable capital is therefore only a particular historical form of the fund for providing the necessities of life, or the labour fund which the labourer requires for the maintenance of himself and his family, and which, whatever be the system of social production he must himself produce and reproduce" (note the assumption, built into the language that the labourer must be a man and the not so automatic assumption that he himself "produces and reproduces" his labour power)

Marx, it is clear, considers production and reproduction of capital not as separate processes but as two aspects of the same process. It is also clear that the production and reproduction of labour power is vitally connected to that process. However the passages in which he considers the production and reproduction of labour-power as such are made rather more difficult because they are entered by way of a discussion of consumption; on the one hand the worker's "productive consumption" of the means of

production, on the other his individual consumption of the means of subsistence. The two are initially described as distinct:

"In the former he acts as the motive power of capital, and belongs to the capitalist; In the latter he belongs to himself, and performs his necessary vital functions outside the process of production"

It seems clear from this that the process of production and of reproduction of labour power are "quite distinct". But Marx then proceeds to recall how "in treating of the Working day we saw that the individual was often compelled to make his individual consumption a mere incident of production" ... "he supplies himself with necessaries in order to maintain his labour power, just as coal and water are supplied to the steam engine and oil to the wheel ... his individual consumption is directly productive consumption" (ibid p.584).

"This however" Marx then says "appears to be an abuse not essentially appertaining to capitalist production". But with typically Marxian irony what appears to be exceptional provides the clue to the full appreciation of the phenomenon. He goes on to say that if we look not at an isolated process but at "capital production in full swing and on its actual social scale ... The individual consumption of the working class is ... the reconversion of the means of subsistence given by capital in exchange for labour into fresh labour-power the disposal of capital for exploitation. It is the production and reproduction of that means of production so indispensable to the capitalist, the labourer himself. The individual consumption of the labourer, whether it proceed within the workshop or outside it, whether it be part of the process of production or not,

forms therefore a factor in the production and reproduction of capital: just as cleaning machinery does, whether it be done while the machinery is working or while it is standing ... The maintenance and reproduction of the working class is, and must ever be, a necessary condition to the reproduction of capital. But the capitalist may safely leave its fulfilment to the labourer's instinct of self-preservation and of propagation" - and this work as Maria Rosa and Selma ought never to have even had to point out, this "production and reproduction" or "maintenance and reproduction" of the male labourer is done by women - mother, wife, or paid female worker. According to Marx therefore commodity production and the production and reproduction of labour-power itself are not separate but part of the same process.

This is why the work of women in the home can appear to be outside the process of production while actually, at this historic moment, being essential to it and therefore part of it.

As to the question whether this work is directly productive of surplus value or not, there is a debate going on on this topic and about the whole question of what is "productive" and "unproductive" labour in the Marxist sense: according to Ian Gough in *New Left Review* No. 76, modern developments have highlighted the unresolved ambiguities in Marx's own statements and analysis. I don't feel competent to resolve these ambiguities, but I do feel that I have to accept the main thesis of Maria Rosa Dalla Costa on the economic importance of women's work in the home to capitalism and of the centrality of the housewife to the understanding of the position of women in present-day capitalism, and to understanding how to get women into action to change both that position and the system that demands it.

It is very important that we do not get too bogged down in the theory itself. What seems to me the most important thing at the moment is that we are for the first time discussing the economic importance for capitalism of the work of women in the home and examining the kind of strategy that flows from it. It is clear, for example, that if that work had to be purchased with wages it would be very expensive - that the unpaid work of women in the home allows workers, men and women, to be paid much less than they would have to be if they were all having to pay for meals already cooked, for laundry, for child-care, for cleaning etc. So we are not merely discussing an area of ideological and psychological oppression, though that is important too, which will all be taken care of when women all get jobs outside their homes and participate on an equal footing with men in making the socialist revolution.

Such a conclusion has important consequences for our movement. What does it mean?

That we are saying that we ought to ignore the problems of women working outside the home? I don't think so. Rather it means that most of those women will also have many of the same problems as housewives because they are also housewives - or if they are single women because they have to reproduce their own labour power a lot more cheaply than male workers, sometimes also looking after dependants without any financial recognition of that work because it is the work that women are always expected to do for nothing.

It means that women who work in shops and factories or offices or who teach in schools will also be interested in the question of Family Allowances, as will housewives.

Of course such women will also have specific problems to organise around like pay and conditions of work and that any gains they make



will affect housewives as well, but they are not two separate species of women - the "housewife" and the "worker" although they may have learned to think of themselves that way.

Nor do I think we ought to get hung-up in an argument as to whether we ought to demand "wages for housework" or "socialization of housework" - as Margaret Benston pointed out what we will get under capitalism is the same form of "socialized housework" as we have "socialized industry" - i.e. "capitalized housework" which is just as much and no more socialized as capitalist industry itself.

I think we must realize that the demand for women to be paid for the work they do has not come out of the heads of theoreticians but from the mouths of housewives themselves - and that the anger at the threatened withdrawal of the Family Allowance Book is seen as the withdrawal of the only financial recognition of the work done by women in looking after children.

Nor does there seem to me to be any necessary contradiction between saying "pay us for the work we do now" and saying "we want to change our work" any more than, say, a demand for higher wages by a factory worker necessarily means that he or she does not want to end the wages system.

Maria Rosa when she wrote her pamphlet put forward the perspective of "refusing the role of housewife" - this seemed to me a good perspective - but it could become merely Utopian, except for a few pockets of women here and there, renouncing home for "the struggle itself" is only possible if we see what we are struggling for. It is capable of becoming more concrete and the demand "pay us for the work we do" could be one of the things that makes it so. (see Wages for Housework by Giuliane Pompeii of Moderna).

A week or so ago a West Indian woman at a Family Allowance meet-

ing said to a couple of us. "We work very hard and we get no money. Housewives should go on strike but we too coward". No-one at the meeting had mentioned wages for housework!

Obviously there is no single demand that will work like a magic wand. We have to be aware though of what women themselves want because only those things will build a movement that can succeed.

Ellen Malos

Maria Rosa Dalla Costa & Selma James:

The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community

Falling Wall Press, Bristol.

Karl Marx,

Capital vol. 1. (Edward Aveling Trans)

International Publishers, New York

## A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION OF THE FAMILY AND THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

### UNDER CAPITALISM.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION.

A historical analysis of the oppression of women would have to start from an examination of the ways in which the mode of production and the social arrangement of reproduction and human sexuality are inter-related in any epoch and of the ways in which social organization and ideology support and sustain the relationships between the two. (This involves recognising the significance of human sex differences, the process of human reproduction, and the helplessness of human infants; and the extent to which these acquire social meaning within the context of and in relation to a particular social formation). This method of approach enables us to see that there are not two separate systems - that of reproduction and that of production - but two inter-related and inter-dependant systems. The unit of social organization in which these inter-relationships have generally been structured is the family. The family is never simply a biological unit; 'it is a creature of the social system and reflects its culture'.

This theme is developed by Engels in 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State'. In it Engels shows that the family is not a natural institution, nor are women naturally the subordinate sex. He traces the relationship between the development of private property and the state, and the emergence of male domination and the patriarchal family; a development which has led to the 'world historic defeat of the female sex'.

However there are important shortcomings in 'The Origin' for us:-  
Firstly its method of analysis is weak. The process of human history which is outlined is a process of development through a series of stages; an understanding of the uneven and combined nature of such developments is missing. Thus the way has been open for bourgeois social scientists to argue against Engels with greater credibility than they deserve (arguing that Morgan's anthropology is outdated, that the history of human societies is one of infinite and chaotic variety, that whatever tasks women have performed in pre-literate and pre-industrial societies their position has always been inferior



to that of men, etc.) In criticising these bourgeois scientists, we have not only to show that they are wrong, but we also have to acknowledge the weakness in Engels' method and attempt to correct it. These are important questions for research and analysis, but they are not the most decisive questions for us; for even if women had always been oppressed, even if the patriarchal family had always existed, the levels of development which are possible to-day render these (and other oppressive and exploitative) relationships potentially unnecessary.

Secondly, Engels does not begin to explore how the family and the oppression of women develop in capitalist society - which is the area which centrally concerns us. And yet we have to go back to Engels because the Marxist contribution since has been so thin.....

## 2. THE FAMILY IN EARLY CAPITALISM.

In pre-capitalist society home work and family were co-extensive for the mass of the population; so that domestic labour was inseparable from the labour of general production. The old, children, women and men all played some part in production in and around the home - in cottage industry, agriculture or some combination of these. Direct control over the families of the mass of the population was minimal; the structural cohesion of these families derived from the economic interdependence of the members of the family productive unit. The families of the wealthy needed greater protection; family law was drawn up around the questions of property, inheritance and the marital and paternal rights of the man; for a long period such laws remained largely irrelevant to the mass of people. However it is this framework of law (which has been greatly extended) which has been increasingly imposed on the working class as capitalism has developed. Similarly aspects of the organization and ideology of the family which arise out of the relationships in the families of the propertied class, have been more generally applied. For example the notion of family relationships as property relationships, with wife and children as the property of the man, was most explicit in the 19th century bourgeois man's possession of his wife as idle, decorative and powerless symbol of his own success. Despite significant modifications in law (recognising women's rights

to property, divorce, the vote etc.) the assumption that the woman is the property of her husband persists in diverse and subtle forms, and particularly the assumption that children are the property of their parents - generally the father - is deeply entrenched. Similarly the subordination of female sexuality, most explicit in the denial of sexual feelings of the 19th century bourgeois lady, persists in widespread - popular and 'scientific' - conceptions of female sexuality as essentially passive, dependant, simply a response to the male; and finds expression in the denial of rights to contraception and abortion, for example, and in the oppression of gay people, especially gay women.

The development of the capitalist mode of production had complex and contradictory effects on the family. These changes develop out of the separation of labour and capital; Marx wrote:

The capitalist system presupposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means by which they realise their labour. As soon as capitalist production is firmly established it not only maintains this separation but reproduces it on a continually extending scale.

This separation is necessary for the accumulation of capital, in which process the bourgeois family plays an important part. It creates the class of labourers whose only means of subsistence is from the sale of their labour power. But the separation is reproduced on a continually extending scale: it involves the separation of the home from the place of work, the separation of domestic labour from commodity production; this process has obscured the real nature of domestic labour, and is an important source of the mystification of the position of the woman - the domestic labourer - in the family. But it also indicated a way of escape from the family, as there appeared to be no structural necessity for the sale of labour power to be dependant on family position; of course that possibility is not realised under capitalism, which is one reason why the 'woman question' is a recurrent 'problem' during the capitalist epoch.

During the early phase of capitalist industrialisation the rate of exploitation was so crude and indiscriminate that there was a tendency for family life and relationships to be undermined. All who were more or less able-bodied could sell their labour power - variations in size, skill and strength could all be utilised. However, gradually it became clear that such crude exploitation was counter productive (economically inefficient, technologically



unnecessary, excessively damaging not only to the future labour force, ideologically dangerous). The working class was not allowed to disintegrate, but was re-enforced. As capitalism has developed the working class family has been brought increasingly under the control of the state and tied into state apparatuses. This trend has emerged out of a series of changes, each of which in itself has seemed in some sense progressive, a victory won from the system; it is important to understand the contradictory processes involved, as they continue and in fact intensify in late capitalism.

For example, protective legislation covering women and children, in effect re-asserted the position of man as breadwinner (thus he had to continue to work in inhuman conditions down the mines etc.), and implied that domestic labour was the woman's responsibility. However this did not mean the exclusion of women from the labour force; throughout the capitalist era working class women have taken paid employment wherever and whenever this has been available, and have been used as a cheap and reserve pool of labour.

The development of capitalism has meant: the separation of domestic labour from general production, the assumption that the domestic labourer should be the woman, the exclusion of the man from domestic labour whilst establishing that the maintenance of wife and children was his responsibility.

Children were excluded from employment and sent to schools; they became economically dependant on their parents, and a liability for them to maintain at the same time they became more directly under the ideological control of the state; in one sense they gain a new independence from the family.

### 3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE POSITION OF THE WOMAN IN THE FAMILY AND THE CENTRAL RELATIONS OF COMMODITY PRODUCTION.

#### (i) THE REPRODUCTION OF THE LABOUR FORCE.

How is the woman's position in the family structurally linked to the central relations of capitalism? In the family the woman undertakes domestic labour for which no direct payment is made; her production is of use values for the direct benefit of the immediate family members - shopping, preparation of food, house cleaning and keeping, laundry, care of children etc. Her conditions of work are privatised, she is isolated from other domestic workers

she even seems to be her own boss'. The situation of wife/mother/domestic worker seems to be something quite apart from the world of wage labour. Yet where these services are performed outside the home (or inside it by a servant or housekeeper instead of wife) they do have an exchange value. And if we examine the position of the woman at home in relation to the worker's relation to commodity production we can identify the structural inter-dependance linking domestic labour to commodity production. (This relationship is examined in greater detail in the appendix).

In the home the woman's work is concerned with the maintenance and re-production of the labour force. Her activities ensure that the worker is fed, clothed, rested, able to resume work the following day; by having and rearing children she provides the next generation of domestic and wage workers; all these services are essential to the continuance of capitalist production. However they are not explicitly acknowledged by the capitalist; although the wage paid to the worker must cover the cost of these services (more or less), what the worker actually does with his wage is a 'private' matter. This is one example of the anarchic nature of relationships in capitalist society. It means that while the capitalist 'profits not only by what he receives but by what he gives to the labourer', no responsibilities attach to the capitalist's gain. The worker is 'free' to spend his wage more or less as he pleases; if he drinks very heavily so that his wife and children suffer, that appears as his individual irresponsibility (not the irresponsibility of the capitalist, or of the way in which the society is organized). Thus capital appropriates the use values of domestic labour, but it does so indirectly; domestic labour is necessary to the production of surplus value, but it does not itself produce surplus value. It is in this way that we can understand the relative powerlessness of domestic labour compared to wage labour, and also the extreme importance of domestic labour in the development of class struggle.

The husband/worker sells his own labour power to the capitalist for his wage; his wife cares for his home, his children, himself, and he maintains her. What remains obscured is that these activities are dependant on one another and both serve the interests of capital. This helps us to explain many aspects



of the mystification of the family and the position of the woman within it. The family can appear to the husband/worker (and also in some socialist analysis to be a defence and refuge against the general system of production, and he does derive from it immediate benefits, which provide the material basis for male chauvinism. To the domestic labourer/wife the family appears to be the reason for her very existence, the source of her social identity, her unpaid work is not really work, it may even seem a 'labour of love'; her skill and ingenuity may cushion the family through periods of soaring prices, low income - low wages, lack of over-time, unemployment etc. - without extensive suffering. The man's responsibility to maintain the family limits his action and his militancy. The woman's position of economic dependency is the material basis of her conservatism, psychological, sexual dependency.

(ii) THE REPRODUCTION OF THE RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION.

From this analysis it is apparent that the family and the woman within it also provide ideological support for the social relations of capitalism. The continuation of capitalism requires not only the reproduction of the forces of production, but also of the relations of production. The existing labour force must be reinforced in its commitment or submission to the ruling ideology and its practice, and the next generation of labourers must be inculcated with its ideas. To recognise this does not of course mean that the social organization of the family, and the ideas attaching to it, are explicitly planned and manipulated by the ruling class; but it does mean that the family is not a neutral institution, rather one serving, in the long run, ruling class interests. In one important sense the family reproduces the relations of production because it exists within a totality of social relations governed by the law of value. However it is not enough to say this, for it underemphasises the significance of the content of the bourgeois ideology of the family, implying that that ideology will simply disappear once a revolution has smashed the law of value. (Whereas we would argue that only in a process of permanent revolution, with the development of conscious policies and organization to this end, would real progress towards the disintegration of the family and the liberation of women be possible). The ideology of the family

and the ideological significance of the family to capitalism is an area of analysis which has been largely ignored by Marxists; we can merely outline some aspects which seem important.

The woman disciplines her husband for capital simply by emphasising his 'responsibilities' to his family, their dependence on his wage. Thus the family is always a potential threat to the solidarity of male workers struggling against capital, but a threat which can be turned into a crucial source of support, as for example in the miner's strike of 1972. (This is something which has yet to be fully understood by most male trade unionists and revolutionaries). The social and economic dependence of children on their parents ensures that men and women are tied more tightly into commodity production. The low levels of women's pay ensure that women, especially with young children are tied into marriage. Child-centredness in contemporary capitalism means above all working harder so that children may have some of the benefits their parents missed, pushing children to do and be what parents had no opportunity for; it means maintaining a marriage, despite breakdown in the relationship between husband and wife, for 'the sake of the children'.

The organization of social life under capitalism is such that marriage family appear to be, and especially for women, the only defence against poverty and loneliness; for the majority of the population there seems to be no alternative. Thus divorcees hasten to re-marry; and those who live outside the family unit - women with children, gay people etc. - are punished economically, socially, psychologically. The spontaneous revolt of youth against authority (often specifically the authority of the family) which is expressed in widespread law breaking, the rock and drug scenes etc. is contained not so much by police, courts (the repressive state apparatus), social workers and so on, as by marriage; the process of settling down into family life involves settling into the capitalist system. (This is true for many one-time student radicals and revolutionaries as well).

In providing apparent relief from the alienation of work, a setting in which a man can assert himself, can feel himself to be boss, and in which even a woman can dominate over children, the family reinforces continuing acceptance



of capitalist social relations. On the other hand the idea that within the family people are able to be themselves, have freedom for self expression and development, and women find their true fulfilment, are constantly contradicted by the experience of family life.

In the care and socialisation of children women are involved in the preparation of the next generation for their place in the system, playing the major part in the earliest years of the child's life. Within the family the child learns not only an individual identity and a sexual identity, but inextricably tied into these a social identity. The social significance of being male or being female, the socially associated patterns of dominance and subordination, the definition and control of sexuality are imposed upon the young within and through the family. The primacy of the woman's responsibility for children is justified ideologically by 'nature' or religion or convenience. Yet the situation is a complex one, for while women are oppressed by their responsibility for their children they are also the agents of their children's oppression.

As capitalism has developed this early care for the young has become increasingly focused as the responsibility of the mother alone. In the early phase of capitalist development care for the young was often shared by female kin, and such patterns have persisted until recently in long established working class districts. However these traditions have been increasingly undermined by a range of state interventions (from housing re-development to health visitors, for example). At the same time the state is directly involved in the preparation of the young through the educational system, extending down to nursery education, and through the media. The state has taken many tasks from the family in general and the mother in particular; it has specified minimum standards for the physical, moral and social care of children; it has surrounded the family with a range of institutions, services and authorities with which the family is expected to co-operate (Thatcher's proposals for nursery school provision are a good example).

This attempt to consider the ideological implication of the family is clearly quite incomplete, and not adequately developed. In considering how

it should be extended it is important that the following points should be considered: Firstly, the organization and ideas about the family derive, in a complex and combined way, from the mode of production and from the social organization of the biological process of reproduction. Secondly, both the oppression of women and the patriarchal family pre-date capitalism; in fact the historically most enduring form of social inequality has been that between women and men, and we can have no illusions about its easy disappearance in a post revolutionary society. Thirdly we must recognise that many of the actual ideas which explain and justify the continuance of the family and the oppression of women within capitalist societies derive from the pre-capitalist period, and also that they vary from one society to another according to specific economic, historical and cultural traditions, and according to the momentum of the class struggle in different capitalist countries (compare Sweden and Italy for example).

### (iii) THE ORGANIZATION OF DOMESTIC LABOUR.

The central tasks of domestic labour, the woman's work in the family, are the material reproduction of the labour force and the ideological reproduction of the relations of production. Necessary as these tasks are to capitalism their relation to commodity production has been indirect (as argued above); this has been very significant for the organization of domestic labour. Because the production of surplus value is not directly involved there has been no strong capitalist interest in increasing the productivity of domestic labour, in re-organising the labour process so as to increase its efficiency. Thus basically the labour process in the home remains primitive and inefficient in the extreme. Modern technology has entered the home through commodity consumption; each home requires - ideally - its own cooker, refrigerator, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, iron etc, etc., so that each domestic labourer may utilise these machines in the most inefficient way, in the isolated conditions in which she works for the benefit of two or three other people, while millions of other domestic labourers with a similar range of machines go through almost identical routines for the sake of their two or three other people. The immediate gain from this duplication being the maximum sales of household commodities. In



advanced capitalism the importance of increasing consumer markets has led to the family becoming increasingly significant as an arena for consumption. This has involved extensive attention from the media focusing on the housewife as household consumer; and following from this governments and employers have sought to define the interests of women as consumers as quite opposed to those of militant trade unionists (who 'cause' rising prices). Basically the organization of domestic labour has hardly changed in a hundred years; as capitalism advances the disparity between the organization of domestic labour and of commodity production becomes greater. At the same time there have been important exceptions to this generalization. Where there has been a high demand for female labour - where women are required for the production of surplus value - social provisions to reduce the domestic responsibilities have been made available. For example the widespread provision of creches, nurseries and cheap civic restaurants during the second world war; the provision of similar facilities by some capitalist firms - as in the Swiss watch industry. Again there are significant variations between countries; in Sweden the demand for female labour has led to the development of some collective housing, extensive day care facilities etc. (and an extensive debate on 'sex roles'; nevertheless women in the labour force in Sweden are in a very similar position of inequality to women workers in other capitalist societies.) We should not assume that quite considerable modifications to the family are not possible under advanced capitalism.

NOTE - It will be obvious that this paper contains general ideas which have to be developed much more fully, and that the implications of the analysis are not fully drawn out here. It will also be clear that the paper owes a great deal to Mariosa Dalla Costa's pamphlet and to other papers and discussion from the November 72 national conference. In the appendix I have tried to examine more precisely the relationship between the tasks of production and reproduction of the labour force and commodity production, in a more detailed way and with reference to what Marx writes in Capital vol.1.

March 1973.

Margaret Coulson - Lancaster Socialist Woman Group  
and IMG.

#### APPENDIX

##### THE REPRODUCTION OF THE LABOUR FORCE AND THE PRODUCTION OF SURPLUS VALUE.

In order to live the worker must sell her/his labour power to the capitalist for a wage. The worker's labour must produce the value necessary for this wage and more - surplus value from which the capitalist draws profit. What determines the value of labour power? Marx writes: 'The value of labour power is determined as in the case of every other commodity, by the labour time necessary for the production and consequently the reproduction of this special article.' As 'labour power exists only as a capacity, or power of the living individual' this means the production and reproduction of the labourer her/himself. Marx outlines several aspects of this process.

Firstly, if the owner of labour power is to be able to work to-morrow his health and strength must be replenished, his means of subsistence must be sufficient to maintain him in a suitably fit state as a labouring individual. Moreover the standard of food, clothing, housing, fuel etc. and the range and extent of other wants necessary to maintain the worker will vary from country to country, and from one period to another, according to the level of economic development, cultural traditions and other factors; so that there is no absolute, a-social, a-historical basis for determining what is necessary for the labourer's maintenance. Thirdly, the labour force has to be reproduced; labourers get injured, grow old, die; the labour power thus withdrawn from the market must be continually replaced with a fresh generation of labourers.

Although Marx does not mention this it is clear that the domestic labour of the woman precisely covers this process of maintenance and reproduction of the labour force, in the vast majority of cases. By implication therefore, domestic labour must be included in the cost of production and reproduction of the labourer, and must be a component to be covered by necessary labour time; the value of labour must encompass domestic labour.

The capitalist gains from this domestic labour as well as from the labour power he buys directly:

'By converting part of his capital into labour power the capitalist augments the value of his entire capital. He kills two birds with one stone. He profits not only by what he receives but by what he gives the labourer. The capital given in exchange for labour power is con-



verted into necessities, by the consumption of which the muscles, nerves, bones and brains of the existing labourers are reproduced and new labourers are begotten. Within the limits of what is strictly necessary, the individual consumption of the working class, is therefore the re-conversion of the means of subsistence given by capital in exchange for labour power.

indispensable to the capitalist: the labourer himself.

However the relationship of domestic labour to capital remains an indirect though necessary relationship. It is not acknowledged by the capitalist as such:

'The maintenance and reproduction of the working class is, and must ever be, a condition of the reproduction of capital. But the capitalist may safely leave its fulfilment to the labourers instincts of self preservation and propagation.'

Indeed it is notable that where the labourer's 'instincts' have been, for any reason, inadequate, the state, not the individual capitalist has increased provided some measure of support.

'The capitalist does not buy the labourer's means of subsistence but his labour power. And that which forms the variable part of his capital is not the labourer's means of subsistence but his labour power in action. What the capitalist consumes productively in the labour process is the labour power itself, and not the labourer's means of subsistence. It is the labourer himself who converts the money received for his labour into means of subsistence.'

## SOME COMMENTS ON ENGELS' ORIGINS OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE

It would seem to be fitting that during this weekend, whilst we are meeting together as women marxists, as 'revolutionary socialists' in the terminology of the organising committee, we should devote some time to a discussion of Engels' popular work, the Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State, which laid the foundations of the classical socialist theory of womens oppression and womens liberation. We come to Engels text after a series of historical events which will have an effect on our reading of him. These recent years have witnessed the second great upsurge of international feminist activity; we have therefore a certain experience of feminine theory and practice which will shape our relationship to the text. The intervening years have also witnessed the Revolution in Russia in 1917, after which there was a determined effort to translate into practice the recommendations made by Engels in the Origins, so that we have the practice of the Soviet Union against which to test Engels' theorisation. Thirdly, we have the experience of the Chinese revolution, in particular the Cultural Revolution, which has raised the imperative of a revolution in the realm of ideology, and with it the necessity of taking ideology more seriously. Fourthly, within western Europe and North America, the development of an interventionist State, linked to the development of monopoly capitalism, has raised for us the problem of the State as regulator of the family form. And finally, on the theoretical level, there has been the emergence of a new science of intra-familial relationships, the science of psychoanalysis.

One immediate effect of these intervening historical events on a reading of Engels is that they lay bare the speculative, schematic and descriptive character of his work. Engels theorisation of the origins of womens oppression and the pre-conditions of their emancipation, which remains the most compelling aspect of the Origins, is intuitive and speculative, a theorisation without yet being a conceptualisation (this is a feature of all those writers who attempt to tackle uncharted areas; there is much more work to be done in the process of constructing a theory of womens oppression/a theory of the patriarchy). His typology of the various forms of family, in a development from group marriage through pairing marriage to monogamy is extremely schematic, and his critique of the bourgeois family tends to remain on the level of a descriptive discourse about bourgeois morality, in all its contradictory hypocrisy.

Having made these preliminary remarks let us turn our attention to two aspects of Engels theorisation: his conception of 'determination in the last instance by the economic' and his conception of the division of labour.

### Determination in the last instance

Engels presents us with the following schema: that at a particular point in history there was a decisive rupture between those societies which can be characterised as dominated by sex ties (where social organisation revolves around relations between clans/tribes) and those societies dominated by class conflict (where social organisation revolves around property ownership). This rupture was caused by a revolution



in the value of labour (increase in productivity of labour, creation of a surplus which can be appropriated as wealth). This revolution took place in a mans sphere (outside the home), which was the male sphere as a result of a spontaneous division of labour. This wealth gave men the economic power to institute a political revolution against the ancient mother-right (descent counted through the mother) and bring in father-right (descent counted through the father) and with it a new form of family, the monogamous family.

At this mometn it is worth spelling out some of Engels characterisations of the monogamous family. It is the first form of family to be based on economic rather than natural conditions, and as such marks the victory of private property over communal ownership. Its appearance marks not the reconciliation of man and woman, but the subjugation of one sex: it proclaims conflict between the sexes (in a similar vein Engels remarks that the appearance of the State marks not the reconciliation of classes but the irreconcilability of their interests). This new economic oppression also marks the transformation of household work from a public industry into a private service, it traps the woman into domestic enslavement, and forces her out of participation in social production. The monogamous family is a transhistorical phenomenon which stretches in time from the Ancient Greeks to the present day. New economic conditions however, can have an impact on this form of family. In this sense: capitalist commodity production creates in the proletarian family a monogamous unit which lacks the characteristics of classical monogamy: there is no private property, the proletarian man cannot afford recourse to law to defend his rights over his woman, and the involvement of women in large-scale social production gives women a possibility of economic independence from men which can guarantee a right of seperation. However, this entry of women into social production involves them in a contradiction between the family and the factory: when they are in the family they are excluded from production, when they are in production they are excluded from the family.

In another sense too the developments of the economic mode can have an impact on the family. Capitalist commodity production engenders a new economic revolution in which the means of production will be transformed from private property into social property and which should also mean that private housekeeping is transformed into social industry, the care and education of children becomes a social concern. Male economic predominance will disappear with the re-introduction of the entire female sex into social production, and with its disappearance the predominance of the man in marriage will disappear.

With the analysis of the monogamous family we have one of Engels main contributions to a theory of womens oppression, a contribution which has formed the basis of socialist theories of womens liberation. Engels locates womens oppression at the level of the economy, links the conflict between the sexes to the appearance of private property and posits the reconciliation of the sexes as possible only when private property has been abolished. The fortunes of women and of oppressed classes are thus intimately linked: neither can be free until economic formations based on private property have been abolished.

One could say further, that Engels Theories have become an ingrained part of feminist theory - themes like womens

exclusion from social production, the necessity of transforming domestic work from private service into socially recognised production recur in the feminist movement in analyses of women's domestic enslavement, even when those feminists themselves seem to be unaware that they have inherited Engels' problematic.

In order to develop a critique of Engels theorisation it is necessary to make a detour through an examination of the conception of the division of labour.

#### Division of Labour

'The first division of labour is that between man and woman for child breeding' The German Ideology, quoted by Engels in the Origins. Both Marx and Engels conceived of a spontaneous division of labour arising out of biological difference between men and women. In Engels Origins this is generally thought according to aschematic women in the home, men outside the home, and this division is reflected in a division of property: the men control the instruments of labour used outside, the women control the instruments of labour used inside the home. Later anthropological findings have made it clear that there are no grounds for assuming a clear and spontaneous division of tasks of the kind assumed by Marx and Engels, although division of labour always does occur. But it is also clear that this division of labour is an important and useful mechanism to ensure coupling and thus reproduction of the species. If man cannot survive without the services performed by woman, and woman cannot survive without the work performed by man, then there will be a structural imperative towards heterosexuality. One of the features of feminist theory and practice is a rejection of and revolt against both compulsive heterosexuality and the sexual division of labour: 'ther's nothing biologically inherent in being able to change a nappy'. But it is impossible to find in Engels' work any criticism of either the division of labour, or of heterosexuality. Indeed the one advance produced by the monogamous family form is individual sex love, which, Engels speculates, will probably come into its own after the socialist revolution. Moreover, in the future state of affairs where domestic labour will again become a branch of public industry, there is no hint that this domestic labour might cease to be performed exclusively by women. It is this passivity in relation to the sexual division of labour which marks a difference between Engels conception and the arguments of the radical feminists, and this passivity points to one of the main weaknesses in Engels argument - its oversimplification. For on the one hand Engels points to a structural contradiction within all societies where a monogamous form of family predominates: the contradiction between men and women, and then assumes that this contradiction will be overcome by a mere reversal of the originating motor. There is no trace of any attempt to examine the ramifications and complexity which this contradiction will acquire in its historical development.

For what happens once women are excluded from social production? It is the entry of class society into history which begins the history of mankind. Men go beyond biological and anthropological existence and achieve historical existence through the transformation of nature and the development of labour productivity; control of the means of production becomes the male preserve, and the fixing of



the sexual division of labour becomes itself a determinant of women's oppression. Women remain within biological existence, and can only be freed, can only enter historical existence as a sex, by overthrowing the determinants of their own oppression. Women's oppression will not be removed by social recognition of the old sexual division of labour in a new communal society of a higher type, because that sexual division of labour itself has become an element of female bondage.

A brief illustration of the problem can be drawn from the experience of the Soviet Union, the first country to achieve a socialist revolution and to attempt to put into practice Engels' formulations. Enormous strides have been made in the emancipation of women in the Soviet Union, but of the two main tasks, entry of women into social production and the transformation of domestic work into public industry, it is undeniable that the first has been much more far-reaching. In 1931 a survey was done of use of day-time hours by men and women, under the rubric 'The Time-Budget of Families'. Women over 25 years of age averaged six or seven hours a day in industry and five to six hours in domestic duties, sacrificing self-education, political life and rest and leisure. Men over 25 years of age averaged 6 hours a day in industry, and two hours a day in domestic duties, using the rest of the time for self-education, political life, rest and leisure. It was the women over the age of 25 who did a double job. More recently, nearly 40 years afterwards, Russian sociologists found that women are still doing a double job, working in the factory and then doing the domestic work. Work performed in the home by women has tended to be seen as a kind of 'superstructural' element which would change as external factors determining it: private property, economic privilege, and so on were removed. But domestic and maternal responsibilities remain as strong as ever. Unless maternity becomes a real option for women and the sexual division of labour is broken down, women will never be able to enter social production on an equal footing with men, and work in industry will continue to be an addition to work in the home. And the refusal of maternity and the sexual division of labour itself brings into question the survival of the individual monogamous family.

#### The Relative Autonomy of the Family Form

To resume my main criticism of Engels' conception of the determination in the last instance: it is extremely difficult to accept, either at the theoretical level, or at the level of concrete reality that the immediate determination of women's oppression can remain a static presence, unchanged by historical development, until its final resolution, a resolution conceived of exclusively in terms of its original manifestation. However, saying this does not detract from the great advance made by Engels which was to constitute women's oppression as a problem of history, rather than of immutable nature, and as a problem which it should be the concern of historical materialism to analyse. Marx wrote to Weydemeyer: "what I did that was new was to prove that the existence of classes was not only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production". We might paraphrase that and say that what Engels did that was new was to demonstrate that the existence of sex conflict was bound up with particular historical phases in the development of the family form.

Engels has often been accused of economic reductionism in his analysis of the family, but in a sense he is less of an economic reductionist than those who try to analyse the family solely in terms of its economic functions for capitalism and thus place the family in a one-to-one relationship with the mode of production. For Engels the family is not the sum of its economic functions, but a system of relationships. It is in order to understand this system of kinship that Engels and Marx turned to Morgan, and derived from Morgan their view that in pre-commodity societies social organisation is dominated by blood ties rather than mode of production, and that in these societies the mode of production is not necessarily the immediate determinant: Engels "at this stage the type of production is less decisive than the degree in which the old blood ties and the old mutual community of the sexes within the tribe have been dissolved", (comparing Germanic tribes and American Indians).

For Engels the development of the family is a process of development from one form to another, and he assumes that new forms of family will arise in the near future. On the basis of family forms various 'superstructures' regulating sex relations - for example the primary prohibition of incest which constitute a barrier to sexual intercourse, and marriage and the family laws arise. One would also include the more flexible prohibition on homosexuality here, defending as it does the institution of the heterosexual couple, although this is never mentioned by Engels, because he takes heterosexuality as a natural 'given'.

The monogamous family, according to Engels, gives rise to a series of juridical relations which safeguard undisputed paternity, life-long monogamy for the woman and the right of sexual freedom for the man, and keep the woman in a state of dependence on men. Not simply juridical relations, however, come in here but also social-sexual mores. The monogamous family produces two main contradictions: prostitution for the men (the form of male sexual freedom, which is marked by male domination through social ostracisation of the prostitute rather than the client) and adultery for the woman (the form of female revolt against imposed monogamy). The monogamous form also produces one potentially unifying development: individual sex love. Capitalist commodity society intensifies, says Engels both prostitution and individual sex love. On the one hand the prostitute becomes analogous to the wage slave, in the area of sex relations, on the other hand the bourgeois rights of free disposal of one's property carries over into a conception of the right of free disposal of one's body, and for the first time love marriage is proclaimed as a human right. But this right, argues Engels, is peculiar in that, unlike other human rights developed by capitalism, it is possible only to the oppressed classes. The ruling class is still constrained to marry in the interests of property. The only vestige of male domination which Engels attributes to the proletarian family is the brutality of proletarian man towards women.

There are two points which can be made here, which illustrate how far we have travelled from Engels. The first is that the right to free disposal of one's body means much more to us in the women's movement than the right to marry for love: it has come to mean the right to control one's own reproductive capacities and thus to subvert the



male right to paternity. Secondly, we have developed a critique of the oppressive nature of individual sex love as a neutral category capable of reconciling the sexes, but that it has become a new terrain of struggle, against the domination of romantic love. Individual sex love may have emerged as an advance in sex relations, but in the present situation it confronts us as a set of mystifications about the reality of the relations between men and women. Again we have been forced to recognise that these mystifications have a psychic and emotional power much greater than we might at first assume. Female dependence on men in the present situation is not simply a matter of economic dependence which can be altered by an economic revolution, but it is engendered in the course of the sexual, psychological and emotional development of each one of us. It has an internal and psychic reality.

It is for this reason that the women's movement has counted psychological oppression as one of the factors of women's oppression. In order to continue this line of investigation we need to turn to the modern science which investigates that system of family relationships which is the individual modern family, and which is the key to the understanding of psychic reality - the science of psychoanalysis.

We also need to locate and interpret the anthropology of the present system, and the sociological and biological barriers which are set up against sexual intercourse. For one of the points which Engels makes about the monogamous family is that although it is the dominant form of family over centuries, being the form of family of the ruling classes it also co-exists with other forms of family, whilst tending to dominate those other forms and to constantly transform and destroy them.

I shall extend the point about psychoanalysis later on. Before I do so, I'd like to extend my argument about 'mixed' systems of family forms within any given society, and their domination by the individual monogamous family.

#### The State and the Family

The modern family, as it emerges into history, is tied to agricultural services. One of the questions which we have to answer is what was the impact on this family in the transition to a social formation dominated not by agriculture production but by industrial capitalism? My suggested answer would be that the development of capitalist commodity production tended to extend the prevalence of the classical monogamous form, the form of the family of the ruling class, to become the form of family of the proletariat, and the State intervention played here a very important role as mediator.

Some form of family structure certainly existed in the teeming tenements of the new industrial centres, but after the early phase of capitalist accumulation, which devoured generations of industrial workers, the needs of industry for healthier and more skilled workers turned the attention of the bourgeoisie to the proletarian family. Women were gradually excluded from the more developed industries (this didn't necessarily mean that they stopped working, mostly they couldn't afford to) but bourgeois ideologues found the explanation of various social evils like high infant

mortality, unhealthy workers and so on, in the working mother, and proceeded to construct a proletarian family in its own image, where, ideally, the man would be the breadwinner and the woman would stay at home attending to her domestic duties and caring for her children. It should be added at this point that this 'ideal' has never been fully achieved. Wives of low-paid workers are forced to go out to work, and their joint income is needed to support themselves and their family. But it should be pointed out that first factories acts limiting hours of female employment, and penalising employers who gave mothers employment, together with domestic education for working class women, combined with a barrage of ideological interventions to constitute the home as the centre of social life. This period before the first world war could be summarised as a period of the 'domestication of the working class'. Since 1911 the extension of State intervention in welfare services has tended to reinforce this new form of family at the political level. Just as all men are equal in the eyes of the bourgeois State, all families are equal to the Welfare State.

This state regulation of the family can be seen to be important in the conversion of immigrant families into families of the dominant type. The capitalist labour market is constantly replenished by imported labour power. Immigrant national cultural minorities bring with them different forms of family, shaped in different conditions. One way in which they can defend their own cultures is to erect barriers against inter-marriage, another is to identify their national-cultural identity with their religion.

It seems to me that it would be worth our while to investigate the types of family which exist within our society, and the process of their transition into families of the dominant type. We should also pay more attention to the intervention of the State in the regulation of family life and sexual relations. I'm not trying to deny that the Welfare State represents in some ways an advance in the living standards of the working class, won only after struggle. But it is worth pointing out that like everything engendered by capitalist society the Welfare State is double-edged and and contradictory. We should not fall into the mistake of placing it above politics, above the feminist struggle, and above the class struggle.

#### Psychoanalysis and the Family

Earlier I indicated that I thought that feminists should turn to Freud, in much the same way as Marx and Engels turned to Morgan, for his insights into the way in which familial relationships structure psychic reality. Introducing psycho-analysis into our discourse seems to be much more fraught with tension than does introducing the concern with economic oppression or the intervention of the State. We are familiar with both of these problems from our understanding and experience of the class struggle. And although we are familiar with the notion in historical materialism that to find the real significance of a social process we have to go beyond the world of appearances, it seems to me that we are too often satisfied with the world of appearances in intra-familial experiences: to spell out more clearly, we often assume a simple conditioning mechanism: that children 'see' certain systems in the outside world and therefore act according to them. Developed as



our understanding of the Marxist dialectics might be, when confronted by psychological structures we often relapse into classical British empiricism.

I don't want to particularly go into here the arguments for or against taking psychoanalysis seriously, partly because I'm sure that we will develop this argument as the feminist movement develops. What I want to do is, more simply, to indicate the problems. We have to understand not just the anthropological significance of kinship systems, but their ideological significance - the meaning of terms like father, mother, sister, brother, wife, husband. We have to understand how it is that women, and also men, come to accept the law of the father (the patriarchy). We have to understand the ideological and psychic significance (and not just the anthropological significance) of the incest taboo - that primary prohibition. We have to be able to delineate the structures through which the human child passes, discover the dialectic of desire and necessity which it traverses, before it achieves 'masculinity' or 'femininity'. And we have to work out the meanings of those terms.

#### Towards a theory of reproduction

Earlier in this paper I expressed dissatisfaction with Engels conception of a 'natural' division of labour, which I interpret as a confusion with a division in reproduction. In the paper which I presented for discussion at the November Conference I tried to show how this division of labour was not simply institutionalised as a private division of labour within the four walls of the house or flat or room but had become a social sexual division of labour. I want to resume that argument here:

"The exclusion of women from industrial production effected by early capitalism continues. To find employment women have to go to the servicing sector of the economy, a sector which is itself dependent on the point of production. The sexual division of labour within the economy mirrors with startling clarity the division within the family. The mass-production of clothing employs female labour overwhelmingly, similarly food packaging and preparation, canteen work, cleaning. Nursing is almost wholly women's work and teaching is gradually becoming a woman's profession (with a consequent diminution in teachers' salaries) and the social services which prop up the family are staffed by women. Both the consumption and service sector and socialisation are maintained by women. Their relationship to the situation of women in the home are amazingly clear. Apart from that, women still work in textiles (traditionally a female occupation), in light industry (usually producing goods for the consumer market) and as clerical workers servicing the needs of male administrators. Here the patriarchal family and capitalism mutually reinforce each other. In the home and outside women's work bears a heavy ideological weight. The term itself can be used to attribute a kind of femininity to the work itself as much as to the worker."

The areas which that work which is typically that of the woman covers could be designated as 'social reproduction', a term which would exclude 'technical reproduction' - that is, the reproduction of the means of production. All these

services would need to be maintained by any advanced industrial society. The problem is: is there anything specifically 'female' in these tasks themselves.

It is from this point of view that I present the following propositions, which could be summarised as 'our theoretical tasks': we should begin to investigate the system of reproduction.

Our purpose would be the constitution of a historical materialist theory of reproduction which would involve the following levels:

- a) ideology: the mode of reproduction of social relations.
- b) the unconscious: the reproduction of masculinity/femininity.
- c) biological reproduction: development in hormonology and genetic technology.
- d) the sexual division of labour: the instance of the economy.

Pivotal to such a study would be a critical theory of the family as the structure which articulates this system, and it would also be essential to study the linkage between the family and the state which appears to be an essential aspect of monopoly capitalism.

Rosalind Delmar March 17th/18th 73.

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the Straight Left, The Women's Liberation Movement and the Subversion of the Community. A Discussion of the ideas in the Pamphlet by Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Lina James.

Note. Since writing this, and as a result of the discussion at the conference in Birmingham I have become convinced that I was over optimistic about the possibility of combining membership of a male dominated group and a total commitment to the women's liberation movement. My commitment is of course to the latter.)

Selma compares the marxism of Mandel, a leading theoretician of the Fourth International, unfavourably with that of Marx. Mariarosa points out that the struggle for women's liberation has to take place in part against the organizations of the revolutionary left, who accept that women are oppressed, but relegate our liberation until some convenient time after the revolution. Where is the stimulating literature for the women's movement? Greer, Firestone, Millett, Mitchell, none of them are members of the revolutionary left organizations. Why not?

There is no doubt that the left wing revolutionary groupings are male dominated and there are more men than women members, and more male predominance still among the leaderships. More, the type of political leadership and educational style has been and still is to a large extent, typically has been didactic in character, intimately linked with individualistic self-enhancement, making it more difficult for women members to express or develop ideas. It is also necessary to struggle to establish the principle - and practice - that the struggle against women's oppression is the responsibility of all members, not just women, but there are big problems in making this a reality. The reasons for this are closely bound up with the situations in which many male members enter the organizations. Many have quite traditional family relationships, especially older industrial workers, whose trade union and political activity has been associated with the relegation of their wives to the home, while the basis for the marriage has not usually contained any elements of a shared political life. Among many of the young men, quite bourgeois conceptions of sexuality prevail. One has to contend with a revolutionary version of Machismo, in which the male asserts his "virility" by his political prowess, which the girl friend is supposed to admire (c.f. McAfee & Wood's discussion in Bread & Roses). Obviously, respect for him, her intellectual capacities are passive, it is her physical qualities that become her chief feature of independent attractiveness. Indeed, many women, though fortunately fewer now than in the past, have entered the revolutionary movement through their own independent conviction, but under pressure from their boy friends, or as one might cynically put it "on the end of their boy friend's pricks". It is typical, however, that the experience of being in such organizations changes the situation, and often such relationships break up, although a few women remain politically dependent, and hostile to the women's liberation movement.

So it cannot be denied that there are contradictions for liberated women in the revolutionary organization, where it is "raving feminism" to attack male chauvinism. It is also not surprising that it is very hard to retain a contributory relationship to the women's movement - not to regard it as a fishing ground; to resist the pressure to think that the "revolutionary" must know it all. The fact that the



revolutionary organizations do not know it all is evident at every women's conference and the amount of time and effort that has to be spent in the struggle against male chauvinism within revolutionary organizations holds back the understanding and analysis of the oppression of women, for the same arguments have to be reiterated time and again. The same is true for other oppressed groups such as black people and gay people, though the problem of women's oppression is more significant than these.

On the other hand, there may be an aspect of the experience of membership of a revolutionary organization which enables a contribution to be made to the women's movement; namely the ability to find the links between what seem to be isolated struggles, making the understanding of women's oppression part of a total programme and relating organization and struggle to that programme in the context of an international perspective (but see editorial in the Feminist issue of Socialist Woman - May June 1973). It is this aspect of the revolutionary organizations which makes many women want to remain in them, to struggle within them, and to persuade other women to join them. They may also provide a perspective from which a genuine constructive criticism can be made of some of the ideas emerging from the centre of the women's movement.

#### Mariarosa's view of the position of women.

Mariarosa's analysis is marxist in conception. It rejects feminism (the theoretical kind that poses the real class struggle as one between men and women). It centres on the working class woman. But it does not regard production as the main arena of struggle for women. She argues the point in a theoretical way, as follows: in a capitalist society, a woman's job is the production of labour power in the home. There, unpaid, in a pre-capitalist economic situation, she produces new workers and reproduces existing ones. Such a situation creates the dependent psychological characteristics which make our struggle so difficult, and involves men as the agents of our oppression, a situation so intricately linked together that many women in achieving liberation from such servitude become gay in order to try to escape the power relationships inseparable from male/female relationships, or, to put it in a positive way, are able to break down the social inhibitions associated with the full expression of mutual relationships with persons of the same sex.

In producing labour power, housewives are themselves exploited, surplus value producers, and integral members of the working class. The struggle must be waged against organizations of the working class which divide between those producers employed in the factory and those in the home. Capitalist society is in fact one great social factory. The crucial task of the women's liberation movement is to start the self-organization of women from the point where their nature is defined in the society, and where they produce surplus value - in the home. Their most important struggles are therefore community struggles. There is no solution in advocating that women should work, for this involves at best a change in the mode of exploitation, at work and adoption of a double one. Therefore the women's movement should organize around demands that women should reject housework; meet their husbands on their own grounds outside the home, for example at factory meetings. Real struggles can be fought on the basis that women's social production in the home has more than covered the rent,

neighborhood meetings become very important.

The question of wages for housewives is a difficult one, and Mariarosa does not come down clearly on one side or the other. On the one hand, it might give the impression that we wanted to "entrench the condition of institutionalized slavery... therefore could scarcely act as a mobilizing goal" - on the other, "it gives an indication for struggle, a direction in organizational terms in which oppression and exploitation, situation of caste and class, find themselves insolubly linked." (p.34-35) The resolution of this contradiction involves an understanding of the nature of demands. For a demand is a "goal which is not only a thing, but... essentially a stage of antagonism of a social relation. Whether the canteen or wages we win will be a victory or a defeat depends on the force of our struggle."

It is impossible in such a brief summary to capture the power and vitality that make this pamphlet so stimulating to read. Yet those very complexities conceal what seem to me to be crucial confusions, leading to the division of a struggle where there should be unity.

I place foremost in these pages the housewife as the central figure in this female era. We assume that all women are housewives and even those who work outside the home continue to be housewives." (p.19) And this social factory has as its pivot the woman in the home producing labour power as a commodity..." (Hames' Introduction, p.7.)

What we mean precisely is that housework is productive in the marxian sense, that it produces surplus value." (p.52)

These quotations enable us to pinpoint some important problems. Compare the second two quotations with the following;

Within the wage, domestic work not only produces use values, but is an essential function in the production of surplus value." (p.31)

We say that the woman in the home produces labour power as a commodity (i.e. has exchange value), and also that surplus value is produced. The quote on p.31 says

that domestic work has an essential function in the production of surplus value.

e. That is the correct position in terms of marxist economics :-

the capitalist does not buy the labourer's means of subsistence, but his labour power. That which forms the variable part of his capital is not the labourer's means of subsistence, but his labour power in action. What the capitalist consumes productively in the labour process is the labour power itself and not the labourer's means of subsistence. It is the labourer himself who converts the money received for his labour power into means of subsistence." (K.Marx, Capital II, p.165)

Other positions of ~~Marx~~ <sup>Selma James</sup> and Mariarosa cited are not correct. If we examine the matter, it is clear that the labourer himself (if he is male) reproduces the labourer. Women working in the home play an essential part in reproducing the labourer and also the labour force (by bearing and bringing up future labourers). They also produce the capitalists, the employers, and the labourers who will remove the system in which they were born. Capitalists would like us to think that the labourers are themselves commodities, factors in the cost of production, but labourers have the commodity which no commodity has of challenging their own price. The ideological



control over the people who reproduce the labourer is very important in maintaining the capitalist system, for it is necessary to have a relatively docile labour force so that the price of labour power does not rise too high and that labourers do not move to wrest the system from their employers, and replace it with one based on the satisfaction of need instead of the pursuit of profit.

If women are relatively dependent, isolated and weak, they will be more likely to fit in with the production of a docile labour force, and act as a brake on the militancy of the labourers they help to reproduce by weakening their power to strike. Thus capitalists would like the definition of women to be within the boundary of the home. The very first quotation above falls into their trap, as Margaret Benston and others have done before her. Yet why should women be defined by us in this way? If we examine women's actual position in capitalist society, it is as clear that women have always worked outside the home as that they have always reproduced the labourer by their work within it. Almost all women have worked at some period of their lives in the capitalist market. Indeed they form an indispensable part of the labour force as direct producers. Not only this, but while woman's true vocation is supposed to be in her domesticity, it is also the case that capitalists have consistently used images of women as sexual objects, with a sexuality divorced from reproduction (however distorted that sexuality may be), in order to assist them to sell commodities. Thus women face a complex triple oppression, not analytically reducible to the single reference point of the home, nor their necessary function in the reproduction of the labour force.

Since the three types of oppression are partly contradictory, they can be utilised in ideology to weaken a woman's position in any one of them. For a woman working may feel she is neglecting her home, or accept poor pay and conditions because she feels she is filling time until the real job of home making begins; a woman at home suffers perhaps from fears that she is no longer attractive (a sex object to her husband; while a woman who utilizes her attractiveness in capitalist terms is stigmatised as immoral. And so on. No wonder we are supposed to be hysterical and are more frequently admitted to mental hospital!

We have to deal with, understand and oppose an oppression with multiple aspects, and, while at one point in time or place, one aspect may seem predominant, the condition of the oppression of women is related to all. Therefore our strategy in opposing that oppression must surely inter-relate the struggles, not emphasize one even if the most central one, to the relative exclusion of the others. (c.f. Margaret Coulson's article, Women's Liberation - context and potentialities)

The next problem that arises is that of organization. Mariarosa is absolutely right to point out that a housewife and mother's position is only apparently isolated, and that in fact she fills a crucial role for capitalism by her work. This significance is not reduced by the fact that she neither produces commodities nor surplus value. But the isolation of the conditions in which domestic work is done, relatively, and the economic dependence resulting from the fact that it is not exchanged on the labour market creates real problems for the organization of housewives, not fully realized by Mariarosa. It is no accident that the parts of the

pamphlet dealing with the organization of and demands relating to housewives are the best. While Mariarosa proposes several things that housewives ought to do, there is little on how housewives will come to make such proposals into demands and act upon them. In this context it can again be argued that developing an understanding of their situation and demystifying it may be easier where women are outside the home, in collectivities at school or especially in work. If the politics of solidarity with women in industry is not confined to narrow economic demands such as equal pay alone, but if such demands are integrated into an understanding of ~~their situation~~ of why economic struggles are more complex for female than for male workers, we can perhaps begin to find means of linking up the struggles, and perhaps of helping women in the home in other ways. It is also the case that male workers reap the fruits of their chauvinism when they are in struggle and their wives do not support them. They then often welcome the women's movement and the struggle can be utilised by us to try and reach strikers wives, again integrating industrial and home-based struggles, though it is essential not to define the situation in terms of the women's interests alone. Such potentialities are not explored in the pamphlet.

None of this means that the solution for the subordination of women in the economy is work in the capitalist market, although, as Mariarosa herself points out, some workers have noted that Lancashire women, cotton workers for over a century, are economically sexually free and helped by men in domestic chores. On the other hand, in the Lancashire coal mining districts where a low percentage of women worked outside the home, women are more dominated by the figure of the husband. "Few people in capitalist society work from choice, and ordinary working people don't get much satisfaction out of their jobs. Most people, including most women are forced by economic pressure to work in the capitalist market. One works because one gets money for it, one needs the money to live. It would be ludicrous to say to women that we can be liberated through work, but until the women's movement can provide an answer to the economic nexus involved in the decision to work, we have no right to try to stop women from working. That requires a total revolutionary perspective, linking together the dimensions of the struggle faced by all the exploited, and relating the struggle against them to a strategy for overthrowing the system as a whole which is their root. Understanding this seems to me to be the ultimate dividing line between reformist and revolutionary politics within the women's movement. Mariarosa's contribution in some ways helps us in this understanding, but also in some ways confuses it.

Carol Riddell, Lancaster Women's Liberation group.



SOME THEORETICAL QUESTIONS RAISED IN REACTION TO

SEXISM, CAPITALISM, AND THE FAMILY

As a result of the last national women's Conference a number of women in Birmingham Women's Liberation felt that it would now be possible to organise a meeting for women in the movement who define themselves as Revolutionary Socialists. Since then we have been involved in a regular weekly reading and discussion group in an attempt to define for ourselves the theoretical and strategic problems which face the movement. On the theoretical level we decided to concentrate for this period on:

1. The concept of sexism, and its relationship to capitalism.
2. The relation of women to the capitalist mode of production.
3. The economic and ideological role of the family and its centrality to the oppression of women.

We prepared and discussed one text weekly and we used:

Kate Millet	Sexual Politics.
Shulamith Firestone	The Dialectic of Sex.
Rosalind Delmar	Sexism, Capitalism and the Family.
Juliet Mitchell	Women's Estate.
Mariarosa Dalla Costa	Women and the subversion of the Community.
Engels	The Origins of the Family.

Most of us found the disciplined reading and discussion extremely helpful but we were always conscious of working within severe limitations - the main one of which was the attempt to make a critique of those writers who see themselves within the Marxist tradition when we ourselves felt our understanding of that tradition to be inadequate. We therefore see this period of work and this conference as a starting point for a long term theoretical debate within the movement. We have attempted to put together here some notes on the lines of development and problems raised in our group.

A. Sexism.

1. We define sexism as the systematic domination of women through men.
2. The analogy of sexism and racism is inadequate since sexism is a universal system of domination and subjugation.
3. Kate Millet argues that "the patriarchal system" is an incomparably stronger and more universal system of exploitation than any other.
4. Shulamith Firestone and Rosalind Delmar both attempt to develop an analysis of the relation between sexism and capitalism seeing them as separate but inter-related structures. Delmar sees sexism as a structure dominating the world of reproduction and capitalism dominating the world of production.

Problems: We disagreed with the attempt to place patriarchy or sexism at the centre of an analysis of the oppression of women. We see it as a set of institutions and attitudes which



take different forms in different social systems. We felt that the two structures, sexism and capitalism, are far too inter-related to be able to say that each one dominates in a single sphere. We are left knowing the characteristics of sexism but not being able to define the precise ways in which it inter-relates yet is separate from the capitalist system. It clearly existed before capitalism and is quite capable of surviving after it, but, the particular ways in which it operates in any particular society varies according to the forms of economic, political and ideological control. We therefore need to develop our analysis of the ways in which the two structures are linked. Are we justified in describing sexism as a system? Should we see it as part of the ideology of capitalism?

B. The relation of women and the family to the capitalist mode of production.

1. The liberation of women is inextricably bound up with the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production. Our analysis of our oppression and our strategy for struggle against it must come from situating ourselves within capitalism.
2. Women at work are exploited as wage labourers in the same way as men. The position of women within the labour force is determined by two factors not one - firstly the needs of the family system and secondly the needs of the economy. Both these ensure that women enter the labour market in a weaker position than men which is reflected in their lower pay, weaker union organisation etc. and they view their role in production as secondary.
3. The relation of women in the home to the capitalist mode of production is concealed by her position within the family. The family is a crucial structure within capitalism - it conditions women to subordination and keeps them within their secondary status, it socialises children into capitalist relations, it maintains and reproduces the dominant ideology and it acts as a centre of consumption. It maintains the split between public and private life.
4. The women's labour in the home is individual and private and only for the consumption of her family. Her work consists of children and housework - it is unpaid. The wage of the husband pays also for the labour of his wife. She plays a crucial part in capitalism in that she maintains and reproduces labour power.
5. In capitalist society organised around commodity production (a commodity having both use-value and exchange-value) Margaret Benston argues that women's domestic work produces only use values and therefore their production is outside of the money economy. But unpaid labour in the home is necessary for profits to be maintained so that women are not only discriminated against, they are exploited.
6. Dalla Costa argues that it is the basic mistake to see housewives as producers only of use values - she sees the housewives as central, not external to the struggle. She

sees the family as a centre of social production producing labour power and providing a hidden source of surplus value. The exploitation of the non-wage labourer and the family is the lynch-pin of this. By completely freeing men from direct exploitation women are vital to the production of surplus value.

7. The separation between men at work and women at home and the failure to see this as two parts of a system has meant that the struggle has been divided - women are hostile to strikes because of the damage to the family which she must protect - the family acts as a stabilising force within capitalist society.

Problems: A lot of our discussion has centred around Dalla Costa's contribution to the analysis. Can we accept the view that the economic function of women in the home is crucial to capitalism and that women produce a hidden source of surplus value? Do we think that women in the home have potential social power? This whole debate can only be clarified by going back to the distinction which Marx makes between productive and unproductive labour. This is differently formulated in different parts of Marx's work and is not entirely clear. There is also a question as to whether the further development in capitalism since Marx has affected this - eg. the augmented role of women in consumption.

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Birmingham Women's Liberation  
Study Group. March 17th-18th 1973



A Contribution to the Discussion On A Strategy For Revolutionary Socialists Within the Womens Liberation Movement

I. The political importance of the WLM and why revolutionaries should be active within it.

Many revolutionary socialists who in a general way agree that women are oppressed under capitalism, do not accept that it is politically necessary to play an active part in the WLM and argue that it is politically insignificant and even in some cases, e.g. the Socialist Labour League, that it is positively diversionary. So, before discussing strategy I will briefly show why we think that the WLM is important, in fact politically necessary, why revolutionaries should play an active part in it (with, as will become clear, a strategy for effecting its development, bringing out its objective revolutionary potential) and why it cannot be dismissed as 'middle class', 'confused' etc.

The first set of reasons for the political importance of the WLM go back to our analysis of womens oppression which argues that in attempting to explain it one cannot reduce it to being simply a form of, or manifestation of, class exploitation. Thus although the development of capitalist relations of production have historically produced the particular form that womens oppression takes, most aspects of the oppression of women, especially those flowing directly from the family structure and womens role in it, have an important degree of autonomy from class relations of production. The significance of this autonomy is that its existence implies that the liberation of women will not automatically follow socialist revolution i.e. the creation of socialist relations of production.

Thus male chauvanism and the other ideologies which back up and justify the oppression of women will never disappear unless they are explicitly identified and aggressively confronted. Neither of these latter processes can occur in a spontaneous, individual way. They necessitate both the development of a theory of womens oppression based on the collectively analysed experience of the oppressed and the organisation of a militant strategy for destroying the means by which oppression is maintained. The reason why this struggle must be based on the self-organisation of women is that although we would not argue that men are the root cause of womens oppression, they are nevertheless placed in the role of oppressor, it is therefore in their short term interests to maintain that position of dominance and they would thus be unable to combat the oppression of women without distorting their attempt by - often unconscious - rationalisations of the status quo. I will discuss later how men could at the present and future stages of the movement relate positively to the struggle, the above point is arguing that the momentum of the struggle must be based on the organisation of women.

Another related reason for the importance of the WLM, implied by the argument that a socialist revolution will not automatically lead to the liberation of women is that liberation cannot be achieved by legislation, not even socialist legislation. Liberation entails as a precondition a political consciousness which demands liberation, it clearly follows that the demand must be made by the oppressed; but the oppressed have to decondition themselves of the psychology of subordination, and again this cannot be done spontaneously, individually or by anyone other than the oppressed.



Some revolutionaries may say in reply to these arguments for the political necessity of the WLM, "we agree with these points, but womens liberation must wait until after the revolution, and then, for the reasons that you have outlined, we shall support the development of a WLM. But now all our resources must go into preparing the working class to take power". To answer this we would put forward another set of reasons for the political significance of the WLM. These arise from an analysis of how capitalism maintains and reproduces itself, of the complex networks of social control that are characteristic of advanced capitalism; an analysis which focuses on the role of the family and sexual oppression in these processes of social control. I will not go into details of this now because presumably this will be done during the first part of the conference, but the conclusions that we would draw from such an analysis are that ideological control (as distinct from overtly coercive control) is of such importance in advanced capitalism that movements such as the WLM, the Gay liberation movement and the black movement, which do, and could to a greater extent explicitly attack major components of bourgeois ideology are of crucial importance to the development of revolutionary consciousness. They are crucial to the development of such a consciousness not only among the oppressed groups that they mobilise but also among the working class as a whole, among students, and other sectors of the population who could be won over to revolutionary politics. The political consciousness of all these social groups, however militant, would necessarily be partial, teetering on the edge of economism and similarly half truths if sexism and racism are not challenged in a political manner (as distinct from treating the problem as individual and psychological e.g. 'when we've recruited that shop steward to our organisation we'll try and sort out 'the woman question' with him"). Thus the growth of a militant WLM is an important part of the revolutionary process in advanced capitalism. Revolutionaries, if they are serious, cannot afford to postpone the issues of womens liberation.

I will discuss the implications of this in more detail in the part of the paper which deals with strategy within the WLM. The above point clearly implies a more externally oriented, aggressive strategy for the WLM than has been the case, perhaps necessarily, in its earlier stages; for e.g. our activity in the trade unions should not be seen only in terms of 'organising working class women' but in terms of combatting the deeply entrenched male chauvanism which exists at all levels of the organised labour movement.

## II. The political characteristics of the LM in Britain

In a sense the first section of this paper was laying out in a general way aspects of the objective political potential of the WLM. Before discussing a strategy for realising this potential, it is necessary to analyse the actual state of the movement in Britain and the various political directions in which it could go. This distinction between the objective potential of the movement and its actual development is important in order to avoid an over-optimism which was characteristic of the early stages of the labour movement. This optimism is based on the argument that because the real liberation of women cannot be achieved within capitalism then the development of the WLM has a

necessary revolutionary logic. The first point in this argument is true as it is true of the liberation of the working class, but as we have seen in the case of the labour movement it does not follow from this premise that a revolutionary logic will be realised and practised at the subjective level. Just as the labour movement has developed in a predominantly reformist direction so there are many ways along which the WLM could go that, although not crudely classifiable as reformist, do certainly not follow a 'revolutionary logic. The obvious conclusion which follows from a rejection of this overoptimism is that whether or not the WLM has the political impact that it could have depends not simply on revolutionaries being active in the WLM but on our effectiveness in taking initiatives, both theoretical and organisational to influence the particular direction in which it develops.

The most apparent characteristic of the WLM is the high degree of political variation that exists within it, with different political currents being dominant in different localities, at different conferences etc. But this heterogeneity is not an indication of chaos and confusion, it is not 'accidental. It is explicable in terms of the origins of the WLM, its various stages of development and the differing ways in which it has reacted to changes in the general political context, in particular the growing militancy of the working class, the rapid increase of struggles among lower paid workers and the unemployed, the struggle in Ireland etc. It is important to analyse these factors in order to understand the present divergent political characteristics of the WLM, which is one aspect of the framework we need to discuss the perspectives for the WLM that revolutionaries should be arguing for.

### a) student radicalisation and the WLM

In order to understand the consequences of the origins of the WLM for its later development, its social composition, the bases of the various political currents within it and the ways in which the movement responds to later external political developments it is particularly important to look at the relationship between the WLM and the student radicalisation of '68 and '69.

There are two main aspects of this relationship:

- a) the way in which the rapid increase in advanced capitalism's need for intellectual labour, which, via its effects on higher education provided the material conditions for student radicalisation had specific effects on women in higher education in terms of their situation as women in addition to their situation as students.
- b) the way in which the political form of the response of women to the consequences of a) was significantly effected by the political nature of the student movement (this was not of course the only factor, the growth of militant black organisations for e.g. was also important.)

To consider a): the vast expansion of higher education that began in the late fifties and was considerably speeded up in the middle sixties was only very slightly proportionally higher for women than for men. However what is significant is not the changes or lack of changes of proportions, but the changing function of higher education, the proletarianisation of the intelligentsia that the changes in absolute numbers for men and women represent. These changes led women just coming out of higher education to be faced with a sudden contradiction between, on the one hand, the aspirations and experiences



engendered by the meritocratic ideology of the higher streams in secondary education and higher education which, strictly within the boundaries of the educational sphere are relatively lacking in sex discrimination, and on the other hand the realities of sexual oppression in the job and family structures and the social relations and expectations surrounding and reinforcing these structures. The expansion and changing function of higher education is a major cause of this contradiction in the following way: the very small number of women who went to university in pre-war and early post-war Britain were predominantly daughters of the established liberal bourgeoisie, who, following in the tradition of J.S. Mill etc., considered the abolition of sexual barriers to the education and careers of women to be a logical extension of liberalism (this of course only applied to members of the ruling class since only they had access to higher education and 'careers'). These women were cautiously allowed to join their brothers in the higher echelons of British capitalism although they were encouraged to do so only in certain spheres, education, social welfare etc. These women were historically unique (as all the books about them exemplify) and posed no real threat to those areas of the job structure where sex discrimination and the maintenance of the nuclear family are really important for capitalism. With the changing function of higher education the vastly increased numbers of women coming into the job market from higher education were no longer special (although the ideology of girls grammar schools (run by the aforementioned generation of women) implied that they were. The job market and its social surroundings that they faced was that of the lower professional and technical worker; it is at this level and below where sex oppression and superexploitation is firmly entrenched and deeply embedded. The importance of this process provides a major part of the material basis for the growth of a consciousness of womens oppression among a section of women who were to form the initial core of the WLM. It also helps to explain the lag between student radicalisation and the growth of the WLM i.e. the contradictions facing the woman student as a woman with the situation and the pressures that await her when she stops being a student.

Before going on to b), it is worth noting the implications of the above for our understanding of the social composition of the WLM. If we accept the theory of the proletarianisation of the intelligentsia (in terms of their relationship to production, not necessarily their consciousness) that is reflected in the massive changes in higher education, then we must firmly reject the description of the movement as middle class, a useless description of the movement as it but which many of us in the movement accepted uncritically. The majority of the womens movement are white collar workers or wives of white collar workers, a small minority are students (this is probably increasing as women workers already radicalised on other questions become involved in the WLM because they see its political relevance rather than oppression). In saying this I do not mean to telescope the WLM into simply being a particular group of working class women. Clearly because, for many, for many, of different origins and different experiences of the educational system

there are significant differences at the level of cultural traditions etc. These differences are reinforced by the initial theoretical development of the WLM. In particular the emphasis on self-analysis and many of the ideas involved in the central theory and method of consciousness raising do not come easily to those who have been socialised into the extremely collectivist traditions of the British labour movement. It is probably such factors that explain why, within the WLM itself (as distinct from working within it sporadically or being in contact with it) there are very few non white collar workers. However the careless description of the WLM has blinded us to some extent to the possibilities of intervening in the T.U.s in more substantial way than the frequent situations of WL groups supporting particular struggles of working class women; i.e. as will be discussed later we could organise within the T.U. (not just on economic questions) to a far greater extent than we have done in the past.

Now to discuss b): the previously described contradictions arising out of the combination of changes in the labour needs of capitalism with the pre-existing structures of womens oppression are only the conditions that make some form of revolt by a particular section of women highly likely; they do not explain why this radicalisation took the political form that it did. To explain this it is necessary to examine the consequences of the fact that these contradictions were developing in the context of a growing crisis in bourgeois ideology which produced among other things a general student radicalisation of which many women had been part, or on the periphery of. The combination of on the one hand the crisis in bourgeois ideology brought about by the realities of imperialist aggression in Vietnam etc., the explosion of the myths of affluence and capitalist stability by the growing unemployment, slow growth rate and balance of payments crises, the reactionary strategy of the Labour government, and on the other hand the initial rejection of stalinist and reformist alternatives, stimulated the beginnings of the WLM in the following way. The former i.e. the crisis in bourgeois ideology, in particular the crisis in liberal democratic theory and politics led to a critical examination of the ideology of the democratic family, which had become especially strong during the fifties because of its clear links with the myths of affluence, consumerism and social mobility. This critique was also stimulated by certain aspects of the less politically directed 'youth culture' which certainly involved a revolt against the family and its authority although mainly from the point of view of children rather than women. Secondly, the rejection of stalinism by the majority of the student movement involved the rejection of an economic eclecticism, to the regeneration of an attempt, albeit rather eclectic, to develop a totalising analysis of capitalist society. The implications of this for the development of a consciousness of the oppression of women was reinforced by a tendency to focus on authority relations rather than solely on relationships of exploitation; from this followed an interest in the distortions imposed on personal relations in capitalist society and explorations into radical psychology. This on occasions boomeranged back into the student movement by giving women activists the initial tools whereby to point to inconsistencies within the practice of the movement itself. It was this, combined with the influence of the experience of blacks within the civil rights movement and the development



of their separate organisations that led to the emphasis on an autonomous women's movement. The fact that the focus on cultural oppression and the exercise of authority were important in the emergence of the WLM from the student movement is exemplified by its far earlier development among sections of the student movement that were more culturally and anarchistically oriented, e.g. Essex, than the more Leninist sections, e.g. L.S.E. It also explains why the WLM is, or was initially, so strongly influenced by certain currents in anarchist theory.

(b) The stages of development of the Women's Liberation Movement

The main emphasis of the first stage of the WLM was to identify and understand the nature of women's oppression, to turn personal anger and frustration into a political theory and programme of action. This was the importance of 'consciousness raising'. This stage was crucial in developing a theory of women's oppression. Some revolutionary groups tended to assume that such a theory already existed and that it was a simple question of 'bringing into' the movement a Marxist theory of women's oppression which was thought to be relatively unproblematic. But, of course, mainly because of the disastrous effects of Stalinism on the development of Marxist theory, only the very bare bones of a theory of women's oppression in advanced capitalism existed. There are, however, significant limitations to consciousness raising as a method of developing a theory and a political movement, as many of us in the Movement have realised. These include a tendency to reject, a priori, any theoretical approach which does not immediately relate to experience, a tendency to take up the Germaine Greer type of position, which sees women's oppression mainly in terms of impositions of roles and cultural definitions of women's identity. This led some women in the Movement to stop at a stage where they had achieved a certain kind of personal liberation through deconditioning themselves of oppressive cultural definitions, re-arranging roles within their social relationships and, insofar as this was possible, they saw little necessity for further political commitment, their commitment to the Women's Liberation Movement became purely social. For example, in the planning of meetings for the next conference, there is a group who see no necessity for the conference to discuss future strategy and merely see it as a massive festival and get-together.

One can argue, therefore, that there is one current within the WLM which, in a sense, has remained at the consciousness raising stage of the Movement and relates to the Movement in terms of gaining a kind of social solidarity to maintain their personal liberation in the face of continuing sexist pressures from the straight world. For want of a better term this current could be called 'life stylist' in that their politics stop at the level of life style. The other currents that we will now discuss do not reject 'life stylism' but politically go beyond it.

The other currents can be divided into four types: radical feminists, libertarians, reformists and revolutionary socialists. This typology is somewhat schematic in the sense that empirically they occasionally merge, e.g. the radical feminists and the reformists over the Anti-Discrimination Bill and the women in the Media Group, and in the sense that further differentiation is needed between different types of revolutionary

socialists. These currents represent different interpretations of the second stage of the WLM (which could be marked by the conference after Skegness in Manchester 1971), that is the move towards an external orientation, the search for a strategy for destroying the oppressive institutions that were identified in different ways in the first stage. They must also be understood as differing reactions to changes in the general political context, in particular the growing militancy of the working class. The differences in responses are to be explained in terms of prior theoretical formation and political experience.

The core of the libertarians probably consists of those who emerged from, or were most influenced by, the rejuvenation of anarchism that was produced by aspects of student radicalisation. (See above.) This was carried over into the growing WLM. There it was strengthened by a basic aspect of theories of women's oppression that focused on the consequences of various forms of authoritarianism. Predictably, they responded to the increase in working class militancy by involving themselves in the least union-dominated aspects of working class politics, viz. claimants' unions, some tenants associations, ETC.

Although there are a number of different versions of radical feminism, their common basic theme is that women's liberation is the central political struggle, the struggle with the greatest potential for revolutionary change. This is based on several arguments, not all of which are part of every version of radical feminism; firstly, they argue that the family is the most fundamental oppressive institution for the maintenance of the present system and therefore the struggle against it has political primacy; secondly, women's liberation has most revolutionary potential because women have least interest in the status quo, the male working class are continually held back by their male chauvinism and their vested interest in the family and the oppression of women. Radical feminism was particularly strong in the early stages of the WLM when prior to the upsurge in working class militancy, there was a superficial empirical relevance to the idea that the male white working class had been compromised and integrated by among other factors - its complicity in the oppression of women (and of blacks).

The increasing political activity of sections of the working class somewhat undermined the practical significance of radical feminism which could not provide any theory of how such political developments related to the WLM, or of what strategy the WLM should have towards them. Most women intuitively saw the necessity to relate to them which they did through supporting strikes, mobilisation around the struggle in Ireland etc. We shall discuss these responses when we discuss the revolutionary current (which has been significantly strengthened by them), but before getting too euphoric about them, it is necessary to distinguish between, on the one hand, a theory losing its practical influence because it is surpassed by events and, on the other, an alternative theory being accepted. In fact, because an alternative theory, i.e. a revolutionary socialist theory, which could both explain these events and provide a coherent and detailed analysis of their importance for women's liberation, does not exist in a sufficiently developed form, therefore, various forms of radical feminism (including but not only Selma James' version) still hold a strong position in the theoretical debates going on in the WLM.



The reformist current which has only recently appeared - around the campaign on the Anti-Discrimination Bill - is mainly based among women in the professions, particularly the media. Their main perspective is one of finishing off the tasks of the suffragettes in terms of the remaining obstacles to womens' career and other forms of overt discrimination. Of course there have in many periods been similar groups of women, what is distinctive about these is their close relationship with the WLM. Because of their articulateness and organising ability they have, in London in particular, made their campaigns into significant focuses for the less politically formed members of the WLM.

The core of the revolutionary current were active in the student movement of '68 and '69, some were then members of, or close to, revolutionary organisations. The effect of an increasing consciousness of their oppression as women and their involvement in the WLM was not a simple one of intensification of radicalisation. Because a theory of womens' oppression hardly existed and it was not an easy question of 'applying' marxism to the problem of womens' oppression, and because of the residues of bourgeois ideology, in this case male chauvanism, within revolutionary organisation, there was during the first stage of the WLM a divergence of radicalised women from the traditional revolutionary politics that as students they had been part of. During this first stage which has been described above and could be summed up as the stage of theory-formation, the revolutionary current was not as distinctive as it has now become. It did exist at this stage, e.g. the various marxist study groups in the London workshop, but unless there exist clearly developed alternative theories, the early processes of theory formation are necessarily more unifying among oppressed groups than discussion and implementation of programmes and strategy. The emergence of a relatively strong left current has been catalysed by the effects of an intensification of the class struggle, particularly on those members of the WLM who have had prior experience of revolutionary politics. One of the common bases of this left current is an understanding of the necessity to play a specific part in the intensification of class struggle. I underline 'specific' because an important consequence of the first stage of the WLM for the majority of the left current is to reject all perspectives which merely offer a different version of their starting off point, student politics, i.e. a submergence of the issues and organisational forms of womens' liberation into an economistic conception of class struggle.

In outlining the main characteristics of these currents I do not want to imply that they are all totally false except for the revolutionary socialist one. This clearly is not true, for example, many of the criticisms made by the libertarians of the dangers of the Movement becoming bureaucratic and generating its own internal authoritarianism are important and are accepted by most revolutionary socialists who have been active in the movement. Similarly, the hostility of the radical feminists towards economism is correct, except that they tend to assume that all marxists are necessarily economistic. I will not spend time here criticising the different currents because the very fact that we are part of a conference of marxists within the WLM implies that at one time or other we have been through that process of criticism. I thought it important to analyse them in a descriptive rather than critical way so that we could have a systematic analysis of the WLM on which to base our discussion of strategy within it. This is

only an attempt to develop an overall analysis and it may well be that I am generalising only from subjective experience, which conflicts with that of others.

### III. Suggestions for Strategy.

There seem to be two aspects of the problem of what we can do within the WLM to influence its development, (1) The question of taking an active part in the existing campaigns in the WLM and attempting to get our analysis and strategy accepted. This means that we need, perhaps, at this conference, to really work out a marxist analysis of issues such as family allowances, abortion and contraception, the Anti-Discrimination Bill and equal pay. For example, on the question of family allowances a lot could be done to make the campaign more militant, both in terms of going beyond the tactic of petitions and lobbying, and in terms of linking it to broader issues raised by the whole of the new tax system. On the question of abortion, there are a number of necessary criticisms of the idea that free abortions will really give women the right to choose, given the social and economic deprivations that restrict the options by frequently ruling out the having of children as a positive choice. It also seems very important to clarify and publicise an analysis of the limitations of the Anti-Discrimination Bill, given that so much of the energy of the Movement is supporting it in a somewhat euphoric way.

(2) The initiating of campaigns and attempting to get mass support for them within the WLM. Here I would like to make two suggestions for discussion, both of which are aimed at extending the ideas of womens' liberation in an organised way into politically important and potentially explosive sectors of society: firstly, the organised labour movement, and here we should not only be concerned with activity at an industrial level but also with relating community-based struggles to organisation at the place of work. Secondly, in schools where the issues of oppression in the family and the issues of sexual oppression are of crucial significance.

I have not had time to write out the precise details of these proposals, given the need to get this paper out before the conference, so I will either bring them in a written form or else raise them in discussion.

H.W.

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The general framework of this paper has been agreed by IMG but the specific analysis of the womens' movement and the proposals for strategy are personal contributions to the discussion at the conference, (and to the discussion within the IMG.)



OUR TASKS AT PRESENT AND IN THE FUTURE

In Britain today conditions are developing which make possible the building of a mass movement of women against our centuries old oppression and exploitation. There is a growing militancy, a growing desire for change and progress among the masses of women. This is happening spontaneously and is inseparably linked to the new awakening of the working class as a whole.

What does this new situation call on us as socialist women to do?

What tasks are we called upon to fulfil?

Obviously if we are to build a mass movement of women we must immediately set about consolidating. We ourselves have to begin to discuss our tactics and strategy seriously, thrash out our differences so that our intervention into the spontaneous movements of women becomes a meaningful one. Our women's organisations must orientate towards the working class and begin to link our strategy of socialist revolution with the day to day demands of the masses of as yet non-socialist and unorganised women. Our work will only meet with success if it is based on their genuine needs and aspirations. If our priority is among women most receptive and most capable of developing a socialist consciousness at this early stage of the mass movement, this means concentrating particularly on working women, especially on the factory floor. To be most effective women's organisations must be based at the place of work as well as in the community. By working and organising women at the point of production we will begin to tackle the very real obstacles which exist in organising women in general. Women are still imprisoned by their role in society, in the family and by male chauvinism. Most women workers still see their home and family as their main responsibility, their main job, and their work outside as secondary. But because of the present situation, particularly the cuts in workers standard of living, women are being forced through necessity to change to question their role. Whereas in the past women would rather have left a job than stay and fight for better conditions or for more money, they can no longer switch jobs so easily because of the ever menacing threat of unemployment. Whereas before they would move from one job to another, doing mostly unskilled work (one job to them is very much the same as another) the women's wage packet is now as essential to the family income as men's and job security is becoming equally important. Thus the fight for equal pay is daily becoming more crucial. The fact that the Equal Pay Act was introduced testifies to the growing militancy of women for it. Large numbers of women now feel that the fight is over and that equal pay will be introduced just like that. Our job is to point out that it still has to be fought for and we must expose the substantial limitations of the Act. Around this demand stems the whole question of the position of women in society. Once women are mobilised in action, they will not be satisfied with second best, they will realise that equal pay will remain a fraud without the more important question of equal opportunity; an end to all that which denies women the right to use their talents and creativity, to play a full and useful role in society. We must wage a determined fight for all the conditions that will make equal pay a real possibility for the masses of women. We must expose those who would rather confuse and frustrate women with promises and empty pieces of paper legislation. We must reactivate our basic demands and link them to the central question of women's liberation. We must renew our fight for equal education, job training, nursery facilities, free contraception and abortion, paid pregnancy leave with the right to return to the same job. We must expose productivity intensity as a condition for equal pay and the use of overtime to make a decent wage, we must not allow ourselves to be conned into doing more work for the same or less real money, in the name of equality. Our rightful demand for equal pay must come out of the bosses' profits, and not the wages, the further exploitation of other workers or from more of our own sweat. We must



take up the demand of the right of all, including women, to a job and in the present situation a 35 hour week.

The growing demand for nurseries and the widespread introduction of contraceptives reflects a change in women's attitudes themselves about the "full-time" nature of their role as mother. The conditions are rapidly arising when women are no longer seeing their only real and fulfilling job in the home, but are more identifying themselves as workers and acquiring a class consciousness.

The struggle in Britain for the liberation of women will more and more be waged alongside the struggle against the menace of fascism; against the attacks on our living standards and democratic rights. For when the capitalists can no longer rule by their old means of force and deception they rule by force alone. We believe that the British ruling class is systematically preparing the way for the accession to power of fascism in the future. The move towards fascism is a direct result of the strength of the peoples of the world against weakening imperialism. With loss of super profits from the colonies, the British ruling class has to intensify exploitation at home. Aware of the inevitable emergence of a revolutionary movement which will challenge their system they are introducing increasingly fascist measures. We are talking of measures like the Industrial Relations Act, intended to shackle the working class as a whole and in particular the most militant sections of men and women workers, in a denial of their basic democratic rights and to organise for the maintenance and improvement of their living conditions. The Immigration Act is intended to divide and immobilise the working class by making black people the scapegoat for all the ills of decaying capitalism.

The class as a whole and women in particular are suffering under these attacks. It is women who have to find the money for rising prices, increased rents and rates and social services. The cuts in welfare benefits affect the most vulnerable; supported mothers, women with large families and single working women. We are seeing more and more women being added to the enormous pool of unemployed. We are seeing employers beginning to implement something like equal pay, they are finding it more acceptable to make women redundant in favour of men or machines. In those jobs that are almost exclusively done by women, equal pay will have little effect. The meagre pittance that women do receive will do very little to alleviate the rapid grinding down into poverty of millions of working class families. We must learn to take up the present attacks on those rights which have been fought for and won as well as for the extension of these rights. Women must organise against the cuts in our living standards, rising prices, wage freeze. We must practically oppose racism and struggle for the unity of the class as a whole.

The struggle to defend and extend democracy, against the increasingly fascist measures must be linked with the struggle for the liberation of women. The effect which effect women must be linked to those which effect them as part of the class. Of course women must be organised in their own separate organisations, with their own identity, but we are not organising women to keep them away from class struggle but precisely to involve them in class struggle. It is essential that we be able to wield all the isolated and spontaneous struggles of the people against the ruling class into one common fighting front - a United Front against the menace of fascism.

In the past women have lacked both the experience and confidence to initiate class struggle, seeing this as the prerogative of men. They have in general been divorced from the mainstream of the labour movement and class struggle. This meant that women have not been so influenced by the dominant and retarding ideas of social democracy and reformism but have remained on the outside feeling isolated and imposed. Although this has meant that women have taken longer to become involved, we must see that once they do they will see less reason to compromise. Women have behind them a whole history of being down-trodden and oppressed and really do have nothing to lose but their chains, which for the most part are bigger and tighter than those of men. It is simply a question of grasping this truth and then acting upon it.

As socialists must concentrate our work where people are. An obvious area is the Trade Unions, the basic organisation of working men and women. We should wherever possible become active in unions ourselves and encourage the fuller participation of women. At present 1 in 4 trade unionists is a woman, but as yet they play little or no part in them. Working in trade unions is not an end in itself and must be done alongside working directly on the shop floor as well as in the community. We must recognise the inherent limitations of the unions, they are the organs through which workers fight for better conditions and wages under capitalism, they are not and never can be vehicles for fundamental change. Our role should be to smash all obstacles which hold back and prevent women from playing an equal role. We must expose the class collaboration and rampant male chauvinism of the union bosses which discourages even the most militant and conscious women. We must aim to raise the level of consciousness of women to an understanding of the necessity of organisation and positive action by women themselves in order to achieve anything. Male chauvinism in society and in the family does create an obstacle to the participation of women. As well as the attitudes there is the concrete responsibilities in the home. This can only be overcome through struggle and with women taking a lead in re-educating men. Men will have to learn that they will not believe their own liberation from wage slavery unless and until they actively encourage the participation of women in class struggle for their own liberation. Progress and change in society are caused by the masses of people, men and women and not by a handful of men heroes. But like everything else, ideas and attitudes included, things do not remain static. They change according to conditions. With more and more women going out to work there is already developing a move towards an equal division of labour within many working class families. This trend must be encouraged. We must use any means necessary to realise the fuller participation of women in class struggle.

The women's movement has as a whole not yet seen organising working class women as their priority neither for those of us who have, have we resolved how to go about achieving it. Bankrupt theories have been invented by so-called 'socialists' such as "abolish the family" or "pay for housewives" both of which are reactionary and will bring us not nearer to identifying ourselves with the masses of women. The first demand arrogantly attacks all families. It neither reflects the needs or desires of the masses of women or society at large, it merely reflects certain current fashions among the young and mostly single middle class. Our demand should be to change the family and women's position in it. (SEE APPENDIX). The second is equivalent to asking for better conditions for slaves rather than fighting to abolish slavery. If women are revolutionised by their material conditions, they will fight to maintain them in isolated non-productive conditions, when as socialists we should be fighting for the participation of women in social production. This is fundamental. It raises the whole question of women's economic independence and their whole position in society, things which are at the very core of the questions of women's liberation. The demand for women to take part in social production is revolutionary. It has often been misinterpreted as meaning that we want women to be equally exploited with men. Under capitalism it is true that women workers would be even more exploited than men. But working outside the home can give women's perspectives a fuller understanding of the nature of society we live in. Collectively exploited can't workers unite and fight their exploitation? Isn't the exploiter identifiable? Where is the parallel in the kitchen? If women are economically independent then there is the real basis to both challenge and change her old role and position. It makes possible an appreciation of the ultimate necessity for socialism; the only system where women can participate fully, equally and independently in all aspects of the life of society.

It has often been said that the socialists within the women's movement have only been using the question of women's liberation to recruit. This is quite so. As socialists we do not hide our intentions to recruit as many women as possible to the ideas of socialism and revolution. But this will not be done by lectures, however long and clever they are, in the hope that we will overwhelm everyone with our profound wisdom. The masses of women will only take up socialism when they see it directly relating to their ideas. When in practice over a long period of time, our ideas and ideas correspond to the ideas of the masses of women. Our first job is



to unite women against their exploitation and oppression, wherever they feel most. All this is not the job of any one group alone, but we ourselves must begin to unite and co-ordinate the work of all our groups.

As well as seeing the necessity of uniting with all those socialist women with whom we can, we in the Revolutionary Women's Union desire unity with the non-socialist women in the movement as well. We recognise that within the movement as a whole there are many women who are not yet socialists but who are genuinely concerned with the liberation of women. In fact the movement as a whole at present is neither socialist nor working class, but is still predominately feminist and middle class. But we support what is positive in this and will continue to fight what is negative. Naturally the majority of women in the movement are from middle class or student backgrounds, having the advantage of more time and comparatively more freedom to question their position and that of society. But on the whole they see the liberation of women from an idealistic and personal view-point. Many base their ideas solely on their own individual and limited experiences. These experiences are not representative of the majority of women whose experiences are social and therefore whose ideas are more realistic and practical. Feminism recognises the oppression of women spontaneously identifying the enemy as men or women's sex. In fact subjectively concentrating on the effects of oppression rather than on the objective causes. The ruling class is quite happy to allow and even to encourage this trend which will misguide women up blind alleys and prove no threat to their system. Remarkably women in the name of 'sexual freedom' and 'women's liberation' are actively assisting the ruling class by pedalling lesbianism and promiscuity as a solution to male chauvinism and oppression. What the ruling class do fear is the mass awakening of women which we as socialists must begin to initiate. We must concentrate our analysis on the causes of women's oppression. Our present inferior position arose with the division of society into classes. When a minority of owned and controlled the means of production and therefore society as a whole. All our ideas must start from this premise. As socialists we must be concise and scientific in our analysis of any situation and not eclectic. But why is it that so many "socialists" within the movement choose to forget this and are so cynical about "orthodox Marxism". Why is there such rampant opportunism in feminism. So many "socialists" within the movement find it quite justifiable to keep their left ideas for their parent organisations and spout nothing but feminist ideas within the women's movement. This opportunism has done more than anything else to hold back the movement and unless we can begin to discuss the issues and resolve the contradiction of linking up socialism with the question of women we will not be able to move forward.

If we see the day to day demands for equality in the context of the present situation in Britain, we will see that there is enormous scope for women's organisations. Our demands are being made at a time when the ruling class are fanatically attempting to maintain and increase their profits. At this present stage women's demands cannot be realised by the capitalists other than in direct contradiction to other demands from the working class as a whole. They will do nothing but intensify the already acute and irresolvable contradictions of modern day decaying capitalism. For the boss class to provide adequate nursery facilities for women would mean freeing women from the home onto an already overcrowded labour market. If equal pay were to be achieved it would mean the bosses digging even deeper into their pockets. But both would be a sham without equal opportunities and rights. But under capitalism the whole of society's attitudes about women and thereby the revolutionising of very important and up to now deep division in society between men and women. Whether they want to or not is not the real question. They cannot. The ruling class are unable any longer to rule. That is why they are resorting to fascism to fascism. We are talking about a dying rat in a corner. They have to be destroyed for the survival and the progress of humanity. Throughout the world our sisters are struggling heroically and magnificently against their oppression. Wherever we look we can see women rising up, gaining self respect, dignity and equality in struggle. In People's China, Albania and Vietnam, the masses of women and men are creating a new life for themselves with women playing a

socialists our demands must reflect these needs and aspirations of the masses of ordinary women. That is why we must demand the socialisation of housework. Equal division of labour among all the members of the family. Nurseries and creches for children. The conditions which make possible the involvement of women in social production such as equal education, opportunities and pay. For the involvement of women in class struggle which more than anything begins to challenge women's passive and subordinate role. How is all this to be achieved? By abolishing the family or abolishing the oppression of women within it? If women are exploited as sex objects within the family, how will the abolition of the family change their position as sex objects in society as a whole, when we know that the woman's role in the family is nothing but the reflection of her role in society. The whole of capitalist society perpetuates attitudes of women's inferiority, justifying its exploitation, oppression and isolation in the home. It is the capitalist class that directly benefits by perpetuating the divisions between men and women. It is capitalist society and all its prejudices which must be destroyed for the liberation of women, not the family. The demand to abolish the family is like saying that because under capitalism workers are exploited, we should abolish work. What we should be fighting for is the abolishing of the exploitative nature of work and the family. For the revolutionisation of the family. For developing what is good and destroying what is bad.

The emancipation of women and their equality with men is impossible and must remain so as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework which is private. The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large scale and when domestic duties requires their attention only to a minor degree." Engels

This can only be achieved under socialism, where the conditions for the economic independence of women are established. Once women's economic dependence on men is eliminated by women taking part in social production, then the basis for the domination of men is gone from both society and the family. With new relations in production there will be new relations in the family. All this is proven today by the example of China and Albania, here we see the flourishing of the family under socialism. No longer do education, customs and attitudes serve to reinforce the inferior position of women as under class society. Instead we see the smashing of all prejudices, and the establishment of the conditions for real equality in the family and society. Relations between people are based on mutual respect, consideration and cooperation. Instead of the family dying away, only the oppressive aspects are dying. There are no longer the economic considerations which have previously tied women down, the worry about their own existence and the well-being and future of their children. The family under socialism is based on all round equality, love and respect of both partners. Where these no longer exist the marriage is dissolved. Personal relations are no longer warped, perverted and exploited as under capitalism, but are entered into freely and independently by both partners.

In socialism the family serves the economic structure as under capitalism. But there is a world of difference between the nature of the economic structure of exploitation and private property under capitalism and the economic structure of cooperation and common ownership under socialism. As socialists our demand must be for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism, in order that the family can begin to serve the masses of men and women instead of the bourgeoisie.

Revolutionary Women's Union,  
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The family as a social institution has developed according to the development and changes in the economic system which it always serves.

Women have not always been oppressed either in society or within the family. In primitive times women held a dominant position in both. This was due to the principal role women played in production. Her chores in the home and the bearing of children were regarded with respect and gave her a superior position in society as compared to men. It is only with the emergence of the patriarchal family that women have been oppressed. This arose with the emergence of private property and the division of society into classes. When some men, having gained control of the dominant means of production, wanted to ensure the legitimacy of their children to inherit their newly acquired property, the patriarchal monogamous family was established. Women were forced out of public production and relegated to the home. They were deprived of any say in the running of the community or over their lives. They became simply domestic slaves. Monogamy was the first form of the family based not on natural but on economic considerations, namely the victory of private property over communal ownership. As Engels said:

"The overthrow of mother-right was the world historic defeat of the female sex."

Although economic systems have since developed and changed, the fundamental organisation of society is still based on exploitation and oppression of the many by the few. The family has remained patriarchal and women have remained oppressed within it.

Under capitalism the family is designed to serve the bourgeoisie just like everything else in their society. The inequality of women within the family is not the cause but the effect of the economic oppression of women. This results in the predominance of the man in the family as simply a consequence of his economic predominance in society as a whole and in the family this leads to the economic dependence of women on men.

The marriage bargain entered into under capitalism is based on just this; it is aimed to perpetuate these roles. On the one hand the financial support of the wife by the husband and on the other hand the providing by the wife of a free catering, cleaning and child-bearing service. This is of course not a very fair bargain.

The providing of free services by women directly benefits the capitalists. It relieves them of their responsibility to provide these necessary services publicly. Thus they are able to save themselves millions of pounds as well as ensuring the provision of a well fed and fit work force and the promise of a future generation for them to exploit.

Of course within this arrangement the roles are not absolute. In fact we are seeing today in capitalist Britain a much more equal division of labour within many working class families, resulting from the increase of working women. With more and more women being forced to go out to work men are beginning to take a fuller part in housework. It is not only in this respect that the family, the economic unit of society comes into contradiction with the rest of society. Within the family both men and women have more chance to avoid the corruption of capitalist ideology aimed to alienate and dehumanise them. They are able to display real human qualities such as love, consideration and self-sacrifice more easily than under the intensive exploitation and pressures on the shop floor. Both men and women directly benefit from this and see in the family a place of sanctity & warmth. The working class work hard to protect this and cherish it. It is not something they want destroyed. Where among the proletariat do you hear the demand to abolish the family in favour of communal living or free love? As socialists we should learn from the working class and listen and take up their demands, not impose our own on them. What are the demands of the masses of working class women? What ~~are~~ are their grievances about the family?

The masses of women are against household drudgery and their isolation in the home. They are against the looking after of children as their sole responsibility. They are against the authority of the husband and their own subordination within the family. They are against male chauvinism, sexual exploitation & physical coercion.



full and equal role. This inspires us with the real possibility and the obvious inevitability of socialism throughout the world and here in Britain too. The liberation of women is inseparably linked with the liberation of the whole working class. There is no short cut. Society has to be revolutionised. This means not only the economic structure, i.e. from the private ownership of the means of production to the social ownership, but revolutionising attitudes, building a world free of prejudice and inequality and injustice. That is why as socialists we can really offer no real solution to women other than socialism.

"Genuine equality between men and women can only be realised in the process of the socialist transformation of society as a whole." Mao Tsetung.

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Tax credits are part of a range of Government proposals and Acts (Housing Finance, Industrial Relations, reorganisation of Health Service) which attempt to 'rationalise' a number of reforms won by the proletariat in the class struggle - forcing the State to recognise a measure of responsibility in municipal housing, education, health, child welfare.

Under the guise of cutting down on inefficient bureaucracy, building a more rational society based on a planned (capitalist) economy (whose rationale is of course the rationale of the private sector), they now attempt to place their responsibility for the many aspects of social welfare firmly back on the shoulders of the wage-earner - the new rationalised model of the family will 'pay its way'. Already we've seen the health charges, withdrawal of free milk in schools etc. We have to show the connections between these parallel kinds of legislation, and place them in the context of the reproduction of labour power.

Remember that the quantity of value (wages) necessary for the reproduction of labour power is determined not by the needs of a 'biological' Guaranteed Minimum Wage alone, but by the needs of a historical minimum (Marx noted that English workers needed beer while the French proletarians needed wine) i.e. a historically variable minimum.

I should also like to point out that this minimum is doubly historical in that it is not defined by the historical needs of the working class 'recognised' by the capitalist class, but by the historical needs imposed by the proletarian class struggle. (Althusser)

So, family allowance was one gain from the struggle - again by the working class for its children, forcing the state to admit a responsibility to all children rather than leaving it entirely on the shoulders of individual wage-earners. Family allowance has up till now been a statutory right - a kind of invariable minimum. Maybe we should press for an increased children's allowance, non-means tested, tax-free, boosted by return of free school milk, meals, etc. We should point out that the 'family' cannot be used as a totally economic unit for planning, as the tax credit system implies - there are also ideological issues at stake. People meet, people mate, people leave each other. Society is made up of men, women and children. These are the 'economic units.'

Struggles against the state in the area of the reproduction of labour power can never be subsumed under any one economist demand, e.g. Wages for Housework - to do this would be to neglect real ideological relations between the state and the function of the family - the transmission of the necessity for the sexual division of labour, to



whatever extent is historically necessary (sex roles, training of women for economic, psychological and sexual dependence on men) the transmission of one's class role (training in how to be exploited, or how to exploit). So, in the family (capitalist) at the level of psychology, we learn our relation to the mode of reproduction (sexual division starts here), and to the means of production (class, modified by sex, starts here.) This good work is carried on by state institutions - nurseries, schools, church, etc.

The reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression so that they too will provide for the domination of the ruling class 'in ovrds'. (Althusser)

As a women's movement we've learned the importance of psychology. we can't forget for a moment the place of ideological domination in the reproduction of labour power, and of the relations of production. Our analysis can't be contained within the purely economic. So why is it that when we start to assess our class position, move towards a class analysis, towards links with working class women, we cop out on our ideological role and allow a totally economist bias to take over?

So evely one of our tasks would be to uncover the real importance of ideology for the whole class struggle, since we have had to cope with it in the area of the reproduction of labour power (the family), and the reproduction of the relations of production, the institution of the state, schools, etc.

#### Framework for discussion

A full understanding of the political implications of the Family Allowance campaign raises certain fundamental theoretical questions for Women's Liberation:

1. The need for an analysis of sexism and its relationship to class and racism.
2. The relationship of the 'natural' and 'social' division of labour within the family to the social division of labour in society and the political implications in terms of a strategy for the women's movement.
3. Any analysis on the basis of one campaign is necessarily a distortion; an analysis of sexism and its relationship to capitalism, and a strategy for fighting it, must come out of an overall development of the movement, and the linking of all campaigns. This raises all the organisational problems in the book.
4. How do we organise around national campaigns without getting bogged down in economism? How do we define economism and its relation to the women's movement and the ideological struggles within it? How do we work with the real economic demands and necessities of women and yet in practice also work on the ideological level of these problems?
5. How do we make theoretical work accessible to each other and to other women?

6. What problems have we encountered in changing people's consciousness (men's, women's, kids', our own) and how do we organise to extend our practice in our confrontation of class issues?

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Some of us are involved in community activity, some in study groups, meetings ... increasingly we have found that the same questions have come up for all of us and made it imperative for us to expand our understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.

Red Rag Collective  
March 1973



by Elizabeth Wilson and Angela Weir.

Since Selma produced her pamphlet, *WOMEN, THE UNIONS AND WORK, OR WHAT IS NOT TO BE DONE* many women will have discussed it. We write to try to assess and to share what we have learnt from our participation in some of these discussions and where they leave us now. We welcomed Selma's paper, and the Italian paper to which it is very much a corollary, because it attempted to move beyond the arguments of a narrow feminist versus a narrow, primarily economist Marxism and tried instead to understand the objective relationships between class and sexuality in modern capitalist society. We wish in this paper to examine the responses to the paper and then to look in more detail at the analysis proffered and the strategy which is indicated - primarily, in Selma's paper in the form of various demands.

Selma says that her pamphlet is intended to begin a discussion. Yet subsequent meetings have tended to develop as though the Women's Movement has either to accept her pamphlet wholeheartedly, accept the analysis and the six new demands, or reject it and sink back into various obsessions - trades unionism; personal liberation; mindless activism. The problems Selma is raising faced the Movement at its birth. we - The Movement - are like a dog with a bone, worrying at one or other of these problems every so often and then burying it again in a ritual without nourishment.

Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the discussions was the low level at which they tended to revolve around the question of whether or not to unionise women. Those who supported trades unionism activism, usually members of I.M.G. and I.S. did not even attempt to suggest - as certainly Lenin or Gramsci would require them to do - their strategy for developing higher forms of working class struggle that would transcend the limitations of trades unionism, its bureaucratism and economism, so that trades union struggle might be relegated to a secondary position.

Given the centrality of the question of women and trades unionism it is perhaps worth re-examining the arguments again. We believe these involve three levels of analysis: 1) an analysis of the social formations which produce the conditions of capitalism; 2) an analysis of the concrete operations of capitalism at a particular time, i.e. now (this must involve history) and the particular contradictions of capitalism; 3) from the above two, a strategy for women now.

Taking the first point the analysis of the extra-parliamentary left in England - this means really the Trotskyist left - is that the crucial and determinant formation in capitalism is the formation of the means of production and that this is located in the factory. Therefore revolutionary activity must begin by organising at the level of the means of production. Further to this there is the quasi-psychological assumption that the grouping together of large numbers of men in large units of production will provide the subjective conditions for the realisation of class consciousness and revolutionary organisation.

On the second level it is thought that the particular organisation workers have evolved to defend themselves are the trades unions, and that therefore it is crucial to work within these "natural" organisations of the proletariat and by a series of carefully framed demands and political education pave the way for the highest form of revolutionary struggle, namely dual power, which is created through the formation of factory committees which link to form some united confederation of workers in which quick and generalised uprisings will be the instruments for taking power. Their strategy proceeds from this analysis.

We reject this and agree with much of Selma's criticism. However, we feel that because her analysis is based on a primarily descriptive/empirical



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account of women's relationship with the trades unions and of the nature of women's work, her paper has an insufficient theoretical basis and so in the end insufficient strategical and hence organisational directives. We wish to advance some possible lines for analysis.

Firstly at the most theoretical level we feel it is crucial to analyse not only the means of production but also the reproduction of the means of production, especially in terms of the reproduction of labour power, and the reproduction of the relations of production. It is perhaps in capital's ongoing struggle not only to produce but also to reproduce the conditions of production - to keep its own system going - that some of its basic contradictions may be revealed.

We feel that this is the viewpoint towards which Selma, and also Mariarosa Dalla Costa in the Italian pamphlet, are both reaching, yet their analyses of women's labour still seems to be determined by the concept of "means of production" rather than "reproduction of the relations of production", and thus their analysis too is primarily "economic".

In the case of Selma's pamphlet the demands reflect a more or less ad hoc mixture of "material" (economic) demands, eg. equal pay for all; and what are usually seen as more "ideological" demands; eg. the right to control our own bodies.

In the case of Dalla Costa, whose pamphlet is more explicitly theoretical, the problem is originally posed in terms of the haunting premise of cultural lag. (We do not especially criticise her for this, because this is the way the "traditionsl" left has often interpreted the problem and she is trying to argue against it). She says capitalism creates wage labour, and that from this women and children (and one might add the old) are excluded. Being excluded from labour these groups lose their power, and "...thus with the advent of the capitalist mode of production.... women are relegated to a condition of isolation, enclosed within the family cell, dependent in every aspect upon men...she remained in a pre-capitalist stage of personal dependence."

What seems ambiguous about Dalla Costa's pamphlet is that she appears partially to accept this vision of women excluded and thus locked in the cell of cultural and material dependency. whilst also asserting - and this is the main argument of the pamphlet - that women do produce surplus value. "We have to make clear that within the wage domestic work not only produces use values but is an essential function in the production of surplus value!" We described this as her main argument because she devotes 11 pages to her analysis of the "productivity" of domestic labour and because she also discusses women's sexual sublimation and passivity in terms of "productivity". In section C she does talk about women being responsible for the reproduction of labour power, but devotes only a paragraph to it. Also, rather strangely, she finds that the cause of women's role in reproducing labour power (interpreted as disciplining husband and children) is the psychological stunting of her personality. Then this function is linked back to sexual passivity which in turn is a pre-requisite or result - the causal sequence isn't quite clear - of women's exclusion from labour. To sum up, Dalla Costa is saying that in these three ways - 1) producing domestic labour, 2) being sexually passive and 3) being disciplinarians to children and husbands - women are being productive, though it is unclear whether or not she is saying that the second and third functions produce surplus value. So having "proved" that women produce labour qua their role of women, women then have their own ticket to create the socialist revolution. Her final section is headed "The Struggle against Labour" and her concluding thought seems to be that to liberate themselves from their exploitation housewives (is this synonymous with all women?) must "recognise themselves also as a section of the class, the most degraded because they are not paid a wage". But who then are women struggling against, to whom are they going to make their demands - the bosses? the government? their husbands? to all these groups in a free-wheeling female holocaust? What is the basis of women's

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power if they destroy the family? Although Dalla Costa gives a Marxist analysis of women's position, and although she makes a number of acute empirical observations all that really emerges is the demand for women to make demands in an unsystematic way - to go down to the local T.U. meetings and make the men demand an end to shift work so they can make love at nights, go down to the medical students and demand that they give us the knowledge and means to have or not to have birth control, abortions etc., and so on. To be frivolous one might say that women are being told "if you're going to nag, nag about the right things", to be less frivolous one might say that although one agrees with many of these demands in themselves, they add up to no more than a mindless activism which tends to be debilitating and frustrating in the long run, and which doesn't amount to the class struggle or the possibilities of class victory.

We shall return to points about strategy and the alternatives to random demands later, but here we would just like to argue that Dalla Costa takes the wrong concept as an instrument for analysis and that it would be more satisfactory to analyse the position of women from an analysis of the reproduction of the conditions of production.

In talking about the reproduction of the conditions of production we are discussing two things: 1) the reproduction of labour power, and 2) the reproduction of the relations of production. We believe these two functions are crucial to an ongoing capitalist society and that women's position in capitalism is fundamentally defined by their relationship to these two processes. In saying this we agree with Dalla Costa that capitalism does and has excluded women from production, but we are asserting that capitalism also creates new forms of institutions and roles for women and that these can be explained by the necessity for any society to create means by which it will reproduce itself. To get to the point at last, capitalism consists not only of a new type of infra-structure but also of a new superstructure and a new state. Rather than women's productive labour being hidden because they aren't paid a wage, what is continually hidden is women's ideological role in a number of state apparatuses, particularly in the family, and the reasons why this role is crucial to capitalism.

Starting from 2) then, women are crucial to the reproduction of labour power because:-

1) they are given the total responsibility for the reproduction of children, whilst lacking the means to control in any way that process. These means are controlled by state institutions - in the case of the U.K. directly, since these are publicly owned.  
2) Women have the responsibility for using the husband's wage for the purpose it is intended, i.e. the material reproduction of labour power. There are two points to this function; firstly there is that of buying food, clothing, housing etc., and secondly the labour of processing and maintaining them. Again, as in the case of having children, women are responsible for the wage but have no control over the means by which it is distributed.

In speaking of the wage one should also note that in the conditions of monopoly capitalism the wage is usually insufficient to cover the successful material reproduction of the wage labourer, and that two other mechanisms are often created to assist this process - 1) surplus value is often channelled away from the firm to the state and paid out again in the form of housing subsidies, health service subsidies etc., though this in no way amounts to an equal redistribution of income. Also one might note that much of the government's money comes from taxation on the wage itself and thus the state has control over the supply of many of the minimum material necessities; and 2) women go out to work to supplement the male wage.



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Women have responsibility for the material reproduction of the worker but lack control in a double sense in that they lack control over the state institutions. Women are crucial in the reproduction of the relations of production in the following ways:-

- 1) the care and socialisation of children. It is crucial for capitalism not only to produce labour materially but also to ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or consent to its practice. That this be the major responsibility of women particularly during the formative learning years of the child's early life is, we suggest, a feature specific to capitalism. However, here again the state controls the educational system and while women have more autonomous responsibility in the care of children than in other functions, the state through the educational system still controls much of the ideological socialisation which again is the woman's responsibility. Arguably this is particularly the case at nursery and primary school level.
- 2) the disciplining of the husband - ensuring his continued ideological subjection by explicitly emphasising her own and the children's dependence on his continuing wage.

In making these remarks we emphasise that they are likely to be more true the further down the social scale one goes - for instance sexual roles are most rigidly defined in the lower working class - and that perhaps they are most true of some black families and of immigrant workers in Europe. There the man as a wage labourer is often banished from the scene altogether and women are thrown in a direct relationship with the state.

## SECTION 2

We have tried to suggest that the crucial social formations of capitalism in which women play a role are the reproduction of labour power and the relations of production and that an analysis of women primarily in terms of their "productivity" masks the centrality of their role in reproducing the conditions of production. We want in this section to look at the present concrete operation of this role, but shall merely suggest some further possibilities for investigation since we have not done enough research to go more deeply.

It seems that the most significant factors in the present situation are high unemployment, inflation, and the decreasing taxation of the very rich, the cutting of state welfare subsidies and the full introduction of means tested social services.

British capitalism, faced with severe international competition and indeed the wage demands of the working class itself has been forced to respond in a number of ways:-

- 1) Automation - productivity bargaining. Capital is being concentrated in high-output, labour saving machinery. As an example of rationalisation we quote from a report in the Guardian (21.8.72) on the Covent Garden move to Nine Elms, drawing attention to the fact that it hints at a theme of a number of recent labour struggles, namely a connection between job and the life outside or around the job. "Faced with the loss of the human elements which have made work in Covent Gardens worthwhile...market workers are ready to demand compensation in traditional style; by hard wage bargaining...The new market will be more like a factory than a garden..(and)..the inevitability of the move, the well publicised activities of property developers in shaping the new Covent Gardens, and the imminent breakup of old-established employer-employee relationships have all contributed to a new mood of political awareness in the Garden".

New investment will mean less jobs not more. The object of the productivity deals are wage rises in return for less shop floor control, speed ups, measured day work, higher productivity per worker and cuts in the labour force. The result is a smaller workforce, more output (product) per worker and more total product, labour cost decreasing proportionately to increased output, and increased surplus value.

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- 2) The "lame duck" rationalisation policy in private and nationalised industry. This has meant profitable parts of a nationalised industry being sold to "Heath's friends", while the social parts from which we all benefit are cut back - for example the postal service - with consequent redundancies. It has meant factories and sections not immediately profitable being wiped out, because other factories and sections are producing more, usually within the same firm.
- 3) Wage freezes - the £2 norm.
- 4) Increasing the cost of the Welfare State - free milk in schools is abolished, prescription charges are re-established, and at the present time rent increases are especially important. In British Capitalism Workers and the Profits Squeeze (Penguin, 1972) Andrew Glyn and Bob Sutcliffe point out that among many other weapons used with the purpose of increasing investment in the present economic situation the Tory Government has already increased welfare charges at the same time as decreasing taxation of the very rich in an attempt to redistribute income to capital. "The working class is also hit by reductions in social services, agricultural price guarantees and housing subsidies, which will involve a saving of something like £500m in 1974/5 on Labour programmes. These reductions include almost £50m in reduced food subsidies (and therefore higher food prices) and £100m-£200m from higher council house rents. Those people below the official poverty line will escape some of the higher charges provided they submit to more means tests, and those who are very badly paid will, if they come forward, benefit a bit from F.I.S. which still leaves them below the poverty line. For the working class as a whole these changes in public expenditure involve clear reductions in living standards, proportionately much greater than those suffered by higher income groups."

These attacks on the working class are being backed by legislation designed to lock the working class more firmly in their cycle of dependence upon and subservience to the ruling class. The two most important pieces of legislation are the I.R.B. and the introduction of means tested social services. Both say the same thing - if you are not officially recognised by the ruling class you have no right to challenge the existing distribution of income, nor even to possess the minimum necessary to live, a house, food, clothing. It has always been true that the ruling class decides who shall live and who shall starve; the new Tory legislation merely spells it out more crudely.

How do these processes affect women?

Welfare cuts are especially meaningful to women, who bear the brunt of them. They have a bearing too on working politically and organising in the community. Women are in fact caught and crushed between two opposing economic forces, the reality of price rises and welfare cuts and the ideology of consumption and the commodity, in which they play a key role. The point about consumerism is not that the use and enjoyment of well made and useful household objects or the desire for a more comfortable life are in themselves bad - and the Women's Movement must guard against the strain of puritanism that tends to imply that such enjoyment is suspect - but that in this society in the pursuit of higher and higher profits and more and more consumption therefore, women (as main purchasers) are offered an ever increasing assortment of useless and unnecessary articles whilst real necessities - decent housing, strong furniture, safe toys - are unobtainable. It is part of the ideology of consumerism that women are encouraged to compete against one another. And there is no need to labour the point about the blatant untruthfulness of advertising.

In fact, as Selma points out, the vast majority of women can't afford the basic necessities of life for their families and themselves unless they work. Selma attempts to show how women's position is crucial to the economic situation, and she talks a lot about work, and the protest against the Protestant Work Ethic. It has been suggested that there is a confusion here between "work" and "labour" or "wage labour". This doesn't make the



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theme less important, though it indicates the degree of confusion surrounding it.

On the one hand the pamphlet expresses a deep rejection of the Work Ethic of our society as it is currently expressed in our daily lives. This is exemplified in mystifying demands by militants for "the right to work" and also in total refusal to work among sections of the youth culture ("work is too oppressive").

Most of us have been brought up with a dual attitude to work. It is portrayed to us when young as an evil necessity about which adults complain ("your schooldays are the happiest days of your life"), albeit with martyred self satisfaction, yet children do notice how their fathers often seem lost when on holiday and become increasingly irritable and bored without their work, so that all are relieved when the holiday ends and they can return to it. On reaching adult status we are urged to find "work you can enjoy", and it is implied that there is something wrong with anyone who can't "buckle down to a useful job of work" ("his trouble is he doesn't like work"). Middle class and working class, alike yet in different ways, are deeply ambivalent about work, and one should not underestimate the importance of this psychology of work.

We differ from Selma over her conclusions. She states her aim as follows: "Our concern must be demands with which the Movement articulates in few words the breadth of its rejection of the oppression and exploitation of women. The tension between a local struggle and the stated principles of the Movement does not vanish, but within each local demand which mobilises women wherever they are, the struggle loses its sporadic, provincial and disconnected character."

Can demands do this though? What are demands? Demands restrict thought by tying it down to something too immediate and specific. Demands are easily misunderstood and distorted. They are already an oversimplification, and can be no substitute for an analysis or for the manifesto - a more coherent statement of aims - which could come out of that analysis. Selma does not show that her demands connect.

What then do we do? Before discussing positive alternatives it is again necessary to explain where and why we disagree with Selma.

The issue of work seems to be connected with what we term Life Style Politics. We believe that this is an important theme in the Women's Movement, but a partly submerged and unarticulated one. It represents a rebellion against the work ethic, and has also tried to offer an alternative based on co-operation (food co-operatives, communal living, non-monogamous relationships etc.), on certain kinds of organisation (such as the C.U.s) and generally on values other than the bourgeois values of acquisitiveness (consumerism), with an emphasis on the de-scaling rather than the proliferation of needs (in the area of fashion the abandonment of make-up, "hairstyles" etc., and of exaggerated cleanliness and routinisation in the sphere of housework). If we need fewer possessions we need work less because we need less money and we can make what we have go further by sharing it, is one belief underlying this life style.

It is in a sense an exemplary way of life, to be differentiated on that count from the drop-out, intuned "counter culture" of hippies, though it has points of contact with it. Exemplary politics have been a feature of the left for a long time. Gramsci for instance defined this tendency as follows "...there is one traditional party too with an essentially 'indirect' character - which in other words presents itself explicitly as purely 'educative', moral, cultural. This is the anarchist movement. Even so called direct (terrorist) action is conceived of as 'propaganda' by example. This only confirms the judgement that the anarchist movement is not autonomous, but exists on the margin of the other parties, "to educate them!"

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Now we believe that in the present situation such exemplary politics cannot be the correct ones for us as women to pursue, because what we have to do is not to educate the left, but to create it, create at least our own left-wing movement and create its relationship to the wider struggle, or perhaps it would be better to say situate ourselves simultaneously as the wider struggle and in it.

Exemplary life style politics also emphasise the gulf between one consciousness and another. Are those who live in this way political activists? To themselves they are; to many working class women they are incomprehensible, bizarre and therefore sinister. This is a familiar problem. But it does not need to be restated that it really is not good enough to reject working class women who are scared by the talk of ripping off from supermarkets and don't wish to take part in even collective demonstrative public action of this kind because it is 'stealing' and they don't believe in "breaking" the law. False consciousness maybe, but also a realistic understanding on the part of say, a working mother of just what she would risk should she get done - her life smashed up, her kids in care, at the best interference from welfare workers or probation officers.

Ripping off is as a matter of fact a demonstration akin to the absenteeism of which Selma speaks. She calls this women's refusal, their revolt. True. Yet it achieves nothing. In the first place the management of the factory can get replacements for the girls on the assembly line and usually costs for a quick transfer and high absenteeism so they don't suffer too much (just as supermarkets cost for shoplifting). Nor does the individual woman benefit ultimately since disaffection from work is part of the vicious circle, it is one reason why she gets married young and "settles down" to have a family - only to have to return eventually to a similar hateful job, from which this time, because of her family responsibilities, she usually can't escape, unless indeed the second time around she takes refuge in mental breakdown, as frequently happens.

The apotheosis of unfreedom is the Temp. Typist, of whom Germaine Greer wrote as if the temp. typist were unfettered, roaming gypsy of our society, the truly free and ultimately liberated woman with no hang-ups about the bourgeoisie security - when again in the long term to do temp. work is merely a recognition that a job for women is just a way of filling up time until you find a husband. To work in that way is to extend prostitution from the sphere of sexuality to the sphere of intellectual functioning,

But in any case female absenteeism can be virtually abolished by a simple rearrangement of shifts to fit in with the family responsibilities of women (i.e. the fact that women have two jobs) The Peak Frean factory in Bermondsey discovered this some years ago. By introducing a nursery for babies and enabling women to fit their shifts around the family timetable, instead of vice versa, they reduced absenteeism and high turnover to zero without making costly concessions.

Absenteeism, like ripping off from supermarkets is the private, negative politics of rebellion and refusal. It is a way of saying "no", of taking a secret revenge against the monolithic Them of the state. Life style politics goes a step further in that it is a public demonstration and a way of saying "things are not the way we want them - this is how they should be" and at least they are collective and not isolated. But there is more difference than a transposition of letters between reactive and creative politics. These reactive life style politics are the politics of weakness because they proceed on the assumption that an actual revolution or transformation is impossible, and that therefore all one can do is create one's own revolutionary ghetto.

Of course we all hate work - wage labour- as it is in this society. We hate being assembly line fodder, we hate being pen pushing or managerial fodder, we hate house-cleaning and baby-rearing fodder.



Yet the demand to work less is confusing because it actually could only come about in an "affluent" society - the day surely will come when we work a 20 hour week - and could not be achieved, and would in any case be an irrelevant demand, in a transformed society in which this country had relinquished its exploitative relationship with the third world.

We should like to see a society in which the bourgeoisie distinction between work and "leisure" - "spare time" as it is so significantly called - was destroyed and transcended. What we rebel against is the separation of work from enjoyment, and of home from work. Nor do we want individual men taking over some of "our" jobs in the home while we take over some of "his" in the office or factory. We want greater flexibility between work and home - to have our kids with us at our place of work, or to work at home; we want greater flexibility in our concepts of what is manual labour, and also of the nature of skills. The rebellion of women against being cast all and always in the same mould of home-maker extends to every sphere. Is it necessary for any individual to spend 50 years on a production line or as a teacher? So-called experience and expertise are valuable but in our present society are fetishised and often merely an excuse for privilege.

The political struggle does transcend the false categories of work and play and Selma is right to say that ultimately that is at least a part of what the Movement has to offer all women - the struggle for a better society and a belief that this is possible.

So we return at last - and too briefly - to strategy and organisation. The struggle must go on at different levels. Our priorities would be:-

1) A general ideological struggle arising out of a development of some of the ideas we have sketched above. Instead of piecemeal struggles - for contraception and abortion on demand, free schools etc. - and the perpetual confrontation with sexism, which often amounts to no more than lip service being paid to a situation which runs very deep, a coherent consciousness of our position as women as essential to the maintenance of the ideology of the capitalist state would suggest a more co-ordinated and consistent attack and this attack would not then be seen as an alternative or as in conflict with political work at the point of production or in the community, whereas at present what should work be connected to our position as bolsters up of the predominant ideology too easily degenerates into merely the search for personal liberation (my man isn't oppressive etc.).

2) The struggle against the state in the community This could be co-ordinated with the struggle in the factories on an area basis. We might ask in passing what the "community" is or can be in our society. Community feeling and community loyalty can often be initially aroused around negative issues of felt need as slum clearance systematically destroys the old working class communities and our society becomes more fragmented. In suburbs or housing estates the men go away to work leaving a purdah of young women and small children, and neither there or at work is there a place for adolescents, who become the werewolves of our society, nor is there a place for the old who become its ghosts.

Yet the struggle in the community has already begun; it has to be co-ordinated and collectively directed against the state and made into a visible part of the same struggle as the struggle at the point of production.

3) We as women need our own organisation. If we do not have this we too will fall back into piecemeal and isolated groups and the Women's Movement will die. Discussing this should be given priority by the Movement.

A final word. This, which started as a reply to Selma, but which, we hope, now exists in its own right as the beginning of our own analysis - however sketchy at present - is heavy and will perhaps be criticised for being too theoretical. Our aim is to contribute towards the ending of a false division between theory and practice. That is why we believe in a theoretical analysis as an indispensable part of action, for from theory actions, such as we suggest should spring.

This paper is an attempt to pose some of the strategic questions raised by our developing theoretical analysis of the oppression of women within capitalism. It would seem that the theoretical work has not been matched by an analysis of consequent strategy and as a result there seems to be a gap between theory and praxis. Strategy is not implicit in our developing critique of capitalism and the family; nor is it implicit in our agreement to work on campaigns around the four demands; there is a lot of discussion on the centrality of these areas right across the movement, but there is also a tremendous amount of confusion and argument. Even if there were more agreement on our analysis of women's oppression, for instance, that women are commonly oppressed under capitalism but are divided by class, this doesn't necessarily show us what to do. An example illustrating this would be where, in showing that for some women one source of oppression derives from their work as unpaid household labourers, the immediately logical strategy for organising against this would be around their relation to production, their work in the home - but, it is precisely this isolation which enhances their oppression and acts as a barrier against organisation. Women have traditionally only organised when outside the home. So, we need a clearly worked out, strategic, analysis which can deal with such contradictions. Strategy is not implicit.

The Women's Movement is not attempting to make a clearer analysis of women's oppression and its relation to sexism and capitalism merely to help us understand ourselves better - we are attempting this in order that we can better understand the way to change the nature of our oppression as women (which, for most women at this conference, implies a change from capitalism to socialism). We develop our analysis so that we have the basis for developing the correct strategy which is a correct handling of the contradictions.

I would say that the 'movement-as-a-whole' has been avoiding strategic analysis for some of the reasons which follow. Though of course many aligned women at this conference bring with them the strategic analyses for fighting the oppression of women from their respective organisations. Despite this I think that there has been an avoidance of, or lack of recognition of certain key problems about strategy.

We should not pose the basic question on strategy as "What is the revolutionary socialist strategy for the women's movement?", but instead we should see it as a triple problem :- a) "How do we see the present and the future development of the women's movement?" b) "What are the problems facing aligned and non-aligned revolutionary socialist women in developing a shared strategy?", and c) "What is the role of revolutionary socialist women within the movement?".

It seems to me that in order to begin to answer these three basic questions we need first to look at various aspects of the development of the women's movement and what currently constitutes the women's movement. I see the main areas leading to clarification of these questions as being:

- Problems relating to the diversity of the movement.
- Problems of organisation.
- The role and status of the campaigns in the movement as a whole. (i.e. our strategy to date and what it has been based on).

With a better understanding of these three areas and the problems which they pose for socialist women, we will be in a better position to work out our strategy for the future. Strategy should not only be related to theoretical analysis, it needs to be also related, in a realistic and concrete way, to the nature and constitution of the movement.

This paper will attempt to formulate the problems as I see them, raise the questions we need to resolve, and put forward one or two proposals.



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## Some reasons why strategy for the 'Women's-Movement-as-a-Whole' is Problematic

### A. The diversity of the movement.

Description of this aspect of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain is well documented elsewhere (see Sheila Rowbotham 'The beginnings of W.L. in Britain' in Body Politic, Juliet Mitchell 'Women's Estate', and Hilary Wainwright's paper on strategy written for this conference). The point I want to make about this is that large numbers of women's groups have sprung up in the last three years which are viewed together as what constitutes the women's movement in this country, the problem for strategy being the different and often conflicting ideologies which they have developed. The very multiplicity of these differing tendencies demonstrates the force with which women feel the need to get out, get together and find ways of struggling against their oppression which in itself is a tremendously creative dynamic for the movement. If I were basing my thoughts hereon my own development since coming into the movement from an almost apolitical position, I might want to argue that an understanding of women's oppression does have a revolutionary logic in it since this has been my experience. But, it has become increasingly clear now that spontaneous organisation around issues which women have identified as appropriate in fighting their oppression does not lead automatically to a revolutionary consciousness or even to identifying with the left.

For those of us who are developing a socialist perspective one task facing us now is to work out a revolutionary strategy which reflects our position. But, we don't constitute the total Women's Movement in this country and therefore are not in a position to put forward a strategy for the 'women's-movement-as-a-whole'. I think that the most we can attempt is to work towards developing a two pronged strategy :-

- a) A strategy for dealing with the problems raised by working inside an umbrella type movement.
- b) A strategy for mass organisation of women generally, around issues relating both to their immediate needs and leading to the development of a revolutionary consciousness.

More attention seems to have been paid to the latter - particularly by women in the aligned left who present it as if it were unproblematical within the movement (i.e. this ignores the problems as posed in a) above).

So, there are structural limitations which must be considered and taken account of when working on the problem of strategy for this umbrella movement that we are in. The most we can do is to work out a shared strategy for women on the left which makes clear the connections between women's oppression, sexism and capitalism, which points out the contradictions, which avoids pragmatism and reformism, opportunism and ultra leftism; most importantly, we must do this in such a way as to not be divisive in the 'movement-as-a-whole'. We know that we don't want splits or else we wouldn't be working in the women's movement in the first place - but this is not always clear to sisters who don't share our politics.

Questions relating to the movement-as-a-whole and in particular its broad based nature will involve a clearer analysis defining the movement; better understanding of the organisational and communications problems which this structure poses; closer consideration of what we mean by 'mass movement' (and how we see it developing); lastly, we need more clarification about the way in which one makes alliances with women inside the movement and with other groups outside the movement when fighting on particular issues. There is, then, a real problem as to the status which anything we decide in common as socialists will have on the 'movement-as-a-whole'.

My own position is arguing basically for maintaining the kind of movement we have now. I am merely trying to raise the questions we are faced with by continuing in this way. It may be that some socialist women at this conference view the issue differently and would want to argue for a more

(3)

clear cut division in order that decisions taken have some status and binding force for the women who subscribe to them, and can be put forward as the strategy of a more clearly defined women's movement.

### B. Organisational Difficulties.

The question of the status of any strategy we develop for the movement is also a problematic in relation to the kind of structure we are working inside. How does strategy develop when one is involved in a broad-based movement - not <sup>an</sup> party organisation where everyone has to abide by majority decisions, where there is a formal communication structure within which dissent can be dealt with, change initiated and so on. W.L. is basically group based with no central responsibility. The Women's Movement is noted for its lack of organisation, for very real reasons:-

- a) Fear of bureaucratic domination with all its implications - the issuing of directives which have no immediate relation to the needs and problems faced at grass roots level, when this is precisely the level at which most energy is generated.  
Related to this:-
- b) A belief that organisation equals hierarchy equals domination equals the undemocratic.
- c) A conviction that organisation is necessary but impossible for a broad grouping until such time as it can share more in common (beyond a shared recognition of the oppression of women) - a theory and a practice.
- d) Most peoples main reference to the Women's Movement is through attachment to the local group and feel that this is where real connections with the oppression of women are made.

Our more recent history has in fact shown a deterioration in the area of organisation. The one structure which bore any semblance of having national status, the W.M.C.C. disintegrated at a point when the fear of factional domination seemed very real indeed, and disappeared under the overwhelming weight of emotional feeling generated by the conflicts in Skogness 1971. The only other movement-wide channel of communication the Information Centre also collapsed through lack of sustained support.

What we are left with now beyond local group organisation is a regional structure which varies in its meaning quite considerably from area to area but is rarely more than a larger base for discussion and interchange of ideas and experiences and, occasionally, for agreement to give regional support in joint action, though rarely on tactics and strategy for this.

Then we have a more tenuous structure which has a national base - the twice yearly National Conference - and while this serves all the sisterhood/solidarity functions it should, giving us a renewed sense of the potential power of the Movement we are in, it has no status beyond this, no decision making power etc. (Another way in which we organise and work nationally is around specific campaigns; holding conferences, circulating newsletters and so on - the significance of this will be raised in the section on campaigns)

So our strength and energy is still, as it always was, at the local grass roots level. But even at this level there are organisational problems which lead to problems in developing strategy. To use Birmingham as an example; our own history is dogged by problems arising out of our insistence on continuing to work together on an ad hoc basis. This has caused such problems as inefficiency and frustration through lack of formal communication system, occasional bad feeling that people have assumed leadership roles without authority - people taking it upon themselves, in the absence of a formal mode of allocating tasks, to do various jobs without making their reasons for doing these things explicit - so - we have been doubly trapped by the lack of formal channels for decision making etc. We have made partially successful attempts to rectify this, committed ourselves to making our various positions more explicit, allo-



cated the least contentious tasks (finances and books etc) to specific people, and set up an unedited newsletter which we see as a democratic device whereby all Birmingham women have equal access to put their views and ideas on any aspect of the Movement - individual groups too seem to have developed better internal organisation. So things have got slowly better locally but there are still huge gaps created by organisational inhibition.

What we have failed to recognise at all these levels in the movement is that by refusing to develop some better defined organisation we are cutting our own throats. We are not, as we might emotionally believe, avoiding the traditional traps which create an undemocratic situation. With little or no organisation we achieve precisely this undemocratic situation whereby those with greatest power of articulation or easiest access to current means of communication easily dominate. Their ideas become known as the ideas of the movement as a whole.

More clearly defined organisational objectives at every level would not only create a situation in which more effective communication and exchange could take place but reduce inefficiency, duplication and frustration. It is particularly important in relation to strategy because in the absence of some authorised structure which validates decisions taken, strategy may seem valid for one group of women (e.g. socialist women) but not for the movement as a whole. Without the status which a more structured organisation could provide for general strategy (and other questions), how can we ever develop into the political force which women throughout the movement recognise we must become.

I think, then, that we need more discussion specifying problems relating to organisation at all levels (or lack of it) in order to clarify better the issue of the status of strategy for the movement.

#### C. The Role of the Demands as the Strategy for the Movement so far.

Given its diversity and the organisational problems outlined above the 'movement-as-a-whole' has in fact achieved an amazing degree of coherence in its basic unity of work around various issues which we raise as demands. Some people may at this point accuse me of optimism, of overpitching the actual degree of unity implied by this. But my reasons for feeling so hopeful at this point in the paper is because, despite criticism (which I will elaborate on later), I do believe that we have identified correctly the key areas for struggle, and, unlike some people, I don't see this level of shared agreement as merely the lowest common denominator for united action. That is a negative view which hides the very positive aspects of the demands' centrality. Or, to put it another way, if we were a united organisation (instead of a broad based movement) the demands we raised would essentially be the same but we would have, in addition, more agreement on common strategy and tactics.

#### The problem associated with the demands

In the broadest sense the problem of strategy for the movement as a whole has already been decided on by common agreement to fight around the demands but this conceals problems implicit in our tactics to date. Our basic problem as socialist women working within the movement is in how to present the issues and strategy relating to the demands in such a way as to make the connections clear and hard without alienating sisters who don't share our perspective. Clearly we don't compromise our beliefs which implies that we must criticise and argue against such things as opportunism, pragmatism, reformism, economism and so on. We need to discuss ways of doing this and at the same time show that we are not seeking to split the movement. That is, we must discuss the tactics of being on the one hand opposed in principle to some positions in the movement, but, on the other hand, not opposed in sisterhood. We need to achieve the right tension between division and unity.

What distinguishes socialist women's struggle around the demands from that of other orientations is precisely the overall theoretical context which underlies our practice: that is we campaign for 'reforms' from a revolutionary perspective. We recognise that any gains we make, though valuable in the short term, are not enough and are ultimately of little long term value under capitalism because of the way in which capitalist society can assimilate and transform even quite major changes so that the end result is just a restructuring of the elements relating to the oppression we originally sought to overcome.

Any social structure relating to women's oppression which we decide to attack by raising demands and forming campaigns around them does not function independently of the other areas of social structure underpinning the other demands, rather, the reverse is true; all aspects of any society are inextricably interrelated at both the material and the ideological level. The consequence of this for both our theoretical analysis and our practical actions is that any campaign which we take up cannot be dealt with just at the level of the specific, but has to be understood within its proper context - that is - seen within its real social/political context, the way in which it relates to the total capitalist formation. This is why Hilary Wainwright is so right to emphasise that one of the strategic tasks facing women at the conference this weekend is to work out a Marxist analysis of the Anti-discrimination and Family Allowances campaigns so that we can develop the correct strategy towards these particular campaigns. Our revolutionary socialist analysis of the 'nature and cause' (location) of any problem will always show us that the basis of any particular problem related to the oppression of women which we identify is rooted in the material and ideological basis of the society. Effective improvement can ultimately only be achieved by striving for total change at this fundamental level, working towards the overthrow of capitalism and laying the preconditions for women's liberation under socialism. Any strategy developed by revolutionary socialist women must be developed having this overall perspective in mind. Correct analysis will lay the basis for the development of strategy and tactics for our struggle - all our actions will relate theoretically to this overall perspective and not just to the more short term, immediate effects of that action.

Action around any one campaign will not be at an end when we achieve the specific short term end towards which we are working because we recognise that this achievement will still be contained within a capitalist formation - on the contrary - we will continue the campaign by reanalysing the result -ing new situation and refocussing our action towards that aspect of the campaign which then emerges as strategically most appropriate in working towards our overall goal, the socialist revolution.

As to the relevance of the basic four campaigns agreed to by the movement as a whole (abortion and contraception, equal pay/job opportunity, equal educational opportunity and free nursery education for all), they underpin the oppression of women in this society at the most fundamentally determining level of social/psychological/political/economic life. Changes in these areas are absolutely vital to set the preconditions for the more basic change we envisage.

Briefly, the nursery and education campaigns are ultimately directed at major change in the socialisation process affecting sex role differentiation and attitudes perpetuated through the institutions of family and school etc. The education and equal pay/job opportunity campaigns are related together and directed towards fundamental changes in the traditional role of women as subordinate in relation to the economic and social relations of production. The abortion and contraception campaign is directed towards giving women control over their own bodies as a precondition to their autonomy and giving them a real choice in their relation to society. Taken together, the campaigns are not co-optable under capitalism.



We are seeking to locate and change those major fundamental determining aspects of women's oppression in order to create the preconditions for women's liberation within an even broader developing theoretical critique of capitalism and patriarchy.

Socialist women, then, avoid the trap of reformism and other tendencies by not viewing each individual demand in isolation from the others - our analysis has indicated their interrelated nature and we need to develop strategy and tactics which reflect this tendency. But, how do we deal with all the other tendencies in strategic and tactical terms? - perhaps our main task is to ensure that we are centrally involved in campaign groups in which we see our role primarily as one for reasoned argument for adoption of our strategy.

This needs to be thought about carefully. In W.A.C.C. there is a current division on the question as to whether energy should be put into providing alternative services (fulfilling a social need) or instead to concentrate on the broader struggle for abortion and contraception on demand which would, if achieved, expose the more political contradiction inherent in the demand, i.e. the question of control over your own body for what? - and if the struggle were lost this too has gains for us because it leads us on to wonder why it is not in the interests of the people in power to 'grant' us this freedom.

It is clear that in terms of a socialist analysis the latter strategy is more correct because it exposes one of the contradictions under capitalism and leads automatically to raising questions relating to other areas of women's oppression and, hopefully, to the development of a more revolutionary consciousness. Yet it took over a year for this division to clearly emerge - is this because those socialist women working in the campaign didn't think out overall strategy and tactics with sufficient clarity to ensure that the socialist mode of struggle could be central in the campaign? What then are our strategies towards other orientations within the movement working on the campaigns?

A second problem is situated in the question of the basis on which we might/or might not work within already existing organisations. This is clearly something that many socialist women are thinking about as is clearly shown by the response to Selma James' Manchester paper. In it she came round to a position of arguing against making alliances with the traditional organisation of working class struggle, the T.U.'s, on the basis of a hasty, though realistic, critique of working in the trade unions because of their male dominance/chauvinism and bureaucracy together with their innate reformism. Her analysis of the problems of the unions is substantially correct but her strategic conclusions are quite unrealistic as many socialist women have subsequently argued. What we need - a strategy and tactics for doing this which maximise the possibility of doing this effectively - this we have had little discussion on to date.

A third problem related to to campaigns is their relation to building an autonomous mass movement for women (?) (and I think we need more discussion about what this means). What function do the campaigns play towards this end - on what basis precisely do we recruit women? We need to spell out, in more explicit terms, our strategy on this question.

#### D. Other questions relating to the problem of strategy for the Women's Movement (in no order of priority and incomplete).

Specific - 1. We need to be more clear about the way in which aligned women situate themselves in the women's movement. Presumably this conference will go some way towards clarifying this. We must be committed to showing the socialist movement as a whole that the women's issue is not divisive - to this end I would expect a commitment from aligned women who work inside the movement as well not to view the women's question as a side issue.

7

2. On what basis can aligned and non-aligned revolutionary socialist women work together. Can we only share ideas and support each others actions on the principle that they are all Women's struggles? - or can we actually work out a shared basis for working together on commonly agreed strategy?

General - 3. We need more discussion on our relation to the socialist movement as a whole - how do we see Women's Liberation developing in the long term in relation to the socialist movement?

4. How do we see the future of the movement politically and organisationally developing at all levels?

5. We need greater clarity on the question of relating a socialist women's analysis to the movement as a whole.

6. By 'mass movement' do we mean a movement which embraces women with many tendencies (sisterhood), or do we mean a movement which draws in as many women as possible on the basis that they identify with our basic analysis? That is - do we recruit on a maximum or on a minimum basis?.

7. What are the other key problems for strategy?

#### E. Proposals

Having begun this weekend to have discussions on the areas of common concern to all socialist women, my main proposal is that we agree to set up a structure for continuing these discussions. One way of doing this apart from holding more conferences on specific topics, would be to start a theoretical journal for women on the left of all positions as a forum for extending and carrying on through public discussion started this weekend, debate relating to questions of theory and strategy for the women's movement.

I see such a journal as being different to the various womens papers which are currently edited by women on the left in that there would be no one particular editorial stance. Red Rag goes some way towards achieving this.

2. I would like to state my agreement with the basic strategic proposals put forward in Hilary Wainwright's current conference paper, and also in the introductory chapter of the I.M.G. answer to Selma James - 'The Choice Before Us'.

#### F. Conclusions

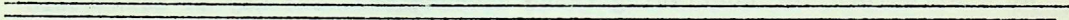
I have by no means begun to answer the problems as outlined in the introduction - but I hope this paper can help start the debate which needs further clarification. I have been less concerned in this paper to outline the theoretical analysis which should underpin the development of strategy basically because so much other discussion material relating to this will be around at the conference - both for the first days discussion on sexism/capitalism and the family, and for the second day on strategy. This omission on my part does not imply ignorance of the primary relationship between strategy and theory.

Instead I have chosen to concentrate on the strategic issues as they relate to a realistic recognition of the practical possibilities in the potential which exists for organising women both inside and outside the movement. A class analysis of the oppression of women is what is important now and we must develop ways of struggle on issues relevant to current needs in such a way as to develop revolutionary consciousness. I am committed to a socialist revolution which does not exclude women. I do not take the criticism that the women's movement is a deviation from the class struggle as a whole, and totally accept the need for an autonomous women's movement now. Our analysis of the family and capitalism



has much to offer to the class struggle in that it enlarges the perspective of what the class struggle is. So called socialist revolutions can occur without women being freed from their basic set of oppressions and I am by no means convinced by the arguments that the gaps in Marxist analysis relating to women's role in the struggle would be overcome if women didn't do this task for themselves. It is not a peripheral question but central and all women should commit themselves to struggle to ensure that there can't be a socialist revolution in this country which doesn't incorporate our theoretical analysis and demands, creating the preconditions for women's liberation under socialism. Our strategy relating to the movement, to women generally and to our links with the socialist movement as a whole must be clarified to ensure that we achieve our basic aims.

A.L. - B'ham W.L.                      March 1973



*[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible, appearing to be bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. It seems to contain a list of points or a detailed analysis.]*



# la "vraie nature" . **humour noir**

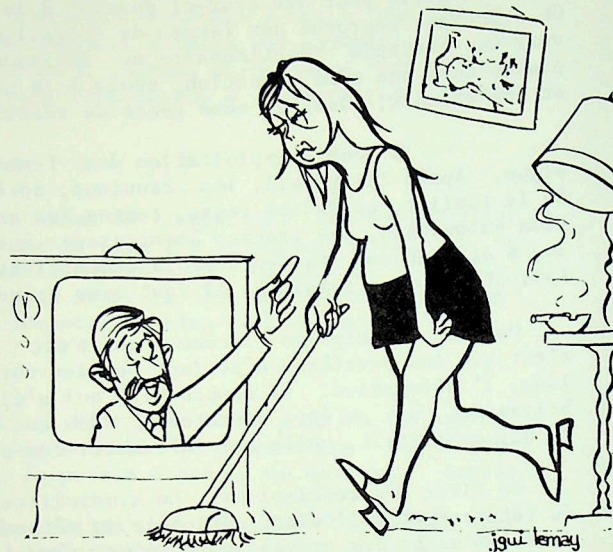
des femmes

à la télévision .

Vous êtes-vous déjà installée devant la télé pour y passer 12-15 heures d'affilées? Nombreuses sont les ménagères qui ouvrent leur télévision le matin après le départ des enfants pour ne la refermer que tard dans la soirée. Tout en travaillant d'une pièce à l'autre, la télévision trompe leur solitude et crée une présence familière tant rassurante que peu exigeante (on n'est jamais obligée de répondre ni d'écouter, elle nous laisse la paix quoi!). Pendant tout ce temps où les ménagères vaquent à leurs multiples activités, les émissions "féminines" se succèdent, croyant fournir information et divertissement à ces pauvres femmes "désœuvrées"...

Nous avons procédé à un échantillonnage d'émissions des réseaux Radio-Canada et Télé-Métropole, s'adressant surtout aux femmes et qui sont passées le mardi 13 mars. Ces émissions seront analysées à partir de leur contenu. Nous en avons retenu quatre caractéristiques: un appel à l'instinct" de "mère-épouse-ménagère", la mauvaise qualité de l'information qu'on leur offre, un paternalisme permanent, le conditionnement à la "féminité". Voici la liste de ces émissions:

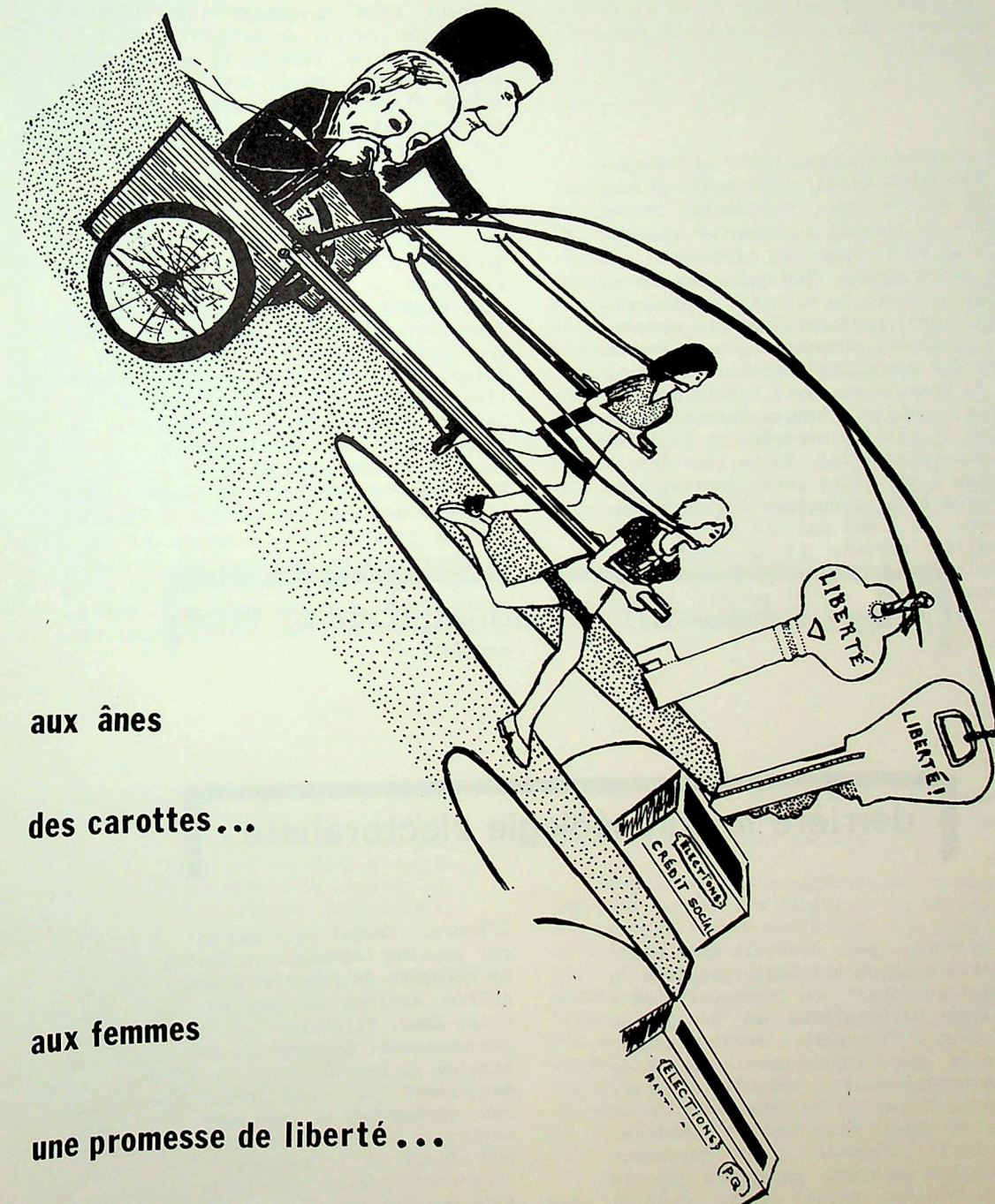
- Pour vous Mesdames (Télé-Métropole),
  - Personnalités (Télé-Métropole),
  - Boubou (Radio-Canada),
  - Femmes d'aujourd'hui (Radio-Canada)
  - Madame est servie (Télé-Métropole),
- et les télé-romans que vous connaissez à part "Rue des Pignons".



"Allô, les belles p'tites madames !!!"

mère-épouse-ménagère

La première et la plus évidente constatation que l'on puisse faire en tentant de voir ces émissions d'un oeil critique, surtout entre autres les émissions dites d'information, c'est l'indiscutable prépondérance des sujets d'ordre "ménager", c'est-à-dire les sujets qui cantonnent les femmes dans le cercle vicieux "mère-épouse-ménagère". Ainsi un autre cercle vicieux se crée: en croyant (en tentant de faire croire) que les femmes ne sont préoccupées que d'elles-mêmes, de leur maison et de leurs enfants et en ne leur servant que ces thèmes dans les émissions créées pour elles, elles s'en convainquent elles-mêmes et bientôt, tout autre sujet les rebute.



aux ânes

des carottes...

aux femmes

une promesse de liberté...



# QUEBECOISES DEBOUTTE!



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## Le

## P.Q.

# ESPOIR ou ILLUSION

"J'appréhende avec volupté les rencontres de l'exécutif..." C'est en ces termes que M. Lévesque commentait récemment à la radio l'élection de Mmes Fecteau et Gélinas à l'exécutif du P.Q.. Nous comprenons bien les "appréhensions" du vigoureux chef de parti, mais ce sont des nôtres que nous parlerons maintenant. Car l'élection de ces dames à l'exécutif et la série de mesures "proféminines" adoptées au congrès du P.Q. (fin février) ne nous apparaissent être qu'un masque trompeur.

Le programme, quand on le regarde de près, ne forme pas un tout cohérent. Mais sans être cohérent, il a un sens interne bien précis: par ses contradictions mêmes, il permet de rallier, dans un même parti, des classes (moyenne et petite bourgeoisie - travailleurs) dont les intérêts objectifs divergent et s'opposent. C'est d'ailleurs le but qu'il vise et à ce titre on peut le qualifier de programme démagogique.

En effet, la direction du P.Q. cache dans les mots "unité nationale" son dé-

sir de voir une bourgeoisie québécoise alliée à l'impérialisme américain se développer et prendre le pouvoir. Toutefois, pour atteindre cet objectif, la direction du P.Q. a besoin de l'appui des classes laborieuses (travailleurs, travailleuses et ménagères). Alors elle cherche à masquer ses véritables intérêts de classe en mettant de l'avant la notion de "l'indépendance réaliste" et en y ajoutant une longue liste de "castonguettes": mesures sociales apparemment "progressistes" qui ont pour but de rallier les classes laborieuses en donnant au P.Q. un visage d'avant-garde, tout en ne changeant rien de fondamental. Ces mesurette ne compromettent d'aucune façon l'indépendance telle que conçue par la direction du parti. C'est justement parce qu'elle touchait à quelque chose de fondamental qu'une proposition prônant la mise sur pied de conseils ouvriers dans les usines, votée par l'assemblée des délégués au dernier congrès, fut bloquée par l'exécutif.

Cet aspect démagogique du programme est important à souligner, car il nous permet de mieux saisir la portée et la



signification de l'adoption d'une série de mesures "pro-féminines" au programme du P.Q.. Cette série de mesures dont on a fait grand état dans les journaux, va constituer la plate-forme qui permettra au nationalisme de droite québécois de récupérer les revendications les plus fondamentales de la lutte des femmes.

Tous les media ont déjà souligné l'aspect électoraliste de ces mesures. Quand on sait que les femmes composent 52% de l'électorat québécois on ne peut se méprendre sur les véritables intentions d'un parti, nationaliste par surcroît, qui adopte une série de mesures à apparence "pro-féminines".



Le baiser de la mort !!!

le sort des québécoises, et leur politique à ce sujet diffère de celle du P.Q. uniquement en ce qu'elle est plus explicitement réactionnaire. M. Dupuis, par exemple, parle déjà de "sauver la race" par une augmentation de la natalité.

Rien de neuf sous le soleil. Les partis nationalistes de droite ont tou-

Déjà, au lendemain du congrès, dans le journal officiel du P.Q. (mars 1973) un article signé "mère de famille" signalait "qu'il nous faut premièrement contribuer à mettre le Parti Québécois au pouvoir car il est le seul (à date) qui s'occupe de nous dans son programme! On voit là clairement que le P.Q. a la même politique face aux femmes que face aux travailleurs en général: leur donner des miettes pour les rallier autour de "l'unité nationale" d'abord, et après on verra...

Par ailleurs, précisons que le P.Q. n'est pas le seul parti à s'être occupé des femmes. Les créditistes de tout poil sont aussi vivement intéressés par

jours manifesté un immense intérêt pour la famille et pour les femmes. Car la famille "se présente comme le premier et principal lieu de reproduction du système capitaliste (...) comme la fabrique de son idéologie et de ses structures." (1)

Ce qui démontre qu'il ne suffit pas "d'être au programme" mais de savoir comment nous y sommes!

## CONTENU DU PROGRAMME

Les principales résolutions adoptées concernant les femmes lors du dernier congrès se lisent comme suit:

1) Que la valeur du travail au foyer soit reconnue et que celui des deux conjoints qui l'assume soit rémunéré par l'Etat.

2) Que l'on reconnaisse l'apport de la mère à la société lorsqu'elle met des enfants au monde en lui accordant une somme substantielle par enfant au moment de la grossesse et après l'accouchement.

3) Que toute femme qui travaille à l'extérieur du foyer ait droit à un congé de maternité de six mois payé, en partie par l'Etat et en partie par l'employeur, et puisse reprendre son travail sans perte de ses droits acquis.

4) L'Etat créera des garderies et des écoles de formation d'auxiliaires familiales qui seront engagés par l'Etat à titre de fonctionnaires. Les garderies seraient gratuites et organisées en fonction du bien réel des tout-petits. La tâche essentielle des fonctionnaires sera de s'occuper de chaque enfant individuellement pour éviter de faire des garderies, des terrains de stationnement pour enfants.

5) L'Etat verra à la mise en place de services essentiels pour les foyers quand le parent qui a la charge des enfants est malade et ne peut prendre soin d'eux.

6) "Le mariage est considéré comme institution égalitaire, avec tout ce que ça implique au Code Civil. On admet que la femme mariée ne soit pas obligée de porter le nom de son mari." (2)

## DES MERES CHRETIENNES AUX MERES NATIONALES

Si ce n'est l'absence de toute législation sur l'avortement (on manquait de temps!), on aurait la tentation de crier à la victoire totale. Mais ne nous réjouissons pas trop rapidement et regardons plutôt ces mesures de plus près. Elles ressemblent plus à une série de vœux pieux qu'à des points inscrits à un programme politique sérieux.

En effet, on peut souhaiter que le mariage soit une institution égalitaire, mais entre notre souhait et la réalité il y a une marge - du moins tant que l'on ne se donnera pas les moyens matériels pour faire en sorte que les conjoints ne soient pas économiquement dépendants l'un de l'autre. Et il ne s'agit pas simplement pour cela de parler de rémunérer le travail ménager. Car il serait impossible pour un état capitaliste de le rémunérer, même seulement au salaire minimum. Si on veut rémunérer le travail ménager véritablement, il

faudrait le socialiser. Toutefois, l'abolition du travail privé aurait entre autres conséquences celle d'entraîner la disparition de la famille patriarcale. Or, la famille patriarcale est le lieu principal de l'ancrage de l'idéologie répressive, nécessaire au maintien de l'Etat de classes autoritaire.

Il est clair pour nous que, dès le moment que l'on ne touche pas à ses assises - la famille patriarcale et le travail servile de la femme - l'Etat capitaliste peut se permettre certaines variantes de son organisation interne (ex.: Congés de maternité payés, garderies, etc.) sans se remettre en cause lui-même.

Par exemple, les congés de maternité de 6 mois payés, sont manifestement une utopie tant que l'on vivra dans une société basée sur le profit. Car, dans u-



ne telle société, il est évident qu'il n'est pas dans l'intérêt de l'employeur de payer, même seulement en partie, une employée qui ne travaille pas directement à augmenter ses profits. Ce serait même directement dans son intérêt de la congédier pendant les premiers mois de sa grossesse pour ne pas avoir à déboursier les frais du congé de maternité et ainsi maximiser ses profits. Il est donc inutile de formuler une telle mesure sans parallèlement se donner les moyens pour s'assurer qu'elles soient respectées.

Nous savons que la direction du P.Q. ne remet pas en cause l'ordre capitaliste d'exploitation. Tout au plus veut-elle l'améliorer. De plus, le capitalisme est activement soutenu sur les plans économique, politique et culturel par le système patriarcal dont la Famille est le pivot. Mais la famille telle que nous la connaissons est le lieu par excellence de l'exploitation économique des femmes (travail ménager). Pour mettre fin à ce travail servile d'où découlent tous les autres aspects de notre oppression, il ne s'agit pas de rémunérer le travail ménager des femmes, mais de le socialiser. Le travail des femmes est gratuit parce qu'il est privé. Et il le restera tant qu'il restera privé (i.e. dans le cadre de la famille). L'Etat capitaliste est incapable d'assumer un salaire décent aux milliers de ménagères québécoises. Quand le P.Q. parle de rémunération, il parle en fait de "compensation". Or la fonction réactionnaire de la "compensation" est d'institutionnaliser le travail privé des femmes dans le cadre de la famille.

Car même si une personne bien intentionnée de la base a pris soin de ne pas parler de ménagère mais bien de "celui des deux conjoints qui assume le travail ménager", il n'en demeure pas moins que dans la majorité des cas c'est l'homme qui va travailler à l'extérieur étant donné que c'est en général lui qui y a été mieux préparé et que c'est à lui qu'on offre les meilleures conditions de travail. Donc la rémunération, dans ce cas-ci est une forme de compensation qui servira à institutionnaliser le travail privé des femmes.

La mesure visant à distribuer des primes à la natalité, soi-disant "en reconnaissance de l'apport de la mère à la société" a elle aussi pour but d'institutionnaliser ce travail privé effectué dans le cadre de la famille. Cette soi-disant "revalorisation" du rôle de mère sous-entend en fait la mystification du rôle de mère. Et en tant que tel il sert à maintenir le travail servile et à encourager les naissances sans créer les conditions favorables. Il n'est d'ailleurs pas à négliger que loin de valoriser la femme en tant qu'individu, c'est la femme-mère que l'on glorifie.

La restauration de la famille en tant qu'assise idéologique du capitalisme et du pouvoir autoritaire de l'Etat a toujours constitué un point crucial de la politique culturelle des partis nationalistes de droite. Le P.Q. ne saurait être une exception.

Il est un parti nationaliste de droite en ce sens qu'il est dirigé par une classe (moyenne et petite bourgeoisie) dont les intérêts économiques exigent qu'elle utilise le nationalisme du peuple à ses propres fins et même contre le peuple. Pour les femmes, comme pour le peuple en général, l'autodétermination est un droit, et constitue un progrès, en autant qu'elle se fasse par lui et pour lui.

L'option électoraliste du P.Q. l'oblige à s'appuyer sur les classes laborieuses (travailleurs/ses et ménagères) qui représentent la majorité du peuple québécois. Pour ce faire, son programme foncièrement démagogique est un instrument très précieux car il mise avant tout sur le concept de nation, masquant les intérêts de classes d'une minorité, car finalement "la nation c'est tout le monde sans exception; les pompiers, les ouvriers, les politiciens, les policiers, les juges, les industriels, les ménagères et les chômeurs, sauf les Juifs et les Anglais!" (3)

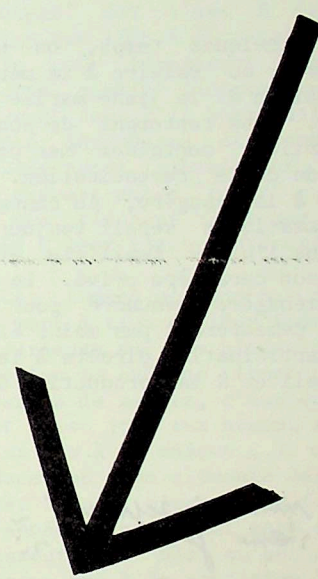
Ce concept de nation, à forte résonance émotive chez un peuple colonisé, vient donc obscurcir les intérêts de classe qui sont en jeu dans la lutte pour l'indépendance, pour le pouvoir po-

litique. Il vient cacher ce fait, que le pouvoir, ce n'est pas la nation qui le prendra, mais une classe précise (moyenne et petite-bourgeoisie avec le P.Q.), et ce afin de le mettre au service de ses intérêts.

Ainsi, la classe ouvrière, support effectif du P.Q., est délibérément trompée. Car l'indépendance n'a de sens pour elle que si elle signifie la prise du pouvoir par elle, en tant que classe, et l'établissement du socialisme.

La définition des objectifs féministes, tout comme ceux de la classe ouvrière, ne peut venir d'un programme tel que celui du P.Q.. Elle surgira des luttes des femmes, travailleuses et ménagères, qui se seront organisées en fonction de leurs intérêts réels. Le seul programme auquel nous devons nous rallier, c'est celui d'un parti qui visera à détruire toutes les formes d'exploitation.

- (1) Reich, Wilhem. Psychologie de masse du fascisme, Editions La Pensée molle, 1970. Page 49.
- (2) Journal du P. Q. mars 1973. Page 6  
‡ La Presse 26-2-73.
- (3) Gagnon, Charles. Pour le parti prolétarien, L'Equipe du Journal, Montréal, 1972. Page 11.



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# SUR NOTRE CONDITION

Depuis quelques temps, on entend souvent parler du salaire à la ménagère ou d'allocation à la jeune mariée et au nouveau-ne. Nous tenterons de soulever dans cet article certaines des contradictions de cette revendication. Avec le salaire à la ménagère, la charge des travaux domestiques serait toujours effectuée dans l'unité familiale et conserverait son caractère privé. Le ménage ou la ménagère rémunéré pour cette tâche n'en demeurerait pas moins éloigné de toute participation directe à la force de travail et à la production de son pays.

"L'Etat a le devoir de donner aux jeunes mariées les instruments pour sauver la race".(1)

Il ajoute:

"La plupart des femmes, si elles avaient le choix aimeraient mieux rester chez elles que de s'ennuyer dans les emplois traditionnels de sténo-dactylo".(2)

*nei numeri ripetuti - dopo una incognito con H. Della Corte e S. James  
do steno f'orale si spiega favorevolmente su il salario.*

## un salaire à la ménagère ?

L'intérêt soudain que certains partis politiques manifestent envers les femmes reste significatif. Devant l'évolution de la prise de conscience féministe des Québécoises, les partis politiques tel le Parti Québécois et le Crédit Social commencent à développer une stratégie dans le but de récupérer cette force non négligeable. En effet, les femmes représentent 52% de l'électorat québécois.

C'est alors que le crédit social décide d'intégrer dans son programme des mesures concernant les ménagères. Depuis mentionne dernièrement qu'il veut encourager les jeunes mariées à rester chez elles en leur donnant une allocation pour s'installer:

C'est donc dire que pour lui, la vraie place de la femme est au foyer parce que semble-t-il ce n'est pas un emploi "traditionnel" mais "naturel". Les motivations fondamentales du Crédit Social à ce sujet sont très explicites: on veut éliminer les femmes de la vie publique.

On retrouve chez d'autres réactionnaires, par exemple Hitler, quelques idées aussi remarquables envers les femmes:

"Son univers, c'est son mari, sa famille, ses enfants et son foyer...".(3)

Passons en revue les sujets traités dans trois émissions populaires: "Pour vous mesdames" (TM), "Femmes d'aujourd'hui" (RC) et "Madame est servie" (TM). Dans les deux premières on a parlé de tricot, d'éducation sexuelle des enfants, de garderies, d'arrangements de fleurs, d'oiseaux, d'appareils électroménagers et un témoignage d'une "femme heureuse au foyer" (dont nous reparlerons plus loin). Le cas de "Madame est servie" est un peu différent car cette émission est télédiffusée à une heure où les maris sont rentrés du travail. Alors là, les sujets sont moins limités: interview d'une chanteuse, discussion sur la hausse du coût des aliments avec nul autre que le ministre de l'Agriculture lui-même (noter l'effort d'objectivité...), un peu de publicité pour l'Association canadienne des Consommateurs, une information pour les médecins (!) désirant se recycler à la maison pour être à l'affût des nouveautés médicales et finalement un mot sur l'enquête gouvernementale sur le crime organisé donné par un des organisateurs de l'enquête... (noter encore l'objectivité...). Voilà un éventail révélateur de ce que l'on croit bon de dire aux femmes... et de leur cacher. Mais autre chose qui ne paraît pas dans cet éventail c'est la façon de donner ces informations...(voir "Les femmes n'ont pas de jugement").

Il est à noter également que tous les commerciaux durant la journée s'adressent toujours infailliblement aux ménagères: on vous vante un nouveau savon, un nouveau détergent, on vous exhorte à acheter tel soutien-gorge "pour être plus séduisante", telle gaine miracle, on vous bourre de pilules contre les maux de tête, de petits puddings Laura Secord (à vous en donner mal au coeur), de soupes Lipton, de vitamines on vous arrose de shampoing, de crème rince, de colorants pour les cheveux, de peps, de coca-cola, de café instantané, d'huile Crisco, on vous beurre de vaseline, de crème démaquillante, de savon de beauté. "Employez Spic and Span"... "Employez Duncan Hines, votre mari en raffolera!"... puisqu'un homme, ça se garde par l'estomac... et vous ne voudriez pas que votre mari vous quitte, n'est-ce pas?

## \*les femmes n'ont pas de jugement\*

Qui n'a pas appris que "L'homme raisonne tandis que la femme résonne"... Ceux et celles qui ne le savaient pas l'apprennent en tout cas devant leur petit écran! Car c'est à partir de ce principe que l'on a découvert la formule miracle pour intéresser les femmes à n'importe quelle information: s'adresser avant tout à la sensibilité, à l'émotivité légendaire des femmes. Voilà où réside notre faiblesse et, par un curieux détour, notre "force" aux dires de ceux qui tiennent à ce que les femmes restent à leur place inoffensive.

Les femmes n'ayant pas de jugement il ne sert à rien de leur fournir d'analyse sérieuse sur des situations actuelles telles le chômage (tout ce qu'elles ont besoin de savoir, c'est qu'elles enlèvent les jobs aux hommes si elles ne restent pas à la maison...) ou la crise en éducation (on alimente des réactions telles: "Y sont mieux d'pas faire perdre une année à mon p'tit gars les maudits professeurs!"). Dès qu'un sujet ne se rapporte pas à la condition "mère-épouse-ménagère", il ne peut intéresser une femme que s'il est abordé de façon anecdotique; C'est-à-dire s'il fait appel à la sentimentalité en racontant un petit fait anodin émouvant (parfois drôle mais toujours émouvant), qui a trait à l'individu ou aux individus ayant un lien avec le sujet. Mais la plupart du temps l'anecdote n'a aucun rapport objectif avec le sujet dont il est question. Prenons un exemple: lors de la manifestation de La Presse, en octobre '71, une femme, Michèle Gauthier, est morte à la suite de la charge des policiers. Comme c'est un événement qu'on n'a pas pu cacher, on s'est arrangé pour qu'il discrédite le moins possible les forces policières en portant certains jugements sur la vie privée de Michèle, sachant que cela influencerait la "majorité silencieuse" qui ne savait trop qui ou que blâmer. Ils ont alors, sans aucun respect (respect qui fut pourtant assuré à la mort de Pierre Laporte), propagé que



cette femme était séparée de son mari, laissant entendre que ses moeurs étaient légères et que d'ailleurs, étant asthmatique, elle n'avait qu'à rester chez elle! De cette façon on attirait l'attention des gens sur des peccadilles, sans parler de la brutalité policière devant une manifestation d'abord pacifique dont Michèle Gauthier bien qu'asthmatique pouvait absolument faire partie ( tant qu'elle se déroulait sans l'intrusion des policiers). Ce sans parler du fait que Michèle Gauthier a dû attendre une demie-heure à l'hôpital, pour se faire administrer de l'oxygène!

Avec un tel exemple, on voit clairement de quelle façon il est possible et facile de diriger le jugement de la majorité, puisque l'information est filtrée selon le bon vouloir de ceux qui la possèdent. Cette méthode de l'anecdote, si elle n'est pas toujours employée pour toute la collectivité, l'est cependant toujours quand il s'agit de s'adresser aux femmes.

### "allô les belles petites madames !"

Et qu'est-ce qu'il ne faut pas entendre chez Boubou...! "Bonjour tout le monde! Aujourd'hui nous recevons des madames de Xville, membres du Cercle des Jardinières. J'ai près de moi madame la présidente... Allo madame la présidente! Vous avez donc un beau pendentif!... Qu'est-ce que ça représente?... Y est assez beau que j' pense que j'vas vous l'échanger pour un bec!... Non?... Vous voulez pas?... Ben j'vas vous en donner un pareil!... Vous m'avez dit tantôt qu'aujourd'hui, c'était la fête de votre mari?... Ben souhaitez-lui bonne fête là c'est l' temps!" etc. etc. (parmi des petits rires gênés et des grincements de dents...) Serait-ce du paternalisme?

Suivent des chansons à l'eau de rose et des jeux de hasard ridicules tandis que l'animateur honore les femmes en distribuant ses baisers et en leur faisant la grâce de pouvoir dire quelques mots à la tv. Il exploite ainsi le mythe que les gens du milieu ouvrier entretiennent à l'égard de tout ce qui a trait au phénomène de la télévision.

Les femmes sont traitées comme des enfants tant dans les jeux auxquels elles participent que dans les conversations qu'elles doivent subir. Pour se plier aux buts divertissants de ce genre d'émission, on exige des femmes qu'elles entrent dans le jeu. Ainsi l'animateur, profitant de l'embarras obéissant de ses spectatrices, ne craint pas d'encourir les foudres de ces dames en réclamant un peu de "participation" afin de mieux rire d'elles. Comme si rien n'était plus drôle que ces petits êtres asservis et peu encombrants, à qui on fait dire des finesses, à qui on fait faire des tours et qui ne demandent en retour que quelques sourires ou quelques mots flatteurs,

Il existe parmi les émissions divertissantes qui s'adressent aux femmes un petit quiz très enrichissant à Télé-Métropole qui pose des questions sur la vie privée des artistes et plus précisément les titres des petits journaux de fin de semaine. Cela rappelle les anecdotes inoffensives dont nous parlions précédemment... Voilà des préoccupations de premier ordre pour des femmes qui se veulent à l'affût des dernières nouvelles!

### les télé-romans ou ce que toute femme devrait savoir

Bien que les télé-romans soient des émissions pour toute la famille, il reste indéniable qu'ils sont suivis par une majorité de femmes et que leur influence se fait surtout sentir chez elles. Nous tenterons d'examiner quelle image de la femme ils véhiculent en général sans nous attarder à chacun en particulier. Nous nous réservons pour un prochain numéro le "plaisir" d'analyser le phénomène "Rue des Pignons".

Dans toutes ces émissions, on nous présente les femmes selon qu'elles aiment un homme, qu'elles attendent le grand amour ou qu'elles sont déçues. Toutes les femmes se doivent d'être altruistes, de ne vivre qu'en fonction de l'homme de leur vie et de leurs enfants ou qu'en fonction des autres si elles sont célibataires (en fonction des en-

fants si elles sont institutrices; des malades si elles sont infirmières, etc.) Le "don de soi", le dévouement, le sentiment maternel, sont des vertus entièrement féminines. Une femme qui va à l'encontre de ces vertus travaille simplement contre sa nature et ainsi, ne sera jamais heureuse. L'épanouissement de la femme ne vient que lorsqu'elle s'oublie totalement pour les autres. Ex: Mme Berger dans "les Berger", Mme Lajoie dans "la Petite Semaine", Mme Tremblay dans "Quelle Famille", Mme Joyal, la secrétaire du "beau docteur" et Jojo dans "Mont-Joye" etc. ) Il faut bien que quelqu'un, à l'intérieur de chaque cellule familiale, tente d'essayer les nombreuses frustrations qu'homme et enfants subissent à l'extérieur. Il est bien plus facile d'aliéner la moitié de la population à cette tâche charitable que d'aller aux sources économiques, politiques et sociales de ces frustrations....

Quand, par malheur, on nous présente une "mauvaise femme" une femme qui pense trop à elle (ex.: l'amie du "beau docteur" dans Mont-Joye: Mme Hélène), c'est toujours pour nous démontrer ses troubles intérieurs et, dans un coup de théâtre, son repentir d'être si égoïste. Vous rappelez-vous de Gaétane, la jolie femme dans le "Paradis Terrestre", sans enfant, mariée à un "brasseur d'affaire" détestable, qui ne s'occupait jamais d'elle? Elle avait fini par le quitter pour suivre un amant qui semblait la combler de bonté et de compréhension et (ce qui ne gêne rien dans une bonne histoire) qui était bourré d'argent. Malgré son bonheur, les remords la rongeaient et elle est revenue vers son détestable époux...

Par opposition, les rôles d'hommes sont toujours sous le signe de l'initiative, de la combativité, de la protection et du paternalisme à l'égard des femmes. Il arrive qu'ils soient même carrément méprisants, surtout les plus "don Juan". Ainsi, les rôles sexuels traditionnels sont assurés d'une reproduction grandissante dans le comportement de tous et dans celui des enfants et adolescents qui suivent ces émissions.



CETTE MÈRE DE FAMILLE VA MAINTENANT NOUS RACONTER SA JOIE D'ÊTRE REINE DU FOYER.

témoignage d'une femme heureuse  
au foyer

Mais le "clou" de cette journée si enrichissante ("clou" qui nous fait encore mal au pied...) fut vraiment l'entrevue de "Femme d'aujourd'hui" où l'on tentait de faire "avouer" à une femme son bonheur de rester à la maison.

Le plus étonnant, c'est surtout la façon dont nous sommes amenées à conclure (grâce à Mme Françoise Faucher: sans elle, nous n'aurions jamais deviné!) que Mme Sarrazin était heureuse au foyer. Mariée, mère de deux enfants, cette dame était ce qu'on pouvait appeler une femme de carrière car elle avait accédé à un poste assez enviable dans la compagnie pour laquelle elle travaillait. Sa première fille naquit six ans après le mariage. Durant ces six ans, elle avait réussi à se partager entre le travail et les tâches ménagères, cependant la naissance d'un enfant est venue bouleverser sa vie et elle décida "par devoir", précise-t-elle, de demeurer à la maison pour consacrer tout son temps à sa fillette. Elle nous expliqua alors à quel point il fut pénible pour elle d'abandonner sa carrière, son milieu,



ses ami(es), et de s'isoler avec ses enfants (car la première fille ne tarda pas à être suivie d'une seconde). Elle insiste sur cet isolement, le manque de contacts avec l'extérieur, la dévalorisation et le vide soudain de sa nouvelle vie; bien sûr il est merveilleux de voir grandir vos enfants mais votre vie se découvre malgré cela très restreinte à cause de l'isolement.

Mme Sarrazin continue en parlant l'importance de l'instruction dans la motivation des femmes à demeurer à la maison: "Une femme qui est moins instruite va moins souffrir de rester à la maison qu'une autre qui, par exemple, aurait terminé son secondaire." Mais comment une femme peu instruite pourrait-elle se sentir "libérée" par un travail de manufacture abrutissant? L'assurance d'une indépendance économique (superficielle étant donné l'insécurité d'emploi) n'est pas suffisante pour lui donner le repos qu'elle ne trouve pas le temps de prendre, tant à cause du rythme effarant de la production, que des travaux ménagers qu'elle doit accomplir en rentrant chez elle.

Notre dame conclut "que la société va être obligée de se repenser" pour permettre aux femmes une participation à la mesure de leurs capacités. Pour sa part, elle ne retourne pas au travail car elle ne pourrait profiter de son expérience, les choses ont trop changé depuis si longtemps... Elle occupe son temps aux bonnes oeuvres et parle de la joie d'éduquer ses filles, de les aguerir devant la vie, de bien les préparer à un siècle difficile...

"Mais ça m'a pris du temps à m'habituer, à me résigner à ces nouvelles limites que je m'étais imposées: l'isolement constant, le seul contact de mes enfants avec lesquelles il était impossible de discuter, d'acquérir des connaissances nouvelles, de se tenir au courant de l'actualité... Je me sentais dans un monde à part, différent."

"Mais quand même, vous êtes heureuse au foyer!...."

# L'AFFAIRE MORGENTALER

Le jeudi 29 mars, le dr Henry Morgentaler tenait une conférence de presse, où il annonçait, qu'en dépit de la loi fédérale sur l'avortement, il en avait pratiqué à date, environ 5,000. Deux jours auparavant, il avait fait parvenir une lettre au ministre Claude Castonguay pour lui demander d'approuver sa clinique pour fin d'avortements et de mettre sur pied d'autres cliniques semblables dans diverses régions.

Dans sa lettre au ministre, il déclarait:

*Depuis quelques années, je pratique des avortements dans ma clinique à Montréal avec les méthodes les plus modernes, celles de l'aspiration utérine combinée avec anesthésie locale et le protozyde d'azote. Je crois que ma clinique pourrait servir de modèle à des cliniques semblables à travers la province et le Canada où les gens désirent un avortement pourraient l'avoir sous le régime d'assurance-santé sans danger et sans la nécessité de grands déplacements à l'étranger.*

*Les cliniques de ce type existent aux Etats-Unis et donnent de très bons résultats. J'étais le pionnier au Canada et j'ai perfectionné la méthode d'aspiration utérine. J'ai même enseigné cette technique à quelques médecins américains et canadiens.*

*Les avantages des petites cliniques spécialisées au niveau de l'avortement sont les suivants:*

- ça permet d'utiliser la méthode d'aspiration sous anesthésie locale qui est la moins dangereuse de toutes et a le taux le plus bas de complications;
- l'hospitalisation n'est pas nécessaire (le séjour moyen est d'une heure);
- les pertes sanguines sont minimes, aucun dommage n'est causé aux tissus et le rétablissement est immédiat;
- les lits d'hôpitaux restent libres pour d'autres patients ayant des besoins vitaux;
- le coût des opérations ainsi pratiquées est beaucoup moindre que celui des opérations pratiquées dans les hôpitaux avec hospitalisation;



- *l'accès facile de ces cliniques éviterait l'attente et les complications qui deviennent quatre fois plus fréquentes lorsque la grossesse dépasse 12 semaines.*

*Ces cliniques sont légales aux Etats-Unis. Au Canada la loi permet au ministre de la santé ou des affaires sociales de chaque province d'approuver des hôpitaux ou des cliniques pour fin d'avortement pourvu qu'un comité dit thérapeutique d'une telle institution approuvée juge qu'un avortement est nécessaire pour conserver la vie ou la santé de la femme.*

Toutefois la loi ne permet pas, à venir jusqu'ici, la pratique d'avortements à l'extérieur des hôpitaux, même lorsqu'il a été prouvé que les conditions médicales ainsi que les résultats obtenus égalent, et même surpassent, ceux obtenus dans les hôpitaux et les meilleures cliniques américaines.

En effet, le dr Morgentaler affirme que sur 5,000 cas, il n'a eu aucun cas de mortalité, seulement 5% ont dû être hospitalisés. Il y a eu 6 cas d'hémorragie, 17 de fièvres au-delà de 102°, 13 avortements incomplets avec rétention des tissus et 2 perforations utérines, mais toutes ces complications ont été traitées avec succès et n'ont eu aucune conséquence fâcheuse pour les femmes.

En s'appuyant sur ses statistiques et son expérience, le dr Morgentaler soutient que n'importe quelle patiente qui se présente à sa clinique pour un avortement, est aussi en sécurité, sinon davantage, que dans n'importe quelle autre unité médicale.

Il est intéressant de constater que, malgré l'importance de la nouvelle, les média n'en ont pas fait grand cas. Pourtant quelques semaines auparavant, trois quotidiens montréalais titraient en première page: "85 femmes ont eu un avortement à New-York cette fin de semaine".

Serait-ce qu'on aurait voulu étouffer "le cas Morgentaler". Et si oui, pourquoi?

Il est bien évident qu'un reportage sur les avortements à New-York (organisés par le Centre Betty Farhood) n'a pas la même couleur politique que la prise de position d'un médecin québécois en faveur de l'avortement et du libre choix des femmes. La déclaration fracassante du dr Morgentaler est donc tombée dans le vide. Les gouvernements (fédéral et provincial) y ont répondu par un silence qui définit sans doute leurs intentions: maintenir le statu quo. Et cela, même

si de récents sondages révèlent que près des 2/3 de la population canadienne sont en faveur de l'avortement sur demande (sondage GALLUP).

Le statu quo, c'est évidemment la solution facile. Pour les femmes québécoises, c'est une situation insupportable et il est à prévoir que la lutte s'engagera de plus en plus durement pour le respect de ce droit fondamental i.e. celui de refuser une grossesse non désirée.

Pour nous, la légalisation de l'avortement (avortement gratuit et sur demande) n'est pas une fin en soi; cependant c'est un service essentiel que doit nous rendre une société qui n'assure même pas les conditions matérielles minimums nous permettant d'élever des enfants (garderies gratuites, congés de maternité payés, collectivisation des travaux ménagers, etc...). Pour nous les femmes, le contrôle des naissances par la contraception et l'avortement (si la contraception a fait défaut) est primordial. C'est le premier pas vers une possibilité de prise en main de nos vies.

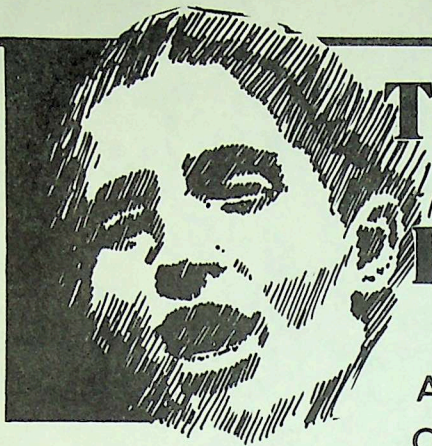
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**73.9%** **SONT EN FAVEUR DE L'AVORTEMENT SUR DEMANDE**

**DES FEMMES A TRAVERS LE CANADA**

TIRÉ DE CHÂTELAINE - MARS 1971





# The Power of Women and Revolutionary Change

A DISCUSSION OF THE CENTRAL ROLE  
OF WOMEN IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE

**Speakers:**

**MARIAROSA DALLA COSTA** of Lotta Feminista, Italy  
— author of "Women and the Subversion of the Community"

**SELMA JAMES** of Notting Hill Women's Liberation Workshop, England  
— author of "Women, the Unions and Work" & "A Women's Place"

**WHERE:** Medical Science Building  
University of Toronto Rm. 3154

**WHEN:** Thursday · April 26 · 8:00 p.m.

**Admission 50 cents**

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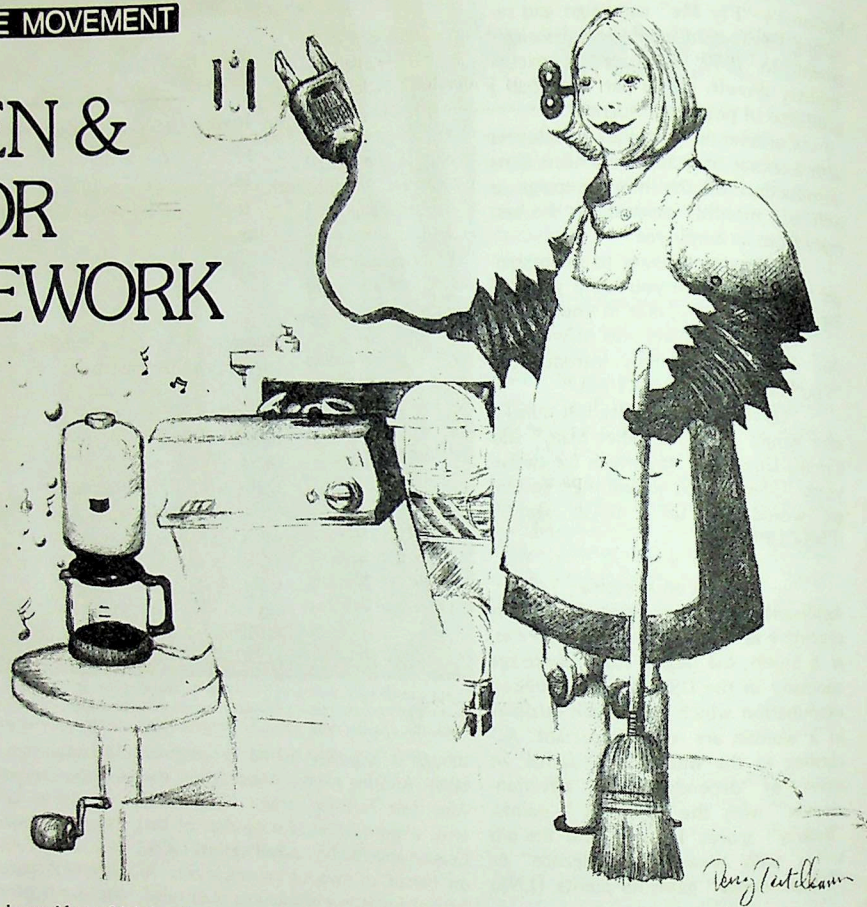
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# WOMEN & PAY FOR HOUSEWORK

by  
Carol  
Lopate



Pay for housework is an idea which has been around for some time. Recently it has begun to receive serious consideration among feminist groups here, largely as a result of the publication in February 1973 of the English version of Maria Della Costa's pamphlet, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*.\* Dalla Costa's analysis comes out of the Italian women's movement and was first introduced to the American women's movement in her article, "Women and the Subversion of the Community," published in *Radical America* (January/February 1972, Vol. 6, no. 1). Quite briefly, the pay-for-housework argument goes like this. Traditional analyses of the working class have excluded women because their work has not been considered "productive"—or, more commonly, has not been considered at all. These analyses have called women "oppressed" but not "exploited," because "exploitation" would imply that surplus value is extracted from their labor. In contrast, Dalla Costa and other feminists say that women's work in the home produces use value, rather than exchange value, and is

\*Published jointly by the Falling Wall Press, Ltd., 79 Richmond Rd., Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5EP, England, and a group of individuals from the women's liberation movement in England and Italy.

thus a remnant of a pre-capitalist structure existing within capitalism. But, say these feminists, it is clear that women as housewives produce and reproduce capitalism to at least as great a degree as any other working sector. The work of women in the home forms the basis from which emanates all other labor, from which, in turn, surplus value is extracted. Women help reproduce capitalism both through childbirth and through socialization; they keep capitalism running smoothly by servicing its current (and future) workers with food, clothes and sex. Thus women in the home are part of the working class, but they are not recognized as such because they are unpaid. Producing only use value, they remain part of a pre-capitalist structure. To legitimize women as part of the working class, and to free them financially from men, they must produce exchange value. The subsequent demand proceeds directly from the analysis: pay women for housework.

The attraction of this theory is not difficult to understand. First, in a brief and efficient manner, women are

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analytically integrated into the working class. Second, a platform for concrete action flows directly from the analysis. Moreover, this demand can be readily understood as developing out of a comprehensive theoretical framework, a fact which might attract the large numbers of women who have not as yet been drawn into the women's movement despite the partial successes of the campaigns around such piecemeal feminist demands as abortion and childcare. Finally, given a capitalist society in which personal autonomy as well as status are gained through money, it may well be that women need to be wage-earners in order to achieve the self-reliance and self-esteem which are the first steps toward equality.

But the attraction of "pay for housework" is not unlike the attraction of union demands: better wages, shorter hours, increased benefits. All of these are far easier to conceptualize and communicate to workers than the demand to change the nature of work itself, a goal which, even when packaged as "workers' control," is comparatively utopian and hard for workers to visualize. Just as unions have generally pushed only quantitative demands and have become reformist institutions for integrating workers into the system, feminist concentration on the pay-for-housework demand can only serve further to embed women (and men) in the clutches of capitalism.

Before going further, I want to make it clear that I am not against "reformist" demands as such, i.e., I'm not automatically opposed to demands whose goal is to ameliorate rather than change the basic structure and relations of society. For example, it is irrelevant to me that capitalism may have accepted abortion reform only because its need for workers no longer requires such a high birth rate. I support abortion reform because I believe that the right to decide whether or not to have a child *freed* women. In a similar vein, I am not opposed to pay for housework simply because it is a reformist, quantitative demand that the system could one day accept, but because instead of freeing women, it will serve to rigidify the sexual and other forms of oppression that we are already fighting against. In the following pages, I want to present a number of reasons why I am against women spending their energies on the pay-for-housework demand.

1) The women who support pay for housework say, quite rightly, that work outside the home is being glamorized and held out as a false carrot. But I do not believe that there has been a sufficient understanding of the quality of work and life inside the home. The lives and aspirations of most housewives have undergone major changes over the past thirty or so years. As men increasingly commute to work, women's daily lives have become more and more separate from those of their husbands. Moreover, the greatly accelerated geographic mobility among both blue- and white-collar workers has left women also bereft of continuity and community with neighbors and, with the decline of the extended family, without the support of relatives who once provided both friendship and assistance. The decrease in house size and the mechanization of housework has meant that the housewife is potentially left with much greater leisure time; however, she is often kept busy buying, using and repairing the devices and their attachments which are

Instead of simply paying women to do increasingly trivialized work, we need to look seriously at the tasks which are "necessary" to keep a house going and to make new evaluations.

theoretically geared toward saving her time. Moreover, the trivial, manufactured tasks which many of these technological "aids" perform are hardly a source of satisfaction for housewives. Finally, schools, nurseries, daycare and television have taken away from mothers much of the responsibility for the socialization of their children; few women can feel that their children's upbringing is really in their hands.

Instead of simply paying women to do increasingly trivialized work, we need to look seriously at the tasks which are "necessary" to keep a house going and to make new evaluations. We need to investigate the time- and labor-saving devices and decide which are useful and which merely cause a further degradation of housework. We need to investigate the isolation of work done in the home and look for new, possibly communal, organizations for doing housework—even when living arrangements may not be communal.

2) The demand to pay for housework comes from Italy, where the overwhelming majority of women in all classes still remain at home. In the United States, over half of all women *do* work. The women who stay at home are predominately the very poor, usually welfare mothers who in a sense are already being paid by the state to work in the home (or stay out of the labor market, however one wishes to conceive of it); and women of the upper-middle class. The wives of blue- and white-collar workers usually do not remain at home, even when they have children. They work. The project of bringing American women into the working class is therefore not merely a question of material conditions, but of ideology. Women who work in America are still seen in terms of their husband's or father's class designation; women themselves remain as if classless, no matter what they do or do not do for a living.

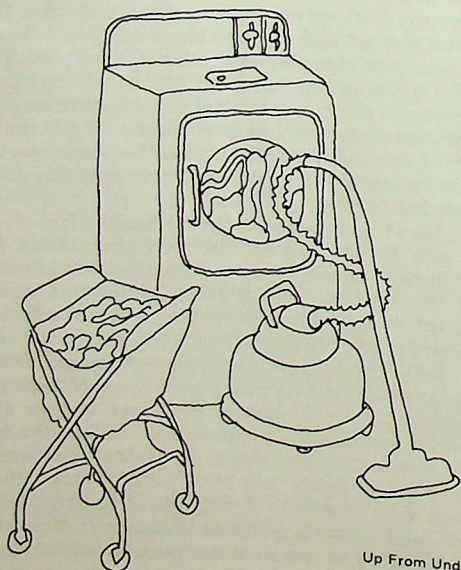
The proposal to pay women for housework does not deal with the fact that the ideological preconditions for working-class solidarity are networks and connections which arise from working together. These preconditions cannot arise out of isolated women working in separate homes, whether they are being paid for their work or not.

3) The financial aspects of payment for housework are highly problematical. Under our present system of corporate capitalism, pay for housework would not lead to any significant redistribution of income or wealth from the rich to the poor. Instead, the money to pay for housework would come from an already over-taxed working class, either through direct taxation or through special corporate taxes which would in turn be passed on to consumers. Moreover, since most men's incomes are at least partially determined on the basis of their being "family incomes," removal of all



women from financial dependence on men would probably lower the income standards for male work. Concentration on the demand for pay for housework without acknowledgement of the effect on other segments of society would have the same devastating effect on any long-range strategy for alliance and solidarity between men and women workers as the demand for compensatory education and social welfare programs for blacks during the 1960s had on white-black relations. Workers knew that they, not the corporations, ended up paying for those programs.

The question of how one would evaluate what houseworkers ought to earn has provoked some almost funny alternatives, if one has a morbid sense of humor. For example, in Canada in the late 1960s, a plan, actually brought before the government, proposed that women be paid according to their educational background; that is, PhD's doing housework would get the highest rate and high-school drop-outs the lowest. The use of this salary scale for creating intra-class solidarity and inter-class antagonisms among women is not difficult to imagine. A second proposal which I have seen suggests that a composite of all the activities included in housework be made up with their respective average salaries (nursery care at X amount, sweepers at Y, dishwashers at Z, etc.), and that a final salary be based on the proportion of time generally spent in each of these activities. Since the only job on the list with any financial status is nursery teacher, houseworkers' wages would be very low. Finally, a third means of allocating payment might be to make housework competitive with what the woman (or man) could make on the outside. Naturally, this would again create a hierarchy of pay among women, with some women able to make \$30 an hour for washing the dishes, while others would do their dishes for the minimum wage. Obviously, men would receive the highest wage for their work at home.



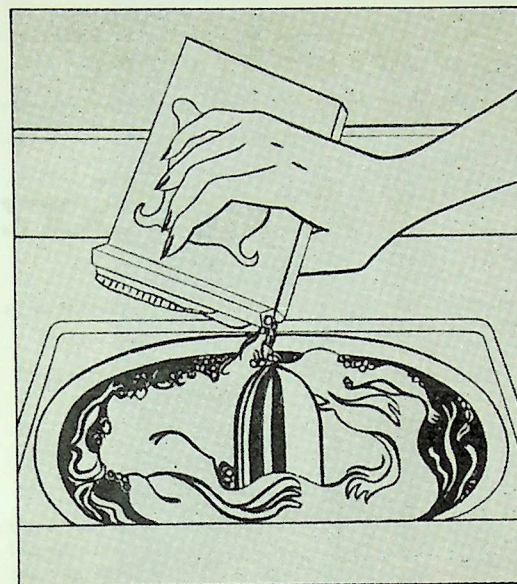
Up From Under

Another question is how houseworkers' work would be judged, and by whom. If the woman (or man) did not sweep behind the couch, would she (or he) be docked? Would there be increases for taking (or demerits for forgetting to take) the kids to the dentist? If the children cleaned their own rooms, would they get paid? Obviously, there would have to be some kind of institutionalized supervisor to investigate the cleanliness of homes and the health of children, since otherwise pay for housework would merely be welfare or a minimum standard income. But the vision of the visiting weekly supervisor smacks of yet another form of welfare investigator or inspector, of yet another arm reaching in from the state.

4) The elimination of the one large area of capitalist life where all transactions do not have exchange value would only serve to obscure from us still further the possibilities of free and unalienated labor. The home and family have traditionally provided the only interstice of capitalist life in which people can possibly serve each other's needs out of love or care, even if it is often also out of fear and domination. Parents take care of children at least partly out of love, and children are nourished by the knowledge that the care they are being given is at least partly on that basis. I even think that this memory lingers on with us as we grow up so that we always retain with us as a kind of utopia the work and caring which come out of love, rather than being based on financial reward. It seems to me that if a child grew up knowing that he cost the state more than his sister because he was a more difficult child, and so took more labor power to raise, that some of our last, ever more flimsy notions of humanity would be blown away like dust in a draught.

There are at least two strong counter-arguments against keeping the family, or whatever living group, in the private sphere: 1) The distinction between public and private should anyway be erased; and 2) This lovely domain of "free giving" that I am calling for has always been at the expense of women. I don't want to go into a long argument in favor of the private sphere. Let me say merely that I believe it is in our private worlds that we keep our souls alive, and that this is so not merely because we live in a capitalist world, but that we will also need private worlds if and when we live under socialism. The problem raised by capitalism is that it is so difficult to keep the private sphere alive when it is being constantly battered down by the commercialization of everyday life and the constant threats to it by the mass media. But we must fight this encroachment, and not simply abandon our last bastion under the guise of liberating women.

Women do not have to transform their labor into a commodity in order to be considered an intrinsic part of the working class or to be part of the struggle for human liberation. The commodity form is an alienated form and women will simply be perpetuating that alienation. The proposition that women must enter the commodity form in order to liberate themselves stems implicitly from a theory which regards capitalism as the inevitable transition stage between feudalism and socialism. Thus women must first be paid for their labor power if they are to move on to the next stage. But I believe there is no such inevitability in these stages. Moreover, to look at housework as a vestige of



Roy Lichtenstein, "Washing Machine," oil on canvas (1961).

feudalism is to see it merely from one side. The separation between use value and exchange value is itself part of the capitalist stage of development. Unfortunately, in fact, attempts to bring underdeveloped sectors into the capitalist sector have done just that. Nothing more. The revolutionary project is quite another matter.

5) I have left for the end what I feel is the most obvious objection to the pay-for-housework demand: it does nothing to solve the sexual division of labor. Because I believe that feminist goals must be integrated into a total theory of revolution, I would not struggle for a feminist goal which sought to undermine the sexual division of labor if it did not at the same time seek to undermine the commodity form. But, conversely, I am not interested in revolutionary projects which do not include a constant attack on the sexual division of labor.

It is highly likely that the institution of pay for housework would solidify the nuclear family. It is difficult to conceive of the mammoth bureaucracy which would be required, whether public or private, allowing pay for communal houseworkers, pay for a man in a homosexual couple, pay for one of two women living together, or even pay for a man and a woman living in a nuclear situation but out of wedlock.

The demand for pay for housework is clearly an easier one to move on than is the call to abolish the sexual division of labor. The latter would involve a total restructuring of private work. Most of us women who have fought in our own lives for such a restructuring have fallen into periodic despair. First, there were the old habits—the men's and ours—to break. Second, there were the real problems of time: many of us have lived with men who work an eight- or ten-hour day, while we have found ourselves preferring or finding less consuming jobs, which have left us more time for housecare.

Ask any man how difficult it is for him to arrange part-time hours, or for him to ask for special time schedules so that he can be involved equally in childcare! Finally, as we have argued and struggled with the men we have chosen to live with, we have found ourselves with little other than moral imperatives to bolster our side. I have noticed the relief of women in meetings when talking about the Dalla Costa analysis: it gives scientific validity to our struggle for equality; we need no longer resort to men's being "good" people.

But let us go back to the analysis of housework as production, from which the demand of pay for housework derived. There has been an argument in circles of left or Marxist feminists over whether the importance of woman's role within the family to capitalism lies in her role as producer/reproducer or as consumer. The argument for women as consumers is obvious, given the advertisements and commodities which are structured around the created needs of women. And yet, as most feminist Marxists like to point out, production is a more deeply essential category than consumption. The rhetorical battle goes back and forth, in my experience, with a lot of anger on each side. There is almost an unstated presupposition that if women can be shown to be the unrealized "producers," the spine of capitalism, then they will also be the "vanguard of the revolution."

I do not have my own analysis to propose; nor do I have a concrete, radical platform for feminist-socialist action. But I do have one insight which I hope can become part of a framework for analysis which I and others will do in the future and on which I and other women—and men—will act. This is that we women must stop borrowing categories from the Marxist world. We are not a class, since all individuals of a class have a specific relationship to the means of production, and we vary greatly in this respect. We are not a caste, as a caste is an endogamous (self-reproducing) group, often also characterized by a specific economic niche, and there is no way—as yet—that women can be endogamous. Even if we use sperm banks or other forms of mechanized reproduction, the sperm will come from the outside. Some of us may be doing work that has use value but that does not have exchange value, and many of us, including those who receive exchange value for our labor power, may be suffering from an ideology which still attributes to women the power and status of a second sex. The essential thing to remember is that we are a SEX. That is really the only word as yet developed to describe our commonalities. But what do the differences in our daily lives mean for theory and for practice? What does being female actually mean; what, if any, specific qualities necessarily and for all time adhere to that characteristic? I believe that if, as revolutionary feminists, we want to be clear about where we are going, we must also be clear about the terms we borrow from the Marxist analysis. It is a quick way to legitimate ourselves on the left, but it is not a long-range strategy. What we may, in fact, have to do is to devise our own new terms. We may have to decide that housework is neither production nor consumption. We may have to be hazy in our visions. After all, a total reordering of sex and sexual roles and relationships is not easy to describe. \*