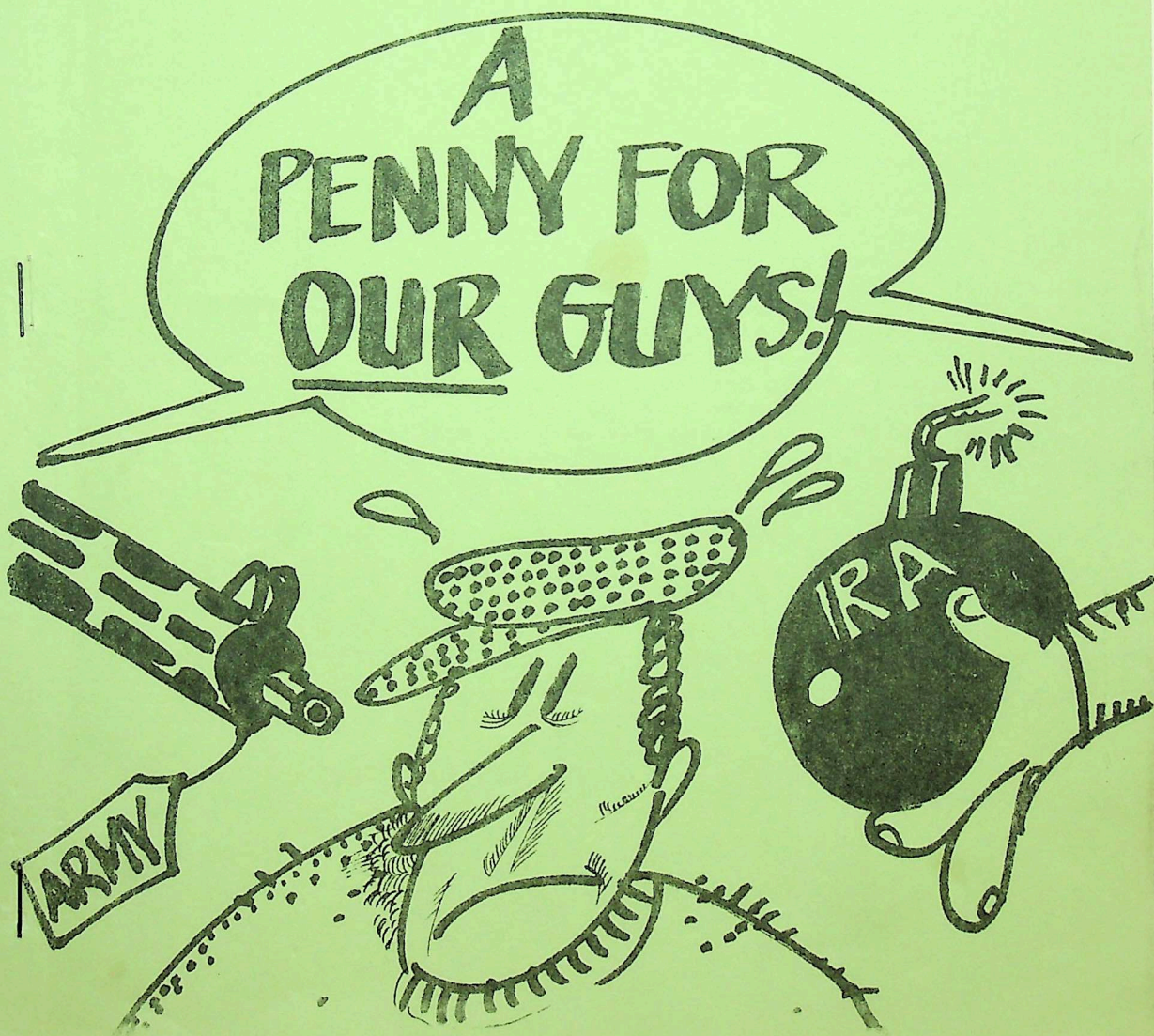


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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE DOCKERS' FIGHT

The left has recently gone into raptures about the militancy of the dockers, while tending to ignore the tragedy of two sections of the working class fighting each other on ground chosen by their employers. This article does not try to provide all the answers to the problems which divide workers in and around the cargo-handling industry. We hope however that it will contribute to a discussion between dockers, container depot workers and lorry drivers about the future of their industry, and how they could face it together. We would welcome further contributions on this subject.

'Over the past five years drastic changes have taken place in this country's dock industry. We have seen the reduction of our register from 65,000 in 1967 to 41,000 in 1972.(1) With the ever increasing use of technology such as roll-on roll-off loads the ship-owners have implemented a policy of directing work from the registered ports to inland container depots and unregistered ports. So successful has this policy been that at one stage the employers were saying confidently that registration of dockers was a relic of the past and did not have a part to play in our industry. Furthermore, closures of the docks were to be speeded up'. (Bernie Steer - Vic Turner - The Times, August 18, 1972.)

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This development should have been foreseen when the dockers accepted containerisation, as a fact of life, two years after their initial refusal

(1) This decline in the numbers of registered dockers has been going on for decades, as the following figures show:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Number of dockers</u>	<u>Tonnage handled</u> (millions of tons)
1921	125,000	37.00
1938	100,000	66.97
1951	80,088	60.15
1961	71,679	86.29
1970	46,912	121.15

to work the new system which had been installed at Tilbury. When decasualisation (2) arrived many dockers had deep illusions about their future. For example they believed that the process of contraction in the industry would end and that their jobs and those of their sons were secure.

Miners, railwaymen, steelworkers and others had already accepted 'rationalisation', through productivity deals, which promised a 'better future for those remaining'. As a result there have been massive reductions of the work force in these industries. Over the last 15 years the jobs of 500,000 miners (two-thirds of those employed) and over one-third of railwaymen's jobs have already gone. A similar process is going on in the docks.

Employers in Britain have been sluggish in introducing new technology, while their competitors in the USA, Western Europe and Japan have been able to do this at a much faster rate. They have been less conservative than their British counterparts in initiating change and more prepared to 'risk' the necessary investment. British employers also faced a better organised working class, some sections of which were able to resist because of strong rank and file organisations, operating alongside the official trade union structures.

In the case of the dockers this power stemming from shop floor organisation has been steadily eroded of late. Rank and file organisation has existed on the docks for 80 years and has been particularly strong since the war. Their militancy has been a thorn in the side of the employers, slowing down the introduction of new methods of exploitation and speed-up. After several Courts of Enquiry into the dock industry, many strikes, and bitter confrontations the employers have, over the last few years, been able to introduce new methods which have changed the whole cargo-handling industry. As a result the dockers, by themselves, now have a reduced ability to control the flow of cargo. It is becoming increasingly possible for cargo to bypass the main docks, using container depots, the smaller unregistered ports and specialised bulk-handling facilities which are springing up all over the country (and on a world scale too). This process will continue. For example the Royal Group, heartland of London's docks, is threatened with the loss of the vital New Zealand meat and dairy trade. Other ports are being involved and containerisation is taking its steady toll. This could mean a drop of 50% of the tonnage imported via the Royal Group and a consequent loss of its work related to exports.

This has led the dockers to demand that all work at container depots and unregistered ports be allocated to registered men, who have better rates of pay and conditions. Naturally the container and allied workers have not taken too kindly to these proposals which would throw them out on

(2) Decasualisation meant that dockers became permanently employed by specific companies instead of working on a day-to-day casual basis.

the cobbles. As they have begun to get better organised and to improve their own wages and conditions, they now have the bit between their teeth and will resist attempts to push them around. (3) Nevertheless when the 5 dockers were recently imprisoned container workers came out in solidarity even before some dockers began to move. This is not to say that all workers in the industry are saints - some of the workers in the unregistered ports were clearly scabbing. Allying themselves with the container workers - rather than fighting them - the dockers would have a better chance of defeating their employers.

The proposals of the Container Workers' Action Committee on this problem are that 'the solution to the problem now before us is for a change in the National Dock Labour Scheme in which the enclosed docks should be legally defined as being registered dock work and that the wharfs, container depots and cold-storage depots, allied to the docking industry, should be included in a new outer dock registration scheme, in which both registered dock workers and the present container depot men would take part on an equal basis'. (Statement by Drivers and Container Depot Action Committee, dated August 7, 1972.) This could provide a basis for joint discussion and action by cargo handling workers, since it would remove the advantages for the boss in shifting work away from the docks.

The bargaining power of cargo workers, taken collectively, is stronger than ever. No one is saying that dockers must engage in an act of self-sacrifice but simply that the old maxims 'divide and rule' and 'unity is strength' still apply. Strong links must be forged between dockers and their brother cargo workers.

Employers are in a better position to resist the more 'costly' demands of the dockers for these jobs, as there now exists a new and growing labour force employed at the container depots. Moreover lorry drivers and other transport workers now work much more closely with this new force than they used to with the dockers. Picketing container depots and cold stores has brought dockers into conflict with other workers at these places. The employers have been quick to exploit these differences between workers.

This is nothing new, but dock militants, despite their long record of struggle, did not try to establish links with the new workers in the

(3) An example of a recent agreement achieved by the action of container workers was the settlement at the five Containerbase Federation yards: 37½ hour week inclusive of meal breaks; £37.50 per basic week for freight handlers, with extra money for shift workers; 17 days' holiday to be increased to four weeks by January 1st, 1974.

According to the Drivers and Container Depot Workers Joint Action Committee, wages have been raised in the London depots from an average of £19 a week to an average of £35.50 a week.

cargo handling industry and ensure that they enjoyed the rates of pay and conditions which the dockers themselves had won. Dockers have by tradition sought to keep their industry closed to outsiders. (For example, it is almost impossible to become a docker unless you are closely related to an existing docker.)

These tactics have been very effective in the past but the new conditions will be less favourable for the dockers if they stand alone. Differences between groups of workers in the same industry could be further exploited by the employers, to wring more profit out of all cargo-handling workers.

When the five dockers were arrested many workers identified with the imprisoned men. It was clear to many people that action could get results. Thousands downed tools without the support of the official trade union or Party leaders. During the 'July days' the movement developed in spite of them.

The struggles in industry are presenting militants with the need for closer ties between sections. This applies particularly to workers involved in cargo handling. Dockers and container and transport workers should build a joint rank and file organisation to ensure collective resistance to their common employers. This is the main issue that dockers should now face up to.

Joe Jacobs.

BRUM'S EYE VIEW OF THE BUILDING WORKERS' STRIKE

Rumours of a nationwide building strike were first heard in early June when some of the lads tried to organise support in Birmingham for the UCATT (Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians) claim: £30 minimum, for a 35 hour working week. We were dubious, as the small builder has had his own way here for aeons. The constant flow of casual labour has made it almost impossible to unionise or unify the men at all. A huge reserve force of lump men is always available to divide us further. Anyway, in this city full credit for rallying support for the strike goes to the Building Workers Charter Movement and in particular to Pete Carter, a C.P. shop steward. Looked upon as the 'champion' of building workers he managed, with others, to whip up massive support for the strike. One or two ex-building worker I.S. members were hovering round but had to play second fiddle to the C.P.

Flying squads were organised and successfully reinforced the picketing. Encouraged, the men set up a Strike Claimants Union to ensure they got their bread. They forced the S.S. (Social Security, for our readers abroad) to open up a Strike Centre and to recognise the strike. This time, the men used their solidarity to get payments for single as well as married strikers.

Pickets at cement depots were reasonably successful although there was some bother with the pigs at Rugby Cement Depot - where a mass picket was organised and some men arrested. There were some well-attended rallies in the city and a couple of highly publicised crane occupations. The men were not fighting alone. Wives and children were fully behind them in the struggle and formed their own Womens' Committee to help. This Committee had a meeting with the shop stewards and Ken Barlow (Regional Secretary of UCATT) to question them. How's that for a step towards community solidarity? How many strikes have been lost by the mass media setting the wives against their husbands to pressure them back to work?

Just after the Rugby Cement arrests I.S. (on one of their desperate recruiting drives) called a meeting for the building workers with Laurie Flynn an ex-writer for Construction News among the speakers. Some good points were made, but only once did anyone mention that it is the building workers who build houses that they themselves can never hope to buy. They build office blocks, car parks and prisons, while there are still shitty slums that belong to the Industrial Revolution here, on our doorstep.

When the final pay deal was negotiated, without their original demands having been met, the men felt that they had been 'marched up to the top of the hill and marched down again'. Sold out by their union bureaucrats over the negotiating table, the scene of so many crimes against the working class! After 12 weeks on strike, they felt that the union should have stuck it out. In Birmingham there was a call to stay out. A group invaded the National Federation of Building Trades Employers for a sit-in. In our opinion the sit-in should have been in the National Headquarters of the union, in London!

Ken Barlow, who was opposed to the return on the Monday, was trying to negotiate a local deal (over and above the national award) with building employers in Brum. No chance though! On Monday, September 18, there was a slow trickle back to work. A wave of disillusionment with orthodox trade union representation swelled up. Once more it was proved that demands will only be met in full when the rank and file wrest control of their interests out of the hands of the T.U. bureaucracy and realise that their bargaining power lies in their own unity and with themselves.

The next day the building workers held a demo and a mass rally in Birmingham to show their disgust and anger with the national UCATT hierarchy and with George Smith, who had accepted the employers last offer without consulting the Regional Executive, the regional shop stewards' committee and, most important of all, without consulting the rank and file themselves. Women and children and about 2500 men turned out to march through Birmingham to the Mayfair Banqueting Suite (this was something new in strike meetings: COMFORT!) A large contingent came from Stoke on Trent, another area that refused to go back, after 12 weeks on strike.

Ken Barlow spent an hour trying to appease the men. It wasn't only the union officials who were to blame for the final defeat but also (wait for it) their weakness in picketing! Finally, Pete Carter addressed the men. Filled with anger he shouted out from one end of the place to the other 'THIS IS NOTHING BUT A SELL OUT BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OF UCATT'. We, the building

workers, would not have been in this position had we not been misled for the last 50 years. We are not going to be conned any more. We are building a new house and the new occupants won't be the same as the old ones - we will throw them out. These men must not be re-elected; we do not want them there (loud cheers); we, the rank and file, were not consulted about the agreement and neither was the Regional Executive'. He went on to say that, reluctantly, they had to return. Only three regions, Liverpool, Stoke and Birmingham, were holding out. That was not enough to fight for a regional agreement. But they would not be returning the same as before. This time they would fight any attempt to offset the rise by laying off men, intimidation, employing lump labour or reviewing the bonus system. These would be met with a total stoppage of work with the full backing of Birmingham UCATT. Carter also mentioned the underhand methods used by the employers to try to break up solidarity. For example they sent letters to all strikers asking them to return to work, to accept the deal and telling them that police protection would be available if they decided to go back!

There was a great deal of confusion on sites around the country as the men returned to work. Shop stewards at three sites in London were told that there were no longer any jobs for them and so the sites walked out again. There was a walk-out in Manchester because of the removal of a shop steward and another at a site in London over lump labour being employed. Here in Birmingham, Bryants and some Wimpey and Laing workers did not immediately return to work. These firms said that they would only pay £26 (for a 40-hour week) despite the fact that at the start of the strike the men were on £30 a week! (They had got this because of their militant local action and strikes during the previous year.) WHAT A FARCE! These sites came out in complete solidarity with the rest of the country for £30 for a 35-hour week and finished up being shat on by the National Executive! Some employers have gone out of their way to add insult to injury. Bryants were trying to buy the men off with the offer of a loan of £10 a week when they returned - but which was to be repaid at £2 a week. The mind boggles!

To top it all, the basic pay award is binding until November 1974, which is really a 2½ year period when you realise that building workers are not going to strike over the winter. The men are now aware of the union sell-out and are very angry and confused. They are even wondering if the National Executive were given a big hand-out to accept the employers' offer.

There has been a sinister development in the form of a very brutal attack on one of the leading militants at a Bryant site. Mike Shilcock was attacked in his own home by four masked men who broke his arm and toes, dislocated his shoulder and gave him extensive body injuries. It had all the hallmarks of a professional job. Organised by whom?

More developments are expected.

S.C. Brum.

FOCUS ON FORD

FORD STRIKE: THE WORKERS' STORY by John Mathews. Panther. 40p.

This book about the 1971 'parity' strike at Ford is a useful addition to the growing body of paperbacks dealing sympathetically with working class struggles. The author makes clear his sense of identification with Ford workers. But identification is not an alternative to analysis and in this respect the book is very weak. There are some glaring factual gaps. It is not enough simply to take sides - one must have some overall conception of the relationship between industrial struggle and the battle for socialism.

WORKERS; STEWARDS AND UNIONS

The book is critical of the role of the trade union bosses at Ford, although it lets some of the 'left wing' ones off very lightly - for instance Reg Birch, the Maoist AUEW E.C. member and main Ford negotiator. For example it claims 'his hands were tied' (by whom?) and that he could not say anything openly at the crucial stage of the secret settlement masterminded by fellow 'lefties' Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon on March 30, 1971. This reminds one of the old C.P. excuse for the peccadilloes of their officials, namely that they were 'prisoners of the right wing'. Mathews also lets off Moss Evans, national secretary of the Automotive Section of the TGWU and Chairman of the Ford NJNC.

The book also has an uncritical attitude towards the shop stewards committees. For example the author accepts at face value the claims made by some of their leaders about the effectiveness of the preparation for and organisation of the struggle. In actual fact some aspects of organisation were very poor. This was particularly the case in the area of communication between workers and control of the struggle by them. Links between factories were weak. In some cases the dominating junta of a Works Committee acted more as a barrier than as a channel of information. Only a small minority of strikers were involved in any way in the day-to-day conduct of the dispute. At best the struggle was run in a hand-to-mouth fashion. There was actual resistance, by some convenors, to the very idea of a discussion amongst stewards and other militants - whether before or during the strike - about the strategy and tactics to be used (for example on the question of an occupation, which must be placed on the agenda in the struggles to come).

The book does not deal with the contribution made by various shop stewards committees to the bolstering up of workers' illusions in the very officials who were to be responsible for the final carve-up. For

instance every single mass meeting at Dagenham, whether before or during the dispute, was totally dominated by full-time officials (usually six or seven officials spoke one after the other, and there were no rank-and-file spokesmen at all). The officials told us that 'this time would be different: the unions would support us all the way'. Another case was that of the weekly Bulletin produced by the Dagenham Strike Committee. Every issue praised the officials to the skies. Even the last edition (the one for the 9th week, which was produced after the Jones-Scanlon carve-up) had no criticisms. It stated that the 'unions are still standing four-square behind us' (a very long way behind, in my view).

The book does not deal with the problem of lack of confidence of the workers in some shop stewards committees. This is particularly acute at Dagenham, but is also a serious problem elsewhere. It was highlighted by two events. Firstly the acceptance by the men of the paltry £4 rise in January 1970. Secondly by the overwhelming vote to end the strike, on April 2, 1971 (albeit on a less than 50% poll). Both of these events took place against the recommendations of the shop stewards. Another example was the two months-long overtime ban which started in September 1968 and which really started the movement of Ford workers, but which was opposed by the Dagenham shop stewards committee.

This lack of confidence is not simply due to mistakes. That would be bad enough. It is the result of a long-term policy of manipulation of workers, where facts are distorted, mass meetings manipulated, debates silenced and opposition slandered. It is what happens when those at the top are more anxious to retain control of the situation than to let the real movement develop. It is not good enough to say the objective of these manoeuvres are often 'militant', namely to get workers out of the gate. In the short term they might even be effective. But in the long run the manipulators are 'twigged' by workers. They have cried 'wolf' too long and they find themselves isolated.

This characteristic is best illustrated in the interview which Jock Macrae and Sid Harroway, convenor and secretary of the Body Group shop stewards committee at Dagenham, gave to Black Dwarf. The interview was published on the day the strike broke out (January 30, 1970). In it Macrae and Harroway attack the left in general, all those who dared criticise the shop stewards committee, and the very idea of occupation as a valid form of struggle. Macrae then went on to describe his ideal mass meeting in the following terms:

'You get to the meeting. In five minutes you tell the workers the salient point and you say "we're on strike". You don't have interminable discussions because that leads to no bloody action. The longer a meeting goes on the less chance you've got of getting strike action carried ... It's better to have a well-planned, well-organised meeting with all your own people ready to say the right things and do the right things, and you're in. You get your strike vote and that's it.'

The tragedy of this situation is that most of these men are militants. They want to fight the boss. But they don't see the workers they 'represent' as being active and conscious participants in this struggle. This attitude is endorsed and reinforced by the traditional left. The book implicitly shares this view.

A frank discussion of these problems and weaknesses is needed if militants are to gain the full benefit from the struggle waged in January 1971. Despite his good intentions Mathews is doing no real service to the development of job organisation at Ford by ignoring these problems. The value of such experiences as the Ford strike is not to provide others with a vicarious thrill, as they witness workers coming into conflict with employers. It's real value lies in the lessons that workers learn from it. The problem is not to laugh or cry - but to understand.

CONDITIONS WITHIN THE PLANT

At another level the book plays down the demands put forward by Ford workers for control over the tempo of work and over condition within the plant (mutuality and 'status quo'). It accepts the excuses of the officials - in particular those of Reg Birch and of Moss Evans - for ratting on these aspects of the claim, in spite of their repeated promises to achieve them. It is obvious that wage parity, if and when it is achieved, will be a meaningless sham if in the meantime Ford workers are driven even further into the ground.* Higher wages or even shorter hours are in the long term meaningless unless they are accompanied by real growth in the strength and power of the shop floor. Indeed management have been known to make concessions on wages and hours, under pressure, provided that their total domination within the plant is not challenged. It is the job of socialist industrial militants to do everything they can to bring about precisely such a challenge.

It is already beginning to look as if the current 'shopping list' of demands is going to be dealt with in the same cavalier way as previously, with everything except wages and hours going straight into the waste paper basket. On September 10, 1972 shop stewards from all British Ford plants

* In 1969 each Ford worker produced 10.5 vehicles worth £8,270. This should be compared with 5.5 vehicles, worth £4,950 produced by each BLMC worker, and with 8.2 vehicles, worth £5,830 produced at Vauxhall. (Labour Research, July 1970). Incidentally, this problem was highlighted at the World Automotive Conference of Trade Union Bureaucrats, held in London at the height of the strike. At this conference the delegates of the Italian Metal Workers Union, under pressure at home, seized the opportunity for a bit of verbal window-dressing. They refused to support the final document of the conference. In their own document, issued on March 25, 1971, they criticised the totally economic character of the main conference document. They criticised in particular its refusal to accept that what goes on inside the factory is also important (not simply the price workers receive for the work they do).

met at Coventry to finalise their claims. These include 'a substantial increase in wages' (this demand is deliberately ambiguous. Militants think it means £10, while it is no secret that quite a few T.U. officials, actual or prospective, would accept £4 tied to a further 2-year freeze); a 35-hour week; a fourth week holiday; and improvements in pensions and average earnings for holidays. Mutuality, as always, is well down on the list.

If the workers accept a paltry settlement on the 1971 pattern - as seems possible - the trade union machines, who have done nothing to mobilise workers and who have actually opposed attempts by workers themselves to get things moving, will be able to use the results of their own inertia as an excuse for 'accepting' a further carve-up.

THE WAY AHEAD

In spite of these major criticisms and of several unimportant inaccuracies and mistakes, the book is to be welcomed. It does document the role of the trade union leaderships in creating the situation in which Ford workers now find themselves. It is this aspect which has caused some leading convenors and secretaries - as well as officials - to oppose its circulation. The book provides a mass of information about the hypocrisy and mendacity of Ford top management. And it is informative about the day-to-day organisation and development of the struggle providing much inside information. For this reason alone the book should be read and kept not only by Ford workers and industrial militants generally, but by all those who want to understand what industrial struggle is all about.

The serious shortcomings of the book reflect, to a certain extent, the faults of the newly emerging radical movement, whose turn towards working class struggle we welcome. These shortcomings are all the greater pity because of the book's considerable circulation among Ford workers (for example 2,000 copies have been taken by the P.T.A. shop stewards committee, at Dagenham alone). With a more critical and analytical approach the book would have been a much better tool for preparing Ford workers for the next round of struggle, which might start early next year.

Militants should now urgently be considering the problems raised by the next conflict. Is it going to be the same carve-up as last time, with the situation inside the plant left exactly the same as it was before? Or is a basis going to be laid now to turn things into something qualitatively different? How do we make the creaky shop stewards committees responsive to the wishes of Ford workers? How do we radically improve communications? It is a scandal that there is no paper run by and for Ford workers - and I don't include the 'Voice of Ford Workers' in this category. When are we going to get down to seriously thinking

about international communications?*

The company is preparing for the next round right now. It is building up stockpiles of components and completed vehicles, transferring machinery and press tools abroad, so that production of key parts, on which continental models are dependent, can continue. Ford workers should also be preparing, from now. In this respect they have much to learn from the workers at the Thornycroft factory at Basingstoke, owned by British Leyland. These workers have been occupying the plant since August 15, against mass redundancies. Nine weeks' supply of gear boxes, the factory's main product, had been built up by the management. The workers had a work-to-rule/go-slow, which reduced production to 10% after 5 weeks. The supplies were down to a few days' work. Then the men went for two weeks' holiday. Then they had the sit-in, a classic case of how to do things, of how not to go off half-cocked.

There have been one or two unconnected efforts by Ford workers. On September 8, 2,000 men at the key Halewood transmission plant had a 24 hour stoppage against the taking of work to Germany. A series of demonstrations in support of the four night shift pattern are planned at Dagenham. But a much more substantial and coordinated campaign is needed. And this means planning and discussion now.

There is a need to strengthen financial resources by building up shop funds. And it is necessary for some hard thinking to be done about

* The emphasis here needs to be on rank-and-file contacts. Too many jacks in office are jumping onto the international band-wagon as an opportunity simply to engage in a bit of meaningless rhetoric. Rather than rely on this sort of eyewash in future disputes, groups of Ford workers could for example go to Belgium and Germany to make direct appeals at the factory gates - over the heads of the officials - to fellow-workers at Genk, Cologne and Saarlouis. In the past these factories have busily gone on producing standardised models which have seriously reduced the effect of strikes at the international level. It would probably be necessary to produce material stating the case of British Ford workers and making a direct appeal for support in the appropriate languages (continental Ford employs many immigrant workers, especially from Italy, Turkey, Portugal, Spain and Yugoslavia). It might even be necessary to throw pickets around the main European plants, if necessary calling for support from the widest sections of the workers and socialist movement in these countries to beef up the picket lines. Miners, dockers and building workers have shown the way to picket on a national scale. Ford workers will have to spread the struggle abroad, if it is to be effective.

what forms of struggle would be best suited to the current tactical and strategic needs of Ford workers. An occupation, perhaps judiciously concentrated at one plant each at Halewood and Dagenham, would be worth considering in its own right. Workers in occupation would be able effectively to discourage attempts to transfer dies, machine tools or components to keep production going abroad, in the likely event of a knock-down, drag-out struggle. Such a tactic moreover would be particularly effective in the likely event of a union-led 'back-to-work' movement.*

We would like to hear the reactions and comments of Ford workers and others to the points made in this review. It is only through the widest and frankest discussion that the real lessons about the struggle of Ford workers will be drawn and then acted upon.

Mark Fyfe.

* For additional discussion and ideas on this subject, see 'Strategy for Industrial Struggle' by Mark Fore (Solidarity Pamphlet no.37 - 10p.), 'The Great Flint Sit-down Strike against General Motors, 1936-37' by Walter Linder (Solidarity Pamphlet no.31 - 10p.) and 'Under New Management? The Fisher-Bendix Occupation' by Joe Jacobs (Solidarity Pamphlet no.39 - 5p.).

BACK ISSUES

We still have a few back issues of SOLIDARITY with articles on Ford. These can be obtained (5p each, including postage) by writing now to our usual address.

The defeat at Fords: more lessons -	vol.III, no.9, p.19
The Kevin Halpin story	III, 9, 21
Inside the Fords defeat	III, 11, 10
After the Fords defeat	IV, 2, 9
Too old at 50	IV, 3, 20
Murder at Fords	IV, 4, 15
Stalemate at Halewood	VI, 10, 1

review

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS by W. Reich. Socialist
Reproduction, 57d Jamestown Road, London NW1. 25p (postage included).
April 1972.

Socialist Reproduction are to be congratulated for popularising this little-known text of Wilhelm Reich's which appeared simultaneously, in 1929, in Unter dem Banner des Marxismus (the theoretical journal of the German Communist Party) and in its Russian equivalent Pod Znameniem Marxizma. It is a symptom of the void in both psychoanalytic and meaningful radical literature today that we have to thread our way back for more than four decades to find a sensible discussion of these interesting matters.

Unlike previous texts of Reich's to which we have referred in reviews (see What is class consciousness? in Solidarity, vol.VII, No.2) and pamphlets (The Irrational in Politics) the current text is of no immediate relevance to an understanding of human needs or of the founts of human action. It is something very different: an attempt by Reich to reply to some of his critics (in both the psychoanalytic and marxist movements).

It is important to situate the text in the Germany of the late twenties. In 1929 Reich's break with Freud was on the horizon, its roots clearly understood. Personal relations with Freud, however, were not as yet embittered. The break with the Stalinists was also in the offing. Relations were bitter but had not as yet been traced back to their ideological source. In 1929 Reich is walking two tightropes. He uses Freud to argue against Freud and the Freudians - and Marx to argue against the Marxists. It is a difficult endeavour, as we have learned from our own experience.

Reich starts by pointing out (rightly in my opinion) that most of those on the left who were criticising Freudian psychoanalysis or marxism were doing so on the basis of an inadequate knowledge of either - or both. He sought to define the proper object of psychoanalysis as 'the study of the psychological life of man in society', an 'auxiliary to sociology', 'a form of social psychology'. He defines limits for the discipline. He freely admits that the Marxists are right when they reproach certain representatives of the psychoanalytic school with attempting to explain what cannot be explained by that method. But, he points out, 'they are wrong when they identify the method with those who apply it ... and blame the method for their mistakes'.

Both psychoanalysis and marxism are seen by Reich as 'science' (psychoanalysis as the science of psychological phenomena and marxism of social phenomena) and by implication as unarguably valid. That the categories and values of science might themselves be products of historical evolution is barely envisaged. In this whole approach Reich is echoing the 'scientistic' ethos of the epoch, which had its roots in the rise of the bourgeoisie and its drive to control and dominate nature, rather than to live in harmony with it.

Reich vigorously defends psychoanalysis against the charge of being idealist. To the indictment that it arose 'during the decadence of a decaying bourgeoisie' he retorts that marxism did too. 'So what?' he rightly asks. He dismisses those who crudely attack all knowledge as 'bourgeois knowledge'. 'A culture', he points out, 'is not uniform like a bushel of peas ... the beginnings of a new social order germinate in the womb of the old ... by no means everything that has been created by bourgeois hands in the bourgeois period is of inferior value and useless to the society of the future'. Reich attacks the simplistic mechanical materialism of those who would claim that psychological phenomena as such do not exist, that 'only objective facts which can be measured and weighed are true, not the subjective ones'. He sees this as an understandable but nevertheless misguided reaction against the Platonic idealism still dominating bourgeois philosophy. He demolishes Vogt's once popular thesis that 'thought is a secretion of the brain, in the same way that urine is a secretion of the kidney'. To dispose of this nonsense Reich calls Marx to his rescue, the Marx of the Theses on Feuerbach, the Marx who wrote that it was not good enough to say that 'changed men were the products of ... changed upbringing' because this forgot 'that it is men that change circumstances'. Psychological activity, Reich correctly insists, has a material reality and is a force in history that only the most short-sighted would deny.

There is no reason, Reich argues, why psychoanalysis should not have a materialist basis. He boldly plunges the Freudian categories and concepts into the reality of the class society around them. 'The reality principle as it exists today', he writes, 'is a principle of our society'. Adaptation to this reality is a conservative demand. 'The reality principle of the capitalist era imposes upon the proletariat a maximum limitation of his needs, while appealing to religious values such as modesty and humility. ... the ruling class has a reality principle which serves the perpetuation of its power. If the proletariat is brought up to accept this reality principle - if it is presented to him as absolutely valid, e.g. in the name of culture, this means an affirmation of the proletariat's exploitation and of capitalist society as a whole'. Reich submits other Freudian categories to the same kind of historical and sociological critique, while seeking to retain their essence. The 'unconscious' too, he points out, may acquire new symbols in an era of technological change. Zeppelins, in dreams, could assume the same sexual significance as snakes.

Having argued, more or less convincingly that there can be - and in fact that there is - a materialist basis to psychoanalysis and that the

subject requires no roots in metaphysical morality, Reich goes on to try and show that psychoanalysis is also dialectical. And here he comes unstuck. Like Lyssenko and his genetics, Reich has to 'tidy up' the rich reality of his own insights (not to mention Freud's) to make them fit into a ludicrous mould of 'unity of opposites', 'transformations of quantity into quality' and 'negations of the negation', all drawn straight from the simplistic pages of old pop Engels' 'Dialectics of Nature'. Paul Mattick laid this particular ghost a number of years ago and it is sad to see Socialist Reproduction resurrect it without comment. These pages are certainly the Achilles' heel of the whole essay. For all his protestations that psychoanalysis is an empirically verifiable set of propositions, Reich shows that he is nevertheless caught in a methodological trap of his own making ... and that he is not really an unhappy prisoner. Someday, someone should write about the anal-eroticism of the system-makers, from Marx and Darwin, via Trotsky, to Reich. Why did they all suffer badly from piles?

Reich finally discusses the sociological position of psychoanalysis. He is here on firmer soil. Like Marxism, psychoanalysis is a product of the capitalist era. It is a reaction to that era's ideological superstructure, the cultural and moral conditions of modern man in society. Reich brilliantly analyses the ambivalent relations to sexuality of the nascent bourgeoisie and the role of the Church during the bourgeois revolutions. The bourgeoisie now had to barricade itself against 'the people' by moral laws of its own. Double standards of sexual morality emerged, well analysed in other Reich's writings. 'Just as Marxism', Reich concludes, 'was sociologically the expression of man becoming conscious of the laws of economics and of the exploitation of a majority by a minority, so psychoanalysis is the expression of man becoming conscious of the social repression of sex'.

In lines of great lucidity, but already seeded with that bitterness that was later to consume him, Reich even foresees the frenetic commercial exploitation of a debased psychoanalysis. Capitalism rots everything. 'The capitalist mode of existence was strangling psychoanalysis, both from the outside and the inside'. 'In bourgeois society psychoanalysis was condemned to sterility, if to nothing worse, as an auxiliary science to the science of education in general'. Psychoanalytic education would only come to fruition with the social revolution. Psychoanalytic educators who believed otherwise were living in a fool's paradise. 'Society is stronger than the endeavours of its individual members'. They would 'suffer the same fate as the priest who visited an unbelieving insurance agent on his death bed, hoping to convert him, but in the end went home with an insurance policy'.

The pamphlet is well produced. There is a good introduction, marred only by the fatuous statement that 'through the twenties ... Leninism in the hands of Stalin was rapidly becoming transformed into the ideological litany of the new managerial class that was being established throughout Russia'. Alas, Leninism was not 'becoming' anything. It had been just that for many a year - certainly since October and probably from much earlier. Whether we discuss Lenin's views on sex (see The Irrational in Politics) or his views on the virtues of 'one man management' (see The Bolsheviks and Workers Control) the clues are there for those who can read them.

'THE RIGHT TO WORK? OR THE FIGHT TO LIVE! by Keith Paton. Available from
102 Newcastle Street, Silverdale, Staffs ST5 6PL. 10p

The 'Right to Work' slogan, popular in rallies against unemployment, implies under capitalism an acceptance of exploitation. But the 'alternative' proposed in the title of this pamphlet ('The Fight to Live') contains reformist illusions as well. As it stands it suggests mere subsistence in this system - hardly something for revolutionaries to campaign for. The antithesis in the title is difficult to locate. The peculiar legend is, however, consistent with the content of this anarchist pamphlet which lacks both a revolutionary theory and a coherent purpose despite a predilection for hip, angry (ANGRY) oaths, which all of us can understand.

Part I is concerned with the effects of 'guaranteed' 'Equal Living Incomes' (E.L.I.). The demand for such incomes is intended, amongst other things, to stimulate revolutionary consciousness, thereby changing people's attitudes to capitalism's ills and presumably bringing about social revolution:

'When the equation WORK EQUALS MONEY EQUALS NECESSITIES is broken (by E.L.I.) people will be free to ask WORK EQUALS WHAT? FOR WHOM? WHY?. Is the product necessary and to whom? ... Is the work being arranged in the most efficient way? Instead of a single control pyramid, is there a complex, crisscross, many-centred pattern, with everyone arranging short cuts with everyone else in the light of a clear plan? Was the plan drawn up by various groups of workers and submitted to everyone for criticism and debate before being agreed upon by a mass meeting?'. (p.6.)

Thus socialism would ensue. Or again, more blatantly:

'Equal living individual incomes would destroy the nuclear family dominated by the male adult'. (p.8.)

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that everyone could get E.L.I. 'as of right' in capitalist society. Why would this guarantee, as Keith suggests, that people would think and act differently? It doesn't necessarily follow. By the beginning of Part III ('Fighting for Equal Living Incomes') the issue is complicated when Keith suddenly realises that E.L.I. could never be granted in capitalism anyway:

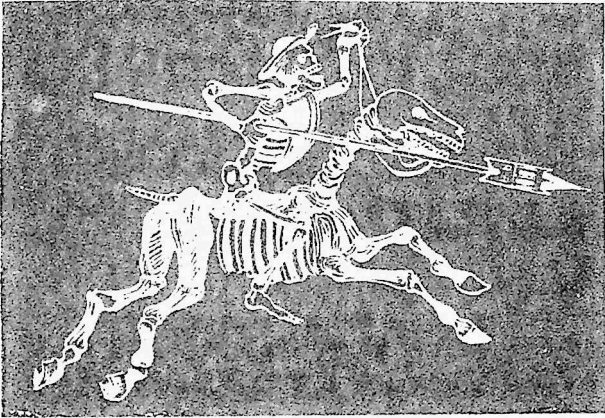
'In the first part I considered what would happen if the demand for Equal Living Incomes was "introduced". This was false, because the state neither would nor could introduce such a demand'. (p.16)

E.L.I.s are to be achieved through genuine, self-managed, 'revolutionary' struggle (detailed in Parts II and III). Yet in Part I we are told that the demand for E.L.I.s will help generate revolutionary change! Thus revolutionary consciousness is needed to get E.L.I.s which are needed to obtain ... revolutionary consciousness! The most logical explanation

of this ludicrous confusion is that Keith's perspectives for revolutionary struggle are severely deficient, even to himself. Hence the substitute of the mechanistic E.L.I. Throughout the text Keith fails to come to terms convincingly with such an essential and simple question as 'how can revolutionary change actually come about?'

The best clue to the author's insufficient answer to this question is in Part III. This contains a resentful attack on the 'respectable' employed worker, the 'skilled, white, middle aged and male ... with these workers suits and respectability are the rule, tradition directs their "thinking", for whatever motions they pass their lifestyles are 100% constipated'. (p.17) This sort of arbitrary divisiveness is excellent so long

as you are not trying to encourage working people, as a class, to a revolutionary point of view. For while Keith supports 'non-integrated' and rebellious workers, the importance of the working class (however uncool or integrated some sections may be at present) in changing the system never emerges from his ideas. Keith never refers to his revolutionary prodigies (claimants, women, blacks, 'whites', schoolchildren, etc) as being - or not being - members of this economic class. They are merely members of various social groups. Their desire for socialism is insuf-



ficient to destroy capital. Socialism, as I see it, would require firstly that capitalist relations of production be changed along democratic lines, industry being self-managed by the producers themselves. Although socialism would require the breakdown of all capitalist relationships, e.g. sexist or racist, the destruction of those concerned with production are basic to a revolution in social power.

A revolutionary working class is necessary, then, for socialism. Those outside of production altogether (students, some white collar workers, etc.) can only become revolutionary insofar as they link their actions with the revolutionary proletariat. In place of even such a brief and schematic perspective as this. Keith's prospects for revolution are based on a loose identification with people fighting oppression:

'Anybody who feels oppression and fights against it is in the revolution centrally'. (p.18)

'We shall fight against all oppression as we experience it'. (p.18)

'The demand (for E.L.I.) can only be realised by us, all of us fighting together...' (p.16)

It is important to note the purely subjective tenor of these statements. They suggest a lack of meaningful analysis of society, which is essential for the reasons described in the previous paragraph.

The significance of the working class is sometimes glimpsed, in a common sense way, but not explained fully:

'Probably it is still true that the mass of white, skilled, middle aged workers have got to get off their knees and fight the system if we are going to have a revolution and not just revolts'. (p.18)

But the outline of a political theory based on the social analysis that the quotation implies is missing. In a similarly perceptive moment the correct statement that 'claimants do not have much economic power' does not lead to a class theory. On the contrary, a perverse attempt is made to justify claimants' isolationism:

'We will be forced to use more imaginative methods, symbolic action, disruptive actions, mass actions...'

This merely emphasises the lack of revolutionary effectiveness of such methods. If genuine working class unity (i.e. revolutionary unity) doesn't exist at present, as the author rightly stresses on p.17, then the obvious task is to help encourage it. It doesn't excuse a liberal attitude to the anger of oppressed minorities, simply because that anger does exist.

Industrial reorganisation, fundamental to socialism, is barely mentioned. We are told that industrial workers 'will only really fight when the outlines of a whole alternative way of living everyday life has become clear, through the struggles of claimants, women, students, etc.' As in the E.L.I. demand, illogical inferences (workers 'will' follow the example) are needed to cover up for inadequacies in the basic ideas. The alternative life-style referred to by Keith, however democratic, would surely be quite different in scale and function from that of industrial work in a socialist society. The nature of self-managed production will derive from the bitter everyday experience of capitalist production itself. Keith's alternative



life style is not related to those embryonic social structures which could prefigure workers' councils as the organs of socialist society (for example strike committees, composed of elected delegates revocable at any time by rank and file workers). Instead he seems to be talking about such schemes as 'self-managed projects', 'social initiatives', 'non-boss' and 'unalienated work'. The pamphlet's examples include: making toys, showing blue films 'socially', duplicating mutual aid sheets, and even robbing mail trains. We don't oppose these things for moral reasons but because, when considered as forms of revolutionary activity, such notions could lead to the most reactionary consequences. Why not support, for instance, the 'self-managed' activities of Jesus-freak communities?

As long as the problem of changing the system of capital is evaded in this fashion, it becomes more difficult to solve. False solutions sooner or later help to stabilise capitalism. Self-management on its own is not sufficient to change society. It must be linked to politics. Only when applied to the economy as a whole and to all other institutions of society, within a socialist perspective, will revolution come about. In the end Keith himself loses confidence in his 'alternatives':

'I began to suggest ways in which we could build it (the welfare society) - or at least survive, while unemployed, far better than the bosses want us to'. (p.16)

When talking about revolutionary self-management we place the emphasis on the collective working class, and not on social 'experiments' or 'fighting oppression'. What does this mean for the activity of revolutionary groups? It means that we must recognise that certain sections of the class (claimants, housewives, students, O.A.P.s and certain white-collar workers) cannot, because of their isolation from production, develop a revolutionary struggle on their own. They are unable to threaten the real locus of power in society. On the other hand, industrial workers have the potential power to prefigure the foundation of a socialist society, namely production run for use, on egalitarian and self-managed lines. Logically then the working class is, at the moment, the only section of society where revolutionary self-organisation can meaningfully be encouraged. Job organisation is the necessary beginning of a desired general revolutionary movement for workers' councils, which could link all social groups to the working class. To maintain, as Keith does, that 'fighting oppression' is the essence of revolutionary politics in effect opposes this general movement. It is a confusing expression of, rather than a solution to, 'oppression'. Keith's theory is influenced by resentment towards the socially integrated workers ('We're ANGRY, Mr. Goodworker') rather than by an objective look at the essential dynamics of capitalism. Social isolation is thus proudly asserted, and a revolutionary class position avoided at all costs, for the sake of the Ego. A genuine revolutionary critique must undoubtedly include a critique of 'welfare', sexism, racialism, ageism - as well as of exploitation - and would include a discussion as to the nature of revolutionary change. But as far as Keith's pamphlet is concerned such a revolutionary critique is hardly apparent.

Steve Place.

discussion

I. IRELAND

We publish below a letter received from the Workers' Association for the Democratic Settlement of the National Conflict in Ireland (a Maoist organisation) together with our reply. Some copies of SOLIDARITY, vol.VII, no.1, which contains the Theses on Northern Ireland referred to are still available.

Your Theses on Northern Ireland (Solidarity, vol.VII, No.1) seemed to me to reveal a certain callousness and disregard for the troubles of real people in real situations.

You say 'We would rather struggle for what we want - even if we don't immediately get it - than struggle for what we don't want ... and get it'. But in a situation such as the N. Irish one, it's not a question of pressing for something we want. There is a confrontation between two kinds of nationalism, which is causing immense and useless suffering and preventing the emergence of class consciousness. This being the case, it is the job of those who want to see a strong united working class capable of tackling the bourgeoisie to resolve this national conflict, even if it means putting forward an ordinary, dull, unrevolutionary, unromantic bourgeois-democratic solution.

Marxism teaches that new forms can only emerge out of forces present in the forms that precede them. Nationalism is losing its effectiveness as a reactionary force in Britain as the bourgeoisie needs to expand its market into Europe. Southern Ireland, too, is having to accommodate itself to this situation - hence the dwindling support for the reactionary protective nationalism of Sinn Fein, as shown in the massive vote in favour of entry to the Common Market. The 'jingoist' nationalism of the North - which you make no attempt to analyse or explain, except with the usual clichés used by Socialist apologists for Catholic nationalism about an 'Orange' bourgeoisie wanting to keep the workers in check - is a defensive nationalism. The people of the North - bourgeoisie and workers - who were at the time participating in a confident and expanding industrialism, had no reason to wish to separate from Britain as part of an 'independent' Ireland whose culture was an expression of the desire of small commodity producers to work on a safe home market, protected from all 'foreign' influence.

The Unionist bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century were very much opposed to Orangeism which represented the landlord interest in opposition to them. They only joined with it to oppose a common enemy, and this common enemy has ensured the reactionary nature of Unionism ever since. Without a threat, Protestant nationalist culture - which is functional rather than romantic - loses its force. The same is largely true of the 'nationalism' of the Northern Catholics, whose support for the IRA is dependent on the degree to which they feel themselves threatened by the Protestants. It was because this nationalism was so lukewarm that the current anti-partitionist campaign had for so long to disguise itself as a campaign for civil rights.

It is clear from this that the people who are keeping primitive nationalism alive in Ireland are Sinn Féin, whose existence is 'justified' by the continued efforts of the Southern ruling class to propagate among Catholics (they've never really tried it on the Prods!) the historically incorrect view that there is only one nation in Ireland, and that the Protestants had no right to secede from it. Of course talking about and campaigning for the rights of nations to self-determination is very tiresome for Internationalists. But while nations and national consciousness are real forces in society the problems they raise have to be resolved to pave the way for Internationalism. Six years ago, national consciousness was fading away from N. Ireland because there was no need for it: now it is everywhere rampant. It is not our job to dismiss it as 'just' a bourgeois illusion, keeping ourselves and our revolutionary consciousness pure and untainted. Those concerned with the freedom of the workers have to connect with the problems experienced by the workers.

Of course, in recognising that the IRA are a reactionary and not a socialist force, and that their nationalist campaign should in no way be supported, you are half-way towards an understanding of the situation. But you yourselves admit that you have very little to offer Irish workers in the way of a practical programme to resolve it. The 'Workers Association for the Democratic Settlement of the National Conflict in Ireland' puts forward two principles that any safe settlement will have to take into account:

- 1) Full recognition of the right of the Ulster Protestant Nation to remain within the UK State.
- 2) Full recognition and accordance of the democratic rights of the Catholic minority in the N. Ireland/UK State, and of the Protestant minority in the Southern State.

There is nothing remotely revolutionary about this programme. Any responsible bourgeois party could have proposed it. As long as the Tory Mr Whitelaw is working in this direction, we support him wholeheartedly. Our demand for an immediate plebiscite has been picked up by the Alliance Party, Paisley and Faulkner in succession. The fact remains that the implementation of this programme is essential if any sort of working class

politics is to emerge in N. Ireland. We're not supporting Protestant nationalism (a large proportion of our members come from Catholic Nationalist backgrounds). We simply want to disarm it, by removing the threat to it.

As an idea, Internationalism is as progressive as Esperanto. It will only become a reality when the forces that create and maintain nations cease to be effective.

Peter Brooke
Workers Association for the Democratic Settlement
of the National Conflict in Ireland

our answer:

It may well be true to say that in N. Ireland today there is no question of pressing for something which we, as socialists, want. But it does not follow that we must choose between the available options. We do not accept the job of 'resolving this national conflict' - helping the rulers, on their terms, to solve their problems. The 'bourgeois-democratic solution' is not simply dull, unromantic, etc. It involves definite social evils, constant exploitation, manipulation, and callousness inflicted on real people in real situations.

In fact we do make attempts to analyse and explain, though not to justify, such phenomena as nationalism. And not only in the economic/historical terms indicated by P. Brooke. Given that the conflict evolved along those lines, Protestant nationalism may be termed defensive, but there is much more to it than natural reaction to a recurring threat. It could be said of many forms of reactionary ideology that they are kept alive basically by fear, and the manifestations of Protestant nationalism are not typically defensive in character. Nationalist culture is always romantic as well as functional. The non-functional, or irrational element, deep-rooted in the psychology of the masses and fostered by the whole process of social conditioning, is indeed vital to its survival.

And the function served is that of class collaboration, based on a mythical identity of interests between rulers and ruled. (P. Brooke makes bourgeoisie and workers.)

No doubt any militant assertion of one nationalism is liable to intensify adherence to the other, but it is a very simplistic view to blame the existence of 'primitive nationalism' on one section of one side (Sinn Fein).

The consistent practices of Unionism and Orangeism could equally be seen as presenting a threat to the minority in the North, and as justifying the pretensions of the Southern bourgeoisie to defend that minority. In any case, the conditioned acceptance of the mythology ensures its survival in at least folklorique forms when no threat is present (as among Irish exiles) and as a tendency to over-reaction when a threat appears.

All nationalism is primitive in terms of class consciousness. There is no acceptable, sophisticated variety. The 'Two Nations' view of Irish history, the entire Workers Association analysis, grants a validity to the concept of nationality which socialists should surely question. Fair enough, if you use certain criteria (as propounded by those who have an interest in preserving such notions), you can make out a convincing case for the view that there are two nations in Ireland. But it's all, at best, rather beside the point as far as we are concerned.

For us, as Internationalists, campaigning for rights of nations to self-determination is not just 'tiresome'. It would be in clear contradiction with our ideas and aims. Supporting nationalist claims does not tend to pave the way for internationalism. We have to demystify on all sides, rejecting such claims as a totally wrong orientation. It is only by refusing to compromise our revolutionary consciousness that we can avoid working against the freedom of the workers. It is only by explaining the real nature of apparent 'problems', even if we have to dismiss them as irrelevant to socialism, that we can meaningfully connect with the workers' experiences and indicate the issues at stake.

We can agree that recognising the reactionary, non-socialist nature of the IRA is to understand no more than half the situation. However, would not the second half consist of an identically demystified attitude to Protestant nationalism? The Workers Association could be accused of enunciating only a partial critique in the mainstream of its publications to date. Consistently to attack Republican mythology may have seemed the most urgent task, and some useful work has been done here (e.g. re-assessment of aspects of Irish history). But the failure to present a more general critique can only result in distortion of the picture as a whole - and the position of the Workers Association within it.

It might be argued that the two principles put forward by the W.A. are of dubious practicality in the real situation; or alternatively that the course of events will not be affected by small groups with no influence on the political manipulators. But it is enough for us to repeat that we do not, as revolutionaries, accept any obligation to offer a programme that is 'not remotely revolutionary'. We do not wish to add our voices to those of 'responsible' bourgeois parties. Our interests are not theirs. As long as the W.A. does not differentiate itself from such parties except by a formalistic adherence to socialism, it will offer nothing of value to Irish workers. And the bourgeois and/or nationalist parties will continue to get the workers' support.

P. Brooke's letter betrays a fundamentally alienated view of revolutionary politics. Our politics are not fantastic/utopian/romantic/unattainable: they are closely integrated with 'real' life, here and now. Our daily experience of, and alienation from, bourgeois democracy is what leads us to reject it completely. A precondition of human freedom is the comprehension and progressive elimination of all that tends to limit it.

Only by principled adherence to ideas like Internationalism will progress ultimately be made. Among the forces that create and maintain nations, the misleading ideology of 'national self-determination' is paramount.

Liz Willis.



2. WOMEN AND THE UNIONS

The pamphlet reviewed here tackled questions which have received scant attention from revolutionaries, SOLIDARITY included. We have developed our critique of trade unions and the traditional left without specific reference to their failings vis à vis women, and we have expressed general support for women's lib. with no detailed critique of the problems involved. Anna's review does not express SOLIDARITY's ideas about the unions (or about women's liberation), but the views it represents are widely held. We publish it, together with Selma James's reply, in the hope of initiating further discussion.

WOMEN, THE UNIONS AND WORK by Selma James, Notting Hill Group, Women's Liberation Workshop, 1972. Obtainable from E. Runay, 46 Scarsdale Villas, London W.8. 5p + postage.

This pamphlet was produced for the Manchester Conference last March. It appeared at a time when the movement was beginning to feel the need for involvement in activity beyond the consciousness-raising for which some local groups had deliberately restricted their size. Sisters wanted to draw together, in a wider political perspective, the forms of struggle in which they had taken and could take part. Selma posits the need for an autonomous women's movement, in the context of virulent criticisms of left organisations and trade unions. She puts forward a new set of demands to provide a focus for the movement, around which women could mobilise. Initially the pamphlet was welcomed because it covered hitherto largely unexplored ground. Many sisters are now less enthusiastic, because of its lack of clarity. They feel it to be escapist in denying the validity of work in unions, at a time when a large section of women are wage-earners. The pamphlet is, however, of value, if only as a catalyst for further discussion in the movement. Much of what it says is relevant criticism of the role played by many revolutionary groups in struggle.

Selma sees a danger of capitalist co-option of the women's movement, both through women being drawn into new fields of exploitative relations, and through the agency of left organisations. She claims these see the class struggle as being that of the white male over thirty, thereby blocking the women's struggle and that of other groups considered 'marginal', such as blacks and claimants. She considers that these left groups ahistorically adopt Lenin's pre-1902 demand for the arousal of 'trade union consciousness' although recent industrial action (such as that of the miners) has shown

the power of the class to organise and develop methods of struggle outside of and often counter to the union bureaucracy. She demonstrates how the unions consistently act against the interests of women. For example there have been no official (though plenty of unofficial) equal pay strikes; differential grading has been encouraged; women are often hindered from joining the union; and despite woman as housewife being the double slave of capitalism (as slave to the wage slave) she takes no part in union decision making. Selma concludes that by dividing the class into wage-earners and non wage-earners unions structurally prevent generalisation of struggle and become bureaucratised. She does not deny the need for organisation against conditions of slavery on the shop floor and in the office, but emphasises that it is the power of the workers which abolishes such conditions and which produces organisation. Unionisation of women, she suggests, may occasionally be useful as a mobilising tactic, but never as an end in itself. She calls for a new analysis of the whole of the class struggle to replace the male analysis of the wage-earning male.

The basis for Selma's attack on the unions is largely her experience in the U.S. (where unions take their place alongside other large corporations in supporting Nixon and capitalism) and in Italy (where there has been widespread rejection of the unions and fairly successful organisation outside of them). Her eulogies over workers' self-activity in the miners' strike are not justified by the facts. There was no serious challenge to the NUM leadership, although workers were able to exert pressure on it with some success. In Britain, we have not seen a tremendous growth in conscious, organised, self-active militancy outside the unions. On the other hand, while the unions are not revolutionary, most of them see their interests as opposed to the capitalist class.

All but the richest women work, at least in the home, and most of them outside as well. Selma sees them as pawns in the cooperation between the capitalists and the unions, expendable as labour themselves, and servicing the male wage-slaves. She points out that women are already involved in some organised unofficial industrial action, and that individual rebellion, especially absenteeism, is rife. She says that the only thing wrong with not working is not receiving a wage, and that it is workers' unconcern with the possibility of unemployment that poses a real threat to capitalism by disarming it. Women must be liberated from the home, without entering the wage slavery of capital. They must organise against their oppression, uniting where capital divides.

The realisation that the demand for 'the right to work' (i.e. the right to produce surplus value) is reactionary is hardly dawning on the left. The danger of Selma's conclusions to the women's movement is a total withdrawal from involvement in the struggle at the workplace. Women are exploited most by capitalist production, receiving a fraction of the wages of men and to some extent they are socialised into reduced expectations (pin money, etc.). The logical conclusion to much of Selma's argument is surely that methods must be developed linking the factory, the community, and the home, involving the whole class, whether male or female, old or young, in its struggle as a class.

In her attempt to give her analysis practical implementation, Selma enunciates six demands which she suggests may be adopted by the women's movement as a whole. The aim is to articulate in few words the breadth of our rejection of the oppression and exploitation of women, and to raise possibilities of new kinds and areas of action in each local situation from the beginning, while always keeping the fundamental issues before our eyes. But instead of starting from the foregoing analysis, she seems here to base herself on the historical evolution of the present movement. Hence the formulation of 'demands' as such, their close relation to the original 4 demands adopted by women nationally early in 1971, and hence perhaps the ambiguities and confusion which arise from this section.

The 4 basic or minimal demands which have hitherto provided an easy answer to the question 'what do you stand for?' are: equal pay now; equal education and job opportunity; free contraception and abortion on demand; 24-hour child care centres. Selma's six are: 1) the right to work less; 2) a guaranteed income for women and men, working or not, married or not - wages for housework; 3) control of our bodies, the right to have or not to have children; 4) equal pay for all; 5) an end to price rises; 6) free community-controlled nurseries and child care. She has explained how these issues affect people and pointed out some of the far-reaching implications they might have.

However, the main purpose of the programme is not quite clear. Is it transitional, or a prefiguration of future society? Are these conditions pre-requisite for change, or the ideal to work for? Items like the struggle against price rises or for a shorter work week can be seen as analogous to trade union demands. The 'guaranteed adequate income' fits in with current thinking in the Claimants' Unions, but how does it relate to equal pay? Then the idea of wages for housework would tend further to entrap women in their traditional role, and to institutionalise as employment what should surely be a minimal background activity shared by all. And are we to ask for control of our bodies, instead of assuming it from the start and resisting any attempt to interfere with it? (On the other hand, if everyone was free to dispose of her or his body with no constraints, the revolution would practically be achieved.) Lastly, the type of nursery and other welfare provisions envisaged places emphasis on community caring and a degree of self-management now.

In considering possible methods of struggle, the pamphlet recommends that women be organised where they work for wages, where they shop, where they live and work, initially by leafletting on hours of work, wages, inflation, child care and slavery. This would give quite high priority to industrial action, but there is little indication of how the struggle in production might be waged. How can women working together best organise on immediate demands and towards control of their work, avoiding co-optation of shop floor militancy. Given that job organisation is basic, should they be prepared to fight the battle against discrimination inside the unions, or

try to by-pass male-dominated structures? How do they relate to rank and file male workers - and to the potential union bureaucrats in their own ranks? Posing such questions might have provided a more direct link between the two sections, analytical and practical, of the pamphlet, even if their answers could only emerge from lengthy discussion in the movement. As it is, the ongoing debate has tended to pay disproportionately little attention to these problems.

The idea that the struggle itself can provide a social existence for women outside the home is attractive. But if all this activity is to be meaningful, it must be founded securely on the consciousness of those involved, consciousness that must go beyond accepting a list of demands. The nature of a demand, and the content of this pamphlet as a whole, is to come up for discussion at the National Women's Conference in November. Perhaps the attempt of the Notting Hill Group to give a new orientation to the movement will then bear fruit, though probably not according to their prescriptions.

Liz.

NEW PAMPHLETS

We have produced 2 new pamphlets. 'AS WE DON'T SEE IT' (5p + postage) was specially written (after long discussions in the London group) to eliminate certain ambiguities in previous statements of our views. It is a response to repeated questions put to us concerning (1) our analysis of various types of contemporary societies, (2) our concept of socialism, (3) our view of the trade union and political bureaucracies, and (4) our attitude to other political tendencies on the 'left'. It has been sent to all subscribers and we hope it will become the quickest and most accurate introduction to our ideas.

CEYLON : THE JVP UPRISING OF 1971 (25p + 5p postage) is a detailed analysis of last year's events in Ceylon. A movement of disaffected youth, drawn mainly from the petty-bourgeoisie (both urban and rural) almost brought down the Coalition Government of UNP, Stalinists and ex-Trotskyists. The State Department and Mao's China, the Tory government and Russia's rulers, India and Pakistan, all sent money, weapons or moral assistance to Mrs. Bandaranaike. The pamphlet contains a full background to the events, an interview with a Ceylon revolutionary, an epilogue on what has happened since the uprising, and an article 'Third Worldism or Socialism' outlining our views on Third World struggles in general. The pamphlet is being sent to all subscribers whose sub is well on the credit side (it is being counted as the equivalent of 5 issues). If you don't receive the pamphlet before the end of October, it means that you sub won't stand it.

The production of these two pamphlets in offset litho has knocked us back financially to the zero line and we are facing a liquidity crisis. We appeal to readers and supporters, who feel this kind of documentation is useful, to help us urgently with some bread.

SELMA JAMES REPLIES . . .

Dear Anna and Liz,

Though I'm glad to have the opportunity to put my point of view along with yours, it is difficult to raise disagreements with you in a journal of an organisation dominated by men. I am conscious that my view may be used against you or your view against me, not to disprove our arguments but to discredit us. Those who have more power tend to retain that power by the principle of dividing and dominating the less powerful. I think I'd better explain this because it is bound to be scoffed at by some men who believe they know all there is to know about 'politics', certainly more than women do.

All organisations in which men and women work together are inevitably dominated by men. I am a feminist and a Marxist; I don't believe democracy, which is based on 'equality', works. The men have organisational skills which we women are only learning. They are not worried about the dishes they left in the sink or whether there are clean nappies for the morning - their heads, then, are more able to concentrate on 'important' things, rather than on the decimating details of routine women's work. Most of all, they are used to authority over women. Therefore they have more confidence, in themselves and in other men. They listen to each other more easily than to us, and give each other's views more careful consideration. All this doesn't stop when they join an organisation that calls itself socialist.

We've become aware in the women's movement of the pressure on the women in these organisations. Though we complain and fight against the male supremacy we meet there, yet we tend to feel on the defensive, feel we must justify the autonomy of the women's movement and its exclusion of men, must convince them that Women's Liberation is not 'unpolitical'. It's precisely this defensiveness that justifies the movement's autonomy and its exclusion of men. And it's precisely the great gap in the politics of male-dominated left organisations that lies at the basis of their male supremacist theory, attitudes and practices.

It was to shatter the outdated politics of the male-dominated left as it had invaded the women's movement that the pamphlet you are reviewing was written. I see by your review, Anna, that you know this.

These politics are based on the factory. But women have as their primary relation to society, their primary mode of exploitation, the home. Workers in factories get wages. Workers in 'private' - more precisely, individual - homes don't. In relation to the wageless, waged people have

power, and this is the basis of male supremacy and the super-exploitation of women in the whole of capitalist society. Even when women enter that factory, as 50% of the women in this country do, precisely because their base is the home, a wageless job, they are even more exploited than men are. It is assumed that women don't need money of their own. But look how the left shed tears when unemployed men don't get a wage. We are told they lose their self-respect!

So the pittance that bosses pay women is called pin money, though women work as hard, often harder than men.

Women are not the only traditional wageless people. One of the reasons that young people run away from home is that, while capital is preparing them in schools to be efficiently exploited, they are wageless and their parents' wages are a power over them. Recently a 16-year old girl was put in Holloway by her father for stealing something to eat. Her father had decided not to feed her because she couldn't or wouldn't get a job. The unemployed are also wageless. The sick are wageless, and the old. But the unions don't organise them. The structure of unions is based on this division between the waged and the wageless. Unions are for people with wages, and for nobody else.

And unions are for work. If anybody thinks they're entitled to live and get back some of that surplus value they are making or made when they were young or not sick or that their parents made, unions are against them. Unions are for a fair day's work, fair, that is, to the capitalist.

OK, you may say, but they fight for the worker. Nobody can fight for the worker. Anybody who comes along and says, leave it to me, I'll fight for you, is going to negotiate your struggle out of existence. That's what the unions do all the time. This is not because they are bureaucrat-ised; they are bureaucrat-ised because they have to ram negotiations and work down workers' throats. The unions only betray workers who have not yet understood that, no matter how hard we fought to establish them in the past, they have now become part of the State apparatus. Younger men workers and women in factories, homes, hospitals and telephone exchanges show by their action that whatever the unions once meant is not going to blind them to what the unions are today. The unions can't betray these workers because they expect what they're going to get. To say the unions betray is like saying the Tory Party betrays. Especially for women, and most especially for housewives.

By the way I notice, Anna, that after giving a splendid summary of the pamphlet, you say: 'The basis for Selma's attack on the unions is largely her experience in the U.S. where unions take their place alongside other corporations in supporting Nixon and capitalism, and in Italy where there has been widespread rejection of the unions and fairly successful organisation outside them'. I'd like to take you up on that.

Yes, my widest experience with unions is in the U.S. I have also worked a little in factories in England. But do you really think that the unions here are different from unions all over the world? Do you think British capitalism is 'different' or 'better' than elsewhere, or workers in Britain not militant enough for the state to need the unions against them? Do you think that when the unions here support Harold Wilson they are not supporting Nixon and capitalism? A good deal of industry in Britain is owned by American capital. The Labour and Tory governments' function is precisely to defend capital, their own and Nixon's, against the working class here. And when you say that in Italy there has been 'fairly successful organisation outside' the unions, where do you think that came from? It came from workers and the extra-parliamentary left together working out clearly and precisely what the role of unions is (at least as far as men are concerned!) and organising autonomously. The result of the struggle in Italy and the U.S. against the unions is that the unions' demands in those two countries make Vic Feather, Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon look like 19th century reformers. The more we organise autonomously, the more we'll be able to use the unions, instead of as now trying to tie women up into male-dominated adjuncts of the capitalist state. The miners didn't have to challenge the NUM leadership in words. They used the union structure when it suited them and ignored it when it didn't. That's autonomy. It made the state tremble and put the NUM in a crisis it hasn't got out of yet. It's scared of the miners. There is no 'British road to communism'. Capital is international and though its negotiators differ in language and style, they are international too. Unions in Nigeria and Israel are not qualitatively different from unions in the U.S. and Mexico, Italy and England, France and South Africa.

The purpose of the programme is not 'transitional' - transitional to what? - or a 'prefiguration of future society'. No. Notting Hill made that clear in their preface. 'They are not a plan for an ideal society, and a society based on them would not cease to be oppressive. Ultimately the only demand which is not co-optable is the armed population demanding the end of capitalism'. The purpose of these demands is to have a basis for organising an autonomous struggle of women, autonomous of men's domination (though not necessarily of men - see below), autonomous of unions, autonomous, that is, of capital and all its negotiators. They arise from where we are, and we are everywhere in the society, at different stages of struggle, facing different obstacles and different modes of exploitation, all based on the fact that we are born with a uterus. When the Unsupported Mothers call for a wage for all regardless of sex, age or marital status, they are implementing these demands, bringing men in under the leadership of women, teaching them a new way to struggle, to struggle not only for better conditions in which to be exploited but against exploitation, against work. And who has worked more for capital than women!

In this space it would be pointless to try to articulate each demand, and also in a sense impossible. Only a movement in action can do that, once it has set its sights against any co-option of our struggle from the

right or from the left. We'll make mistakes and have failures, but we are attempting to do what has never been done, to organise and connect the struggles in every area of exploitation, under the leadership of those who are exploited. We women must break the power over us of the meagre wage men receive. As I tried to say, for every demand we need time and we need money, the two things that capital robs us of. I can't see, Liz, how this relates to the previous four demands which were a call, in my view, for a more efficient Welfare State.

We in the women's movement must ensure that our heads are clear about what capital is. Men have not understood it up to now, because they didn't know we were exploited and they didn't know that in the home, they were the instruments capital used to exploit us. So we have a lot to tell them. But more important, unless we work out what capital is as we know it, we will never understand or be able to assist the persistent day-to-day revolution which women (you know who women are - those backward, flighty, non-political appendages to men) are waging daily.

There are a lot of things the pamphlet doesn't say. It's a pamphlet, not a book, first of all, and secondly there is so much I don't know and that we all can only learn from the struggle. If you want to know more about the general political view from which the pamphlet emanates, however, there is one book. It's called THE POWER OF WOMEN AND THE SUBVERSION OF THE COMMUNITY by Mariarosa Dalla Costa and myself, and is published by Falling Wall Press and a group of women who love women, the women's movement and therefore themselves, and who hate the ruling class. It's available from me for 25p.

You are in a male-dominated group, and I feel very much that this is a failure of the women's movement. We have not offered you enough as yet. We hope to change that soon. My hope is that the ideas in the pamphlet, when put into practice, will hasten that change.

Much love and much power,

Selma.

P.S. I don't like all the quoting that goes on and the general tone of debate on the left in which I also for many years engaged. But I'd like to quote one thing which will clear up a misunderstanding. You speak, Anna, of 'Lenin's pre-1902 demand for the arousal of "trade union consciousness".' The left certainly gives this as Lenin's view. It was never his view. Listen to this: 'The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness...' '...the spontaneous labour movement is pure and simple trade unionism ... and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers to the bourgeoisie. Hence our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the labour movement from its spontaneous, trade unionist striving to go under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy'. This is from WHAT IS TO BE DONE (Lenin's emphasis). In 1902 Lenin obviously didn't yet understand the working class, but, oh god, how he understood the unions!

RED RAG

price 10p

A MAGAZINE OF WOMENS LIBERATION No.2



INSIDE

A Discussion on Selma James' Pamphlet
WOMEN, The Unions and Work

EDITORIAL

RED RAG is a Marxist journal of Women's Liberation, a journal that challenges whatever and whoever demeans women, and stands in the way of their struggle.

We are committed to the destruction of capitalism, and the struggle of the working class for liberation from a dehumanizing and divisive society. Integral to this struggle is Women's Liberation, which is articulating the suppressed bitterness and desperation of women—the hitherto silent majority.

Up to now the movement has been less concerned with women's relationship to work and the trade unions, than with consciousness-raising—women collectively discovering the extent and ramifications of their oppression. This determination to calculate the price we pay for being women in capitalist society is vital if we are to evolve an alternative to our problems being dismissed as private when they are the political symptoms of oppression.

However, like something of a bombshell, Selma James' pamphlet 'Women, the Unions and Work' has provoked a great debate in the movement around how women working inside and outside the home, paid and unpaid, relate to work and the trade unions.

Whatever is thought of her observations, demands and conclusions, the pamphlet has clearly signalled a new phase in the women's movement, and this is why we are reproducing a summary by Selma of the pamphlet, together with several articles responding to it.

Working class history has certainly been stained by the betrayals of leaders corrupted by racist, sexist, bourgeois ideology, although the collective potency of workers bound together in the Labour movement has at least inched forward and upward the material conditions of the working class against the crudest exigencies of the employers.

What is important is not to reject the

unions, but to inject into them persistent and comprehensive demands for change, so that they begin to mean something to women, and to move their weight against sexism, instead of reinforcing it.

It must be stressed that the trade union movement can only partially improve our situation, for there are many dimensions to our oppression. Organising women in unions cannot solve the problems of women at home.

To argue for the involvement of women in unions is not to minimise the need for other forms of struggle. One of Women's Liberation's most poignant achievements has been to reach out to the unpaid and the unorganised—and our activity on that front must surely be galvanised, and must penetrate deeper into the unplumbed wells of women's society.

However, the women's movement is not only vital to those unrepresented by other movements, because the women's movement is indispensable if women's demands are to be articulated.

Without the women's movement militant women are isolated, often at odds with their sisters, and women's demands, if asserted at all in the unions, get drowned in a sea of male incomprehension and indifference.

The movement has a responsibility to thrust its demands, its programmes, into all spheres and institutions.

Women trade unionists can only begin to be effective if their ideas and their demands are invested with the experience and insight of the women's movement, and if their campaigning is bolstered by feedback and support.

Women's Liberation could be the best thing that ever happened to the trade unions.

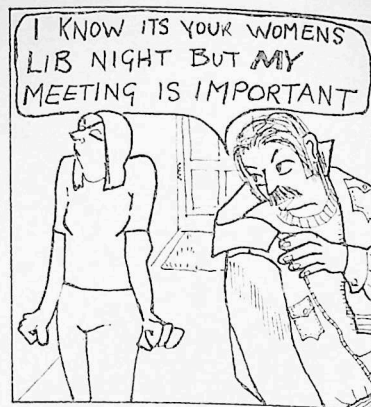
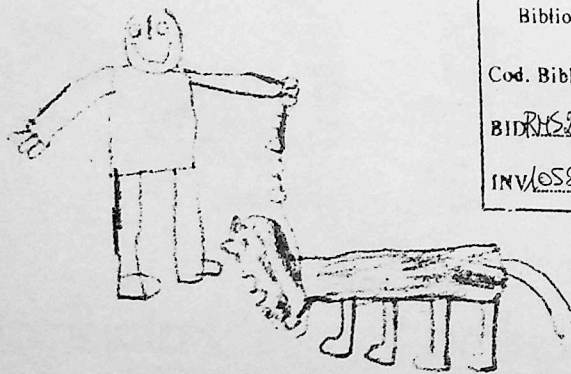
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Contents

Cassandra Southwick	3
A SUMMARY of Selma James pamphlet Women, the Unions and Work	
Sheila Rowbotham	4
The Carrot, the Stick and the Movement	
Sue Cowley	6
Eclectic but not Dialectic	
Ros Delmar	8
Oppressed Politics	
Micheline Victor	12
Fuzzy Feminism	
Caroli Mullen	14
What is Definitely Not to be Done	
Molly Dunthorne	19
He Earns the Money, She Spends it Wisely	
Monica Sjoo	20
Women, the Claimants Unions and the Cohabitation Ruling	
Robin Jardine	22
A Century of Liberation	
Letters	23

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by Ethel Gabain (Imperial War Museum)

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(With special thanks to Margaret and to Pete)

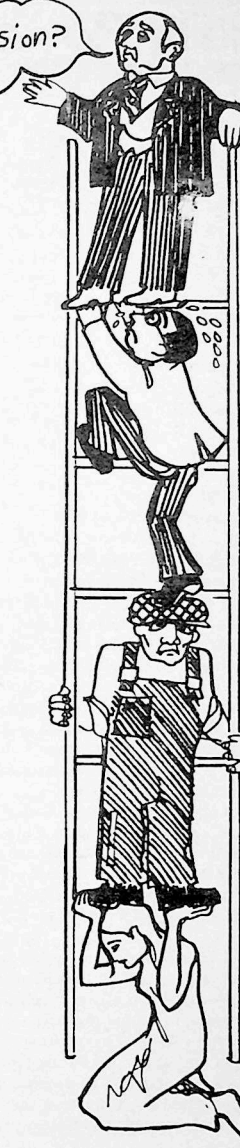
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Cassandra Southwick

A Summary of Selma James' Pamphlet WOMEN, The Unions and Work

whats all this talk about oppression?



'WOMEN, the Unions and Work' begins by facing the twin dangers of co-optation of the women's movement. The first and most easily recognized is the capitalist machine itself, which has expressed its willingness to incorporate women, not only as tokens, but also as 'grateful outsiders' who will bring new energies and a greater rationalization of production and discipline to the system. The system, in other words, wishes to use women to make capitalism work better.

The other danger the pamphlet defines is more insidious for the very reason that it comes from those who pretend to speak for the interests of all women as they pretend to speak for the interest of all workers: namely, the white male-dominated organisations of the Left. These organizations see working-class women, especially working-class housewives, as backward. They believe that women can only liberate themselves by going out of the home to work for wages. Once there, they will have their 'trade union consciousness' raised. Then they will be able to help men in the 'general' struggle instead of hindering them.

Such a conception, the pamphlet shows, can be entertained only by massive self-deception. First of all, the Left glosses over the record that the unions have in regard to women: that they have helped to maintain unequal rates of pay for men and women; that they have undercut struggles of women against discrimination by bosses and by men workers; that they have not tried to organize the most exploited women in small shops; that they have ignored the labor (as well as the struggles) of the houseworker.

The Left misrepresents the natural and logical reaction that women have to this record. The pamphlet elaborates on these points and its centrefold, a reproduction of a union form, illustrates the real concerns of trade unions.

Second, the Left ignores the nature of women's work. Not only are women clustered in the lowest, most tedious and oppressive jobs in factories and offices, and segregated in small sweat-shops, but factory or office jobs do not relieve them of their non-waged job in the home. Most working women endure a double slavery. The Left organizations define this condition as the 'road to liberation.'

Third, they fail to see what every woman knows by bitter experience that even though she works only in her home, isolated in the most menial, repetitive chores, she is an integral part of the whole productive apparatus. She services the worker and produces the worker of the future; she stretches the worker's wage to cover the family needs and sees most clearly the wage rise, for which all suffered, swallowed in the inflated prices which follow the strike; she sees the decrease of social services and the destruction of human relations in separation of the old from the family, in hostility in the young, in alienation between the sexes that capitalism brings.

In short she has a view of the total problem which Left organizations lack. Their narrow focus on the factory and on trade unionism is substantiated in the pamphlet.

Against this position and in defence of women and of the autonomy of the women's movement, the pamphlet asks us to look at the real conditions of women, their work, and the kind of struggles that they have waged against capital in an arena where the factory is a part but not the whole. To quote from the conclusion:

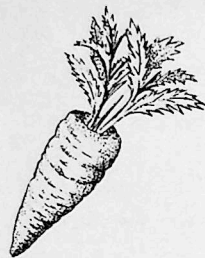
We must not allow what we know is the female experience to be translated into the secondhand politics of 'trade union consciousness', which has been presented to us as the only viable alternative. Goodbye to all that. When 20 per cent of the women of a mainly women's factory don't turn up for work on Monday, they are light years beyond the trade union struggle, in fact its mortal enemy. They are struggling not only for better conditions in which to be exploited but against exploitation, against work itself. We in the women's movement should be the last people to believe or act upon the absurd notion that women are incapable of leaping beyond the oppressive institutions which trapped men. Because we have been ignored and excluded by these institutions it is precisely us who are in the position to move beyond them.

To strengthen and focus this self-activity of women, the pamphlet proposes six demands for the Women's Liberation movement to act on. They are:

1. WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO WORK LESS. (For starts, a twenty-hour week.)
2. WE DEMAND A GUARANTEED INCOME FOR WOMEN AND FOR MEN, WORKING OR NOT WORKING, MARRIED OR NOT. WE DEMAND WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK.
3. WE DEMAND CONTROL OF OUR BODIES. WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN.
4. WE DEMAND EQUAL PAY FOR ALL.
5. WE DEMAND AN END TO PRICE RISES.
6. WE DEMAND FREE COMMUNITY CONTROLLED NURSERIES AND CHILD CARE.



Sheila Rowbotham



The Carrot, The Stick and The Movement



THIS is not a detailed review of all the points in Selma James' pamphlet 'Women the Unions and Work'. Instead I want to take up some of the more general questions she raises.

CO-OPTION

Selma is pre-occupied with several forms of co-option, unions are presented as continually nobbling workers and capitalists co-opt both workers and Women's Liberation, while left groups lie in wait for women's liberators.

I'm not going to deal with the last kind of nobbling as I think it's better discussed out loud with very specific examples. Vague accusations only create an atmosphere of political paranoia and a reds-under-the-bed mentality which I am sure is very far from what Selma intends and only benefits the ruling class.

As for the co-option of unions, the working class and possibly of Women's Liberation too, it would be absurd to deny that these have not gone on and are not going on, or might not go on. The point is, how can we most effectively stop this process?

Selma keeps coming up with a series of scapegoats to explain failures and partial successes. This is all very well if we want to work off some rhetorical rage. But it doesn't help us to see how capitalism works and understand how to change it. The scapegoats serve as decoys. As long as we chase them we miss the social reality which brought them into being.

UNIONS

She says the unions fragment the working class, 'into those who have wages and those who don't'. In fact such a division was created by capitalism. The factory system finally removed production from the home and brought the working class under the wage system. The growth of modern unions has come from this concentration of the labour force in the factory.

The work discipline of the factory which kept the machines running regularly was, and still is, bitterly resented by workers. It takes hours, days, years out of their lives. The employer takes a large part of what workers produce in the form of profits.

In resistance to the exploitation of their labour in this way workers have combined to raise the sum they can get out of the surplus they produce. Capitalism has thus made it possible for workers to create

organisations to defend themselves on a scale that was impossible before.

Now although this kind of organising is limited to the wage bargain, it still constitutes a threat to the absolute control the employing class has over what the workers produce and the time they spend at work. It also makes possible the class pride and confidence workers gain through solidarity in strike action. The union organisation is necessary in order to prevent isolation of particular groups of workers.

Ever since the unions have been made legal the employers have tried alternatively to use the carrot and the stick. The carrot has been the co-option Selma notes. The stick has been the use of the state and the laws in the interests of private capital. The only effective weapon against this has been the continual creation of rank and file pressure and organisation. The shop steward movement is the obvious example; the movement for workers' control, another.

But this does not make the union structure unnecessary. If we only say women should organise where they work how do women on strike get support from other workers? How do they get strike pay?

If we are really serious about challenging male domination in the unions we should start by organising Women's Liberation groups at work and in union branches. Not as alternatives to unions but as a way of making industrial organisation both more effective against capitalism and more democratic, to go beyond the economic basis of the wage bargain. Women's Liberation groups are places where women can develop trust for each other as women. But working class women



EMMA GOLDMAN

need class solidarity with men too.

WHERE WE COME FROM

Both feminism and the Women's Liberation movement have come, like the unions, out of particular historical situations in capitalist society. The early feminist movement's origin was the economic, social and political helplessness of middle class women who were excluded from production.

The main theme of this kind of feminism was for equal rights of jobs, before the law and for the vote. But Selma does them a disservice by saying they invited women to vote and be free. Many socialist feminists in the early 20th Century saw the vote as a necessary reform but by no means the answer to the oppression of women.

It is very important that we try to understand what kind of changes in capitalism have produced our own movement. Selma picks out one important factor, the potential use of educated female labour in middle management at lower rates of pay than men. She sees this as a way in which the women's movement could be co-opted. But the way she presents this very real danger is confusing in the same way as is her analysis of the role of the unions in capitalism.

It was not the women's movement which produced the girls coming out of university as she implies. Higher education for women is a result of the need for a more educated labour force and of feminist agitation. It is of course still restricted mainly to middle class girls and is also not equal to men. Nonetheless the concentration of girls in universities which resulted from post war expansion, meant that middle class girls were shuffled into one of the most developed points of capitalism only to confront more clearly the underprivilege of their sexual future.

We came up with a terrible bump against the block between educational promise and practical reality.

REPRODUCTION OF THE LABOUR FORCE

We were not the only ones to be affected by changes in modern capitalism. The growth of welfare and the direct intervention of the state in the reproduction of the labour force has not only come about as a result of working class pressure. It also serves the long-term needs of capitalism for a relatively healthy and intelligent, if subservient, labour force.



Fortunately this combination has proved dodgy again for capitalism and has created new ways of bargaining with the state, like the Claimants Union.

It has also made the nature of our upbringing in the family, our education, our sexual relations, our feelings towards our parents and children, and the work women do in the family in reproducing the labour force, vital political questions. It is very important that we organise against capitalism at all the points where it reproduces itself.

AND ORGANISATION AT THE POINT OF PRODUCTION

However this does not mean that we throw the baby out with the bath water (to use a bad image). We should not dismiss effective organisation at the point of production.

Selma's analysis disregards the significance of what has been an interrupted, but long-term trend in this century, the absorption of married women into the labour force. Capitalism has landed itself in the awkward position of depending on women's work in two places at once, at home and in industry.

It has tried of course to have it both ways, and force women to do two jobs. This process pre-dated the emergence of women's liberation. It was not a result of it as the Italian article Selma quotes implies.

'Capital itself is seizing upon the same impetus which created a movement—the rejection by millions of women of women's traditional place—to recompose the workforce with increasing numbers of women.'

In fact, this recomposition was well under way in the U.S. and in parts of Europe in the 50s when the propaganda about women being in the home was strongest and when Women's Liberation was being thought about only by tiny groups of women, among them, Selma in America and Simone de Beauvoir in France.

I am not saying that movements are the automatic response to crude economic facts or that consciousness does not change society, but that in reacting against this

distortion in marxism, Selma lands us in another one.

Because she does not see movements and ideas as coming out of social reality as well as transforming it, she misses the contradictory forces which bring us to conscious resistance. This has a serious strategic consequence because it means she emphasises organisation at home, around the reproduction of the labour force at the expense of organisation at the point of production.

Simply because some boneheaded marxist men have been dozy enough to stress only economic organising doesn't mean that we have to rush off in the opposite direction.

The importance of Women's Liberation is precisely that it makes it possible to cut through the separation between home and work, production and consumption, wage earner and dependant, man and woman, which has always helped to make capitalism stable. That is why working class women are such an important group—their class and sex situation makes the connection necessary.

It's no good making a demand like paying people to do housework. This does not socialise housework. It merely confirms the isolation of the houseworker, in her, or less likely in his, nuclear home. It does not connect those who are responsible for the reproduction of the work force to wage workers in commodity production.

UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Implicit in Selma's pamphlet is an analogy between women and the underdeveloped economies. The Italian article she quotes touches on this and the danger of struggling against women's specific oppression only to reach 'another degree of capitalistic control and regimentation'. This is a very real danger and I think it's a pity she hasn't tried really to disentangle what this underdevelopment of ours involves and how this relates to the dominant form of production in capitalism and to the dominance of men in our culture.

This confusion means she falls into the opposite trap. Instead of simply getting

capitalism to rationalise itself, she tends to idealise the symptoms of our weakness in capitalism. Absenteeism may be a gesture of revolt, but I don't see how we can stop the Tories cheating us out of equal pay if we never turn up for work.

We must be careful in asserting an alternative to male domination that we stress our possible strengths not our existing vulnerability.

Many of Selma's demands are based on the desire most of us feel to find a short cut out of capitalism. Of course we are opposed to price rises but it is a problem when we try to take long-term effective action against them. Of course we would like to work less. But this demand would get many employers laughing up their sleeve at the moment.

This is why the men and women who are demanding the right to work have a more realistic idea of making a demand which can be organised round in a decaying capitalist economy. To say we want to work less confuses the present situation with a future socialist society and misses out the struggle in between.

There is no short cut out of capitalism, no amount of wishing and willing and demanding in the air will make the grotesque old monster pack his bags and go quietly off to some remote desert island for a quiet retirement.

PATRIARCHY

The disentangling of the non- or sub-capitalist elements in our predicament is one of the most crucial theoretical and practical tasks ahead of us. The danger of exposing women more completely to capitalism mentioned in the Italian article quoted by Selma is very real.

Capital itself has whittled away at patriarchal authority, which is based on the ownership of women's persons by men and rooted in the family as an economic unit of production.

Patriarchy, however, has survived though in a distorted form into capitalism. Like other 'backward' i.e. non-capitalist forms of ownership and production it owes its survival to the manner in which it serves capital. Capitalism is thus continually eating away at the sub-capitalist remnants which feed it.

It is not clear whether capitalism could continue without patriarchy and the special oppression of women. It is certainly very difficult to imagine capitalism without male domination. But it would be rash of us to imagine that the struggle against male domination alone is sufficient to end capitalism. Our success will depend on the strength of other movements, against imperialism, racism and class exploitation and our ability to unite with them.

Our task is to make a strategy which will guard our autonomy but to make alliances with other movements of the oppressed, which will devise means of continuously breaking down the divisions capitalism has forced between us, and which neither idealises underdevelopment or exposes us to more systematic exploitation. The difficulties are tremendous. But it is our only chance of victory.



Sue Cowley

Eclectic but not Dialectic

I'M putting down here some reactions, problems and questions about Selma James pamphlet 'Women, The Unions and Work'. I've been in a number of discussions on the paper and they've usually been favourable but concerned about specific aspects such as the payment for housework demand. Some women have been antagonistic but not able to explain why or if they have it has been from a rather male defined position.

My reactions may represent questions and confusions as well as misgivings other women feel about Selma's piece. Please other women write what they feel about their opinions.

Selma states her position on trade unions early on and it is one of the dominating themes of the whole piece. She uses the miners' strike as an example of what she is against and for in organizing against capital. The miners' strike she says was an example of 'autonomous class action' and the leadership of the miners' union is an example of the sell-out 'official' management of labour by labour for capital.

It seems clear that the miners fought and won the strike because of their 'rank and file' militancy and refusal to play down their struggle but it also seems clear that their strike was a union activity. The

strike represented the more militant actuality and mood of the workers but it was a union strike—a withdrawal of labour power—and was done, however rebelliously, thru the organization of the miners, their union.

Because the strike was supported by the men and reflected their real conditions, their fed up emotions, it drew to it and was part of the community life around it. The mining community women organized around the strike. I'm not suggesting they're not strong, independent women but they were activated by the strike.

Selma James does have good ideas and insights about women's real relationship to production—both in terms of their vital and intimate connections with its maintenance and in the validity of day to day life outside of production. But her answers still leave me confused. The problems, prejudices and limitations women face in unions, if they get in them, if the union even wants them, are as much reflections of the whole ideology of capitalist society as of the particularity of the unions.

Sure trade unions are often corrupt and do regulate labour for capital but they have been used to win and maintain very important and necessary gains for labour against the bosses and maybe they could become a lot more aware and militant in that sphere than they are now. But in an overall view of a future/now political movement of the working class, S.J. places the T.U.'s too high on the ladder in order to knock them too far down into the gutter.

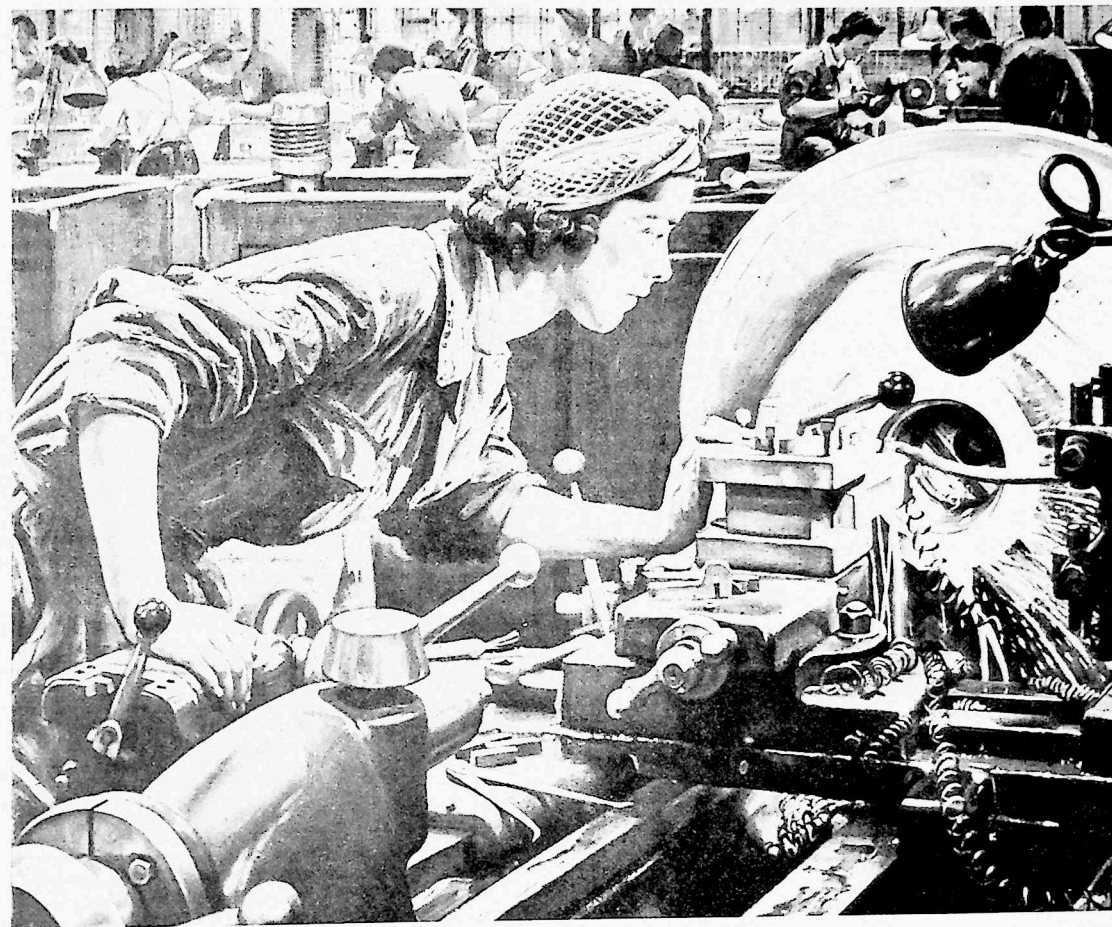
I'd like to suggest that it's not so much that trade unions prevent organization outside of production but as much the lack of a political movement in the working class that prevents the politicization of trade union members. The trade union fight can be taken to its limits only with the development of a revolutionary movement which is leading to an overthrow of the structure which brought forth trade unions. This lack also prevents the development of political activity which could begin to unite all the strands of movement against oppression into a concerted fight against capital.

Unions are limited to struggles in production. The political movement of the people to get rid of capitalism must be part of us—women, in and out of production, in and out of unions. Trade unionists must also become political with us and we must figure out and be clear about how we relate to the struggles in production.

I suppose my biggest criticism of the piece is the very nature of its reasoning. My feeling is that S.J. is eclectic in her presentation of the contradictions in T.U.'s and of the possibilities of ways forward. I'd tentatively say that she's not



SHIP BUILDING ON THE CLYDE by Stanley Spencer 1940 (Imperial War Museum)



Painting—RUBY LOFTUS SCREWING A BREECH RING by Dame Laura Knight (Imperial War Museum)

at all dialectical about the way she presents trade unions. From the way the pamphlet reads, you'd think the capitalists sat down and decided to start the struggle for trade unions so in the end they could control them. But to get them took decades of struggle and death on the part of the working class. Because trade unions are only part of an overall political movement which can act against capital but is located at production, some left groups do get hung up in work with or around T.U.'s—economism etc.

We reject this and any political movement must reject it if it is to work out revolutionary politics which take into account all the different spheres of life.

The legitimacy, importance and force of activities in the community does not deny production. It does recognize the necessity of dealing in depth with our day to day life particularly at this point in the development of capitalism when ideology has blunted and obscured certain relations and also perverted the perception of exploitation on our doorsteps and which we ourselves are so determined to end—sex, race, class. We women will attack sexism where we have always experienced it—in all areas of our lives.

The brief excerpts from the Italian

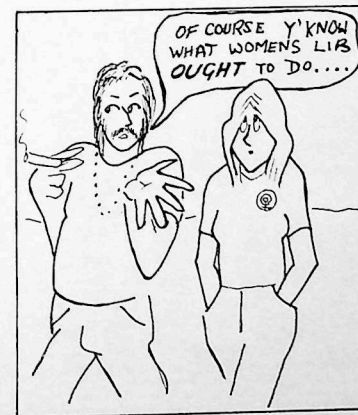
paper are interesting but do not convince me. How necessary is the family to capitalism? It has been vital but is it necessary? Also are exploitation and work synonymous? The puritan work ethic has to be recognized and dealt with in any left wing approach to life of now and the future. But is Selma really saying that work equals capitalism? Or is she posing new definitions of work? It's also clear that we have to explore what the development of technology—automation—really does to people's relation to work.

The demands themselves are often confusing because it isn't clear when they're meant for or how to achieve them or in a general sense what sort of women's movement they are directed at. I know what the introduction says about them but that's not enough.

Specifically I need more explanation on numbers 1, 2, and 5. What do they really mean in terms of the situation we live in now? How should we—the W.L. movement—understand the demands? They are not all equal. Some would mean very different things to different women. How we made them a perspective could be completely different. Does that matter? All the economic points Selma brings up for me need much more clarification. What is the

relationship between wages and inflation? What are price rises, including tax, rent, food and clothing connected to?

I hope argument and discussion will help clarify some of these things for me. I agree that we've got to start moving, acting and working with women in this country now.



OPPRESSED POLITICS

SELMA JAMES' paper reaches out to us as an authentic and desperate search for a way of understanding our movement, of bringing strands together, of looking for the traps we might unwittingly have fallen, or be falling into. It is a call for action, and a cry of warning.

Full of intuitions of danger, and of the fear that we might wake up one day finding ourselves demoralised and broken, having been the political expression of women's desire for release from the oppressed and subordinated, intolerable lives that we live, but having pursued the desire for freedom down dark alleyways which have left us as oppressed as ever.

What comes over is the sense of urgency—the potential of our movement is being squandered—an anguished look at our politics, expressed with an energy which drives through all the confusions, contradictions, all those, in my view, profound errors, with which her paper is riddled.

What I am trying to do here is to present some alternative framework for the analysis of the womens movement, an alternative perspective on the problem of the relation of our movement to that of the working class. This means trying to go through some of the problems of the relationship of capitalism to sexism. For although there are points on which I am in agreement with Selma, I am in fundamental disagreement with her conclusions and with many of her theoretical positions.

The main consideration which prompts me to write a reply to Women and the Unions is a political one. I looked at it from

this point of view: if we won our four existing demands, I could envisage that we might find ourselves in struggle around the application in practice of those demands, but not against the principles they embody:

Thoroughly Misconceived

That women should have control over their own reproductive powers and that discrimination against women in all spheres, schools, factories and so on, should be eliminated. But the demand for wages for housework should be institutionalised as a category of paid wage labour and that in this way the housewife should be treated in the same way as any other wage labourer.

This demand seems to me to be thoroughly misconceived, and I will try to show why later on. In the long and the short term we would certainly be squandering our energy if we fought for demands which, if ever we won them we would then find ourselves struggling against.

Then the way in which the demands are discussed, in terms of whether or not they are ultimately 'co-optable' by the government, is profoundly depressing. The first consideration must always be the relation of demands to the needs of women and to the struggle of women against sexism.

Of course there is a real need of women to which this demand does correspond—the need for just a little more time, just a little more money, particularly in a situation of rising unemployment, rising prices, wages being forcibly kept down and so on. But it does not follow at all that housewives wages is the solution we should put forward.

Ros Delmar

Understanding the Movement

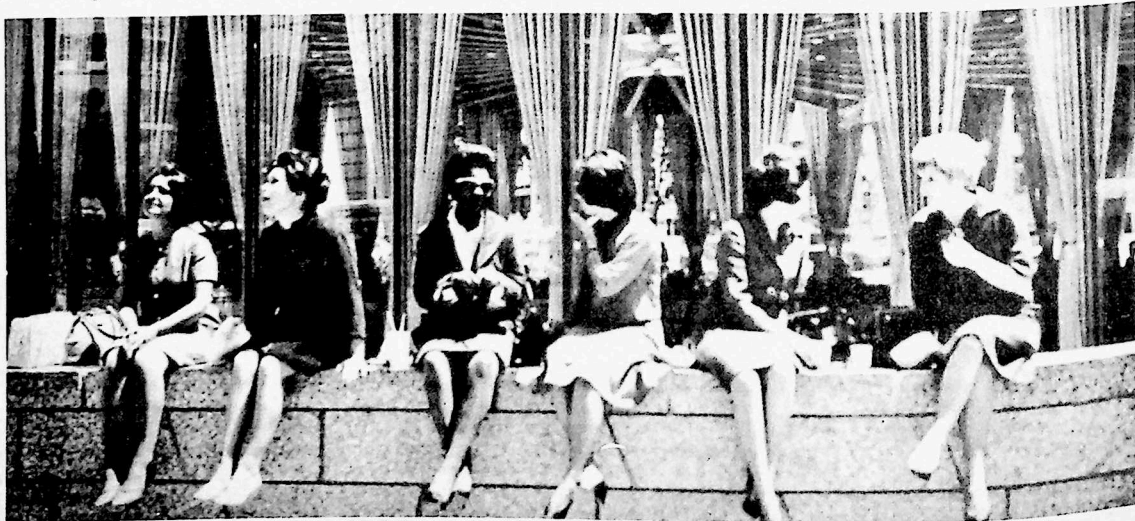
It seems clear to me that as a movement we are extremely weak in certain respects. We haven't yet solved the problem of how to create an information service, although that is the need we have felt from the beginning. It is not so much that we don't know what groups are doing—in our own city, in other towns and cities—even more important we have not yet worked out ways to communicate how we evaluate our experiences, what kinds of criteria we use in reflecting on and learning from our work.

We have no journal in which the ideas which we are developing can be expressed and debated, and have tended to turn for that to American journals. So that in a very real sense we are ignorant of our own movement.

The movement's energies are not being 'squandered'. To put it like that implies a direction, a controlling group. The situation is much more that the movement has a spontaneous dynamic, is in a sense out of our own control in that we have not yet learned how to understand the movement.

How do we respond to this situation? One way is to try to impose a centralised direction. This solution became the politics of the Womens National Co-ordinating Committee, which we abolished last year at Skegness. Competing groups within the WNCC saw in it a potentially centralising body and tried to gain control over it and the movement.

The WNCC was abolished because it had simply failed to keep in touch with the politics of the developing movement, and



OFFICE GIRLS EATING LUNCH NEAR CROWN—ZELLERBACH BUILDING



Painting—THE DINNER HOUR, WIGAN by Eyre Crowe 1874 (City of Manchester Art Galleries)

prepared a conference the terms of which the majority at the conference rejected. These groups confused the politics of womens liberation with the politics of a committee. It was perhaps no coincidence that the contending groups were both the womens sections of male dominated left organisations.

Demands

Another way is to struggle for the acceptance of specific demands as a unificatory element of the movement. Thus, much of the debate around Selma's paper has centred around the demands spelt out at the end of her document, and specifically around that for the payment to housewives for their domestic work.

As a women's movement we have adopted three historic demands developed within socialist women's movements: equal pay, equal education and job opportunity, and 24 hour day nurseries. To these we have added one new demand: free abortion and contraception.

One thing about demands is that they certainly do give a kind of direction to the movement which power struggles in committees do not. The campaign for free abortion and contraception on demand, for example, has united on a practical level women with very different theories of women's oppression and women's liberation.

But one of the mistakes which can be made is that of summing up the objectives

of the movement as the gaining of particular demands, ie, to present the women's liberation movement as four campaigns, and to talk as if a society with free abortion and contraception on demand, equal education and job opportunity and 24 hour day nurseries would be a society within which women would be liberated rather than a society within which the *minimum pre-conditions* of our liberation from our present oppression would exist.

Another problem of demands is that part of their significance derives from the politics within which they are articulated. Thus, the demand for free abortion and contraception has one significance as a part of a strategy for liberating women; it has a totally different significance when it is the objective of a pressure group like the Family Planning Association, and we should be quite clear what that difference is.

Eugenics movements for population control will support the same demand as us, but their objective is totally different in that what we demand is the right of women to control their own reproductive capacities, and our objective should be to wrest the control of women's reproductive capacities from men and the state.

We must be clear that our development as a movement depends much more on the development of an understanding of the structures which oppress us as women and the strategy which we work out in order to overthrow this oppression. It depends much

more on our ability to communicate to the mass of women on the basis of our specific critique of sexist and capitalist society, on building eventually a mass movement to overthrow sexism rather than the gaining of a specific demand.

Capitalism but not Sexism

It is striking that Selma James constantly talks about capitalism and never about sexism. However, she represents capitalism as if it were a self-determining and self-controlling institution. An example—'the government, acting in the interests of the capitalist class in general, has created unemployment in the hope that, instead of fighting for more pay and less work, it will be glad for the crumbs etc.' This is in fact a psychological image of the government.

The point is that the government, however powerful it may be in capitalist Britain can no more control unemployment than it can control the sun and the moon. The impression which it tries to give us is that it can, and reassuring noises have been broadcast to this effect in all the mass media for the past five years.

Theorists, notably John Maynard Keynes in Britain, have been dedicated to the attempt to find methods of controlling employment and thus the labour market, but there is no reason at all to believe that they have yet discovered the secret.

Marx devoted his intellectual life to the discovery of the mechanisms of the capital-

ist economic system (mode of production) one of whose characteristics is that it is precisely anarchic (the anarchy of competition), and operates independently of the will of the capitalist.

It is only through the process of the transition through socialism to communism that a dominant class (ie, the proletariat) learns how to control the laws of economy so that man governs the economy and not the other way round. Although the capitalist class is a powerful and dangerous enemy to all who struggle for liberation from all forms of oppression we must not ascribe to it magical qualities—that would be to believe its myth about itself.

In the present situation we can see that what is happening is out of the government's control—civil war in Ireland (or are we to believe that it created that in order to have somewhere to send the unemployed?), endless strikes, rising prices to the extent that even the Confederation of British Industry is asking the government to put an end to it, a return of female militancy, revolutionary groups even appearing in schools. From the government's point of view the situation must appear sometimes to be frighteningly out of control, rather than well in hand. We have no reason at all to believe that they knew it all along.

Liberal Centre

A similar confusion is revealed in these sentences: 'This use of rebellion, to co-opt the most articulate minority for the purpose of developing capital . . . is not new and not confined to women. It is the over-riding principle of capitalist development.'

It is difficult to see the point of writing such nonsense in the name of Marxism. The whole point about Marx was that he precise-

ly demonstrated the way in which the over-riding principle of capitalism is the extraction of surplus value, not the use of rebellion to co-opt articulate minorities, (whatever those articulate minorities might think).

Sentences like these do not stand up to political analysis. When examined they reveal a curiously liberal centre. Who after all are being described as the 'most articulate minority'? Women graduates. Doesn't this suggest the equation between 'most articulate' and 'most highly educated' which is so popular among the state functionaries who run this educational system? Surely from our point of view the 'most articulate minority' are those women who express what the real condition of women is—and these will not necessarily be university graduates.

The women's liberation movement (and it is important to take this very seriously) represents 'the most articulate minority'. We must not accept the definitions given to us by this society that you need a degree in English before you can be considered articulate. This same curious liberalism can be found in the description of the indigenous ruling groups in ex-British colonies as 'grateful outsiders'. What, after all, are they grateful for? The chance to be cut in on the proceeds of the exploitation of their own people and their own country. They are only 'grateful outsiders' to the extent that all quislings are. And when these peoples rise up against imperialism and its agents they will be swept away without a twinge of sympathy.

Co-option

Of course, the fear that lies behind all this is the fear that we, the women's

liberation movement, will be co-opted, and turned into an annexe of the capitalism system. And that this could be done through bribery.

But this fear of co-option seems to be a somewhat mysterious one. The idea is, indeed, clear enough—that capitalism will absorb the movement into itself and in this way kill it. But is this an adequate description of the process by which a movement can become a secondary aspect of bourgeois politics?

The Suffragettes

Within our own history—the history of English feminism—we have the example of the suffragettes, who although demonstrating great militancy and courage, in the end seem to have been an attempt to gain women entry into bourgeois politics.

How can we explain this?

The beginnings of some sort of answer can be found by looking at the main organising body of the suffragettes, the WPSU (Women's Political and Social Union). One outstanding feature of the WPSU was that it was totally undemocratic, to the point of mimicking a military organisation (the organisers were called 'the General Staff', the main organiser was nick-named 'The General' and so on.

This small and powerful group of women which dominated the suffragette movement were absolutely determined to restrict the significance of the movement to the gaining of the demand for the vote. Their power came from the popularity of the demand, which, as militancy developed and the government became increasingly recalcitrant and repressive, gained the resonance of a symbol of female emancipation.

The decision was also made, early in the

history of the WPSU to link the fortunes of the women's movement to the governmental struggle between the Liberal and Conservative Parties: ie, there was a determination within the women's movement, more, in the leadership of the movement, to link the women's movement to parliamentary manoeuvres.

This was itself accompanied by a parliamentary understanding of the significance of the demand. As a demand the right of women to political citizenship on the same terms as men is unexceptionable. As one demand in an articulated strategy for freeing women from their oppression it would certainly have its place. However, the strategic decision of the leadership of the movement was to limit its objectives to the gaining of that demand, and this signified the adoption and absorption of bourgeois politics by the movement.

That Christabel Pankhurst appeared on recruiting platforms for the government during the 1914-18 war is as unsurprising as the fact that before then those women, including notably Sylvia Pankhurst, who wanted to link the fortunes of the women's movement to that of other oppressed and exploited groups were forced out of the WPSU.

If we examine and analyse our own history we will find plenty of reminders that the question of which kind of politics was to dominate the women's movement was as much under discussion then as it is now. And that there is much more to the failure of the suffragettes, (as indeed there would be to our own) than 'co-option' by a fiendishly clever capitalist class.

It should also be added that the demand was never 'co-opted'. The ruling class resisted female suffrage as long as it could, and the battle was only won after a hard and courageous struggle by thousands of women, many of whom went through the torture of forcible feeding in prisons to win the vote for women.

Of course, there is always the possibility, reading through Selma's paper, that co-opted stands for successful. From that point of view it could be argued that female suffrage was 'co-opted' because it became law.

But this obliterates the reality of the struggle which was waged, and of the message of that movement, which is that you only get what you want by struggle, and that as long as you content yourself with simply asking politely you are ignored. Of course capitalism proved itself equal to the task of accommodating the female vote, just as it accommodated to the working class vote.

Goodies and Baddies

To understand that we need a political analysis of the theoretical and political weaknesses and failures of the movement. Otherwise we are left with the hardly satisfactory schema of the eternal goodie fighting the eternal baddy who, mysteriously, always somehow wins.

Perhaps the most enlightening confusion about what the term 'demand' is stretched to mean lies here: 'Ultimately the only demand which is not co-optable is the armed population demanding the end to capitalism,' which put simply means that the bourgeoisie will never lead a revolution-



BY RACHEL AGE 5

ary struggle against capitalism. Which is to be expected.

But why express it in such tortuous terms? Surely the whole argument about 'demands' and 'co-options' stands in place of a serious analysis of the problem of how it is that parties and movements of revolutionary forces in society—the exploited and oppressed—can be dominated by what is fundamentally a bourgeois ideology. A conspiracy theory is inadequate to explain that problem (for example, leaders always 'sell out'). In *What is to be Done?* Lenin began an analysis of it.

The paragraph on Lenin really is incomprehensible. 'We are told we must bring women to . . . "trade union consciousness"'. This phrase is Lenin's and comes from a pamphlet called *What is to be Done*. In many ways . . . brilliant . . . but written in the early days . . . Lenin repudiated a good deal of what he wrote before these two revolutions' (1905, 1917).

We are left with the distinct impression that Lenin repudiated his particular conception of 'trade union consciousness' in later life, and that he would have endorsed that view were he alive today. The latter is such speculation as to be closed to discussion. As for the first claim, I believe that we have a lot to learn from Lenin's analysis of trade

union consciousness, never, to my knowledge, disowned by him.

In *What is to be Done*, Lenin engaged in polemic with those who considered that trade union struggle and trades union consciousness (that is, the theoretical understanding of capitalism which comes from that struggle) were sufficient to the development of a revolutionary movement capable of overthrowing the state.

Lenin's argument was that this was not the case and that a revolutionary politics was needed which was capable of articulating the struggles of all the oppressed, not just the working class, for the overthrow of the state power. It was revolutionary political consciousness which was the need in the struggle, not trade union consciousness.

More, Lenin argued that trades union consciousness was a spontaneous product of capitalism, and, if left to its own spontaneity, would be dominated by bourgeois ideology, just as all modes of thinking spontaneously produced by capitalism are spontaneously dominated by those modes of thinking which are dominant in capitalist society—those of the bourgeoisie.



Micheline Victor

Fuzzy Feminism

THE paper, 'Women, the unions and work—or what is not to be done,' seems to me important because of the kinds of discussion it has provoked, rather than because of anything particular it adds to Women's Liberation analyses, or any of the demands put at the end.

Its provocativeness stems mainly from two things, one useful, the other misleading and confusing. The most useful parts of the paper are those in which the dangers of political co-optation are described and warned against. That ought to challenge women who do advocate 'trade union consciousness' as the pivot of women's liberation, and those middle class women who exploit the confidence they've got from the movement. However, the paper seems to me to achieve very little in the way of analysis which is helpful in formulating demands, or even describing the nature and role of an autonomous women's movement—which is what the paper claims to do.

I'm not going to offer criticisms of the section which deals in detail with unions, but to focus on the ideological weaknesses and confusions. They fall into three areas.

1. The absence of a discussion on sexism, which seems to me to be crucial in terms of the suggestions for organisation and the demands;
2. The confusion created by the demands and the way they're presented.
3. The implied comments on the movement.

1. Sexism and The Unions

The question of women and unions involves a general argument about the role of unions which applies both to men and women. The paper lumps all unions together, without making the distinction between those which really are controlled by their leaders and those in which there is more flexibility. However, at the moment unions are the only way in which people can protect themselves and make demands at work. And in theory this includes women at work.

However, we know that women have a particular problem; as the paper points out, we have to fight the prejudices of men in unions (and everywhere else) before we can even get near employers. Of course this could be a strong argument for forming a national women's union (less conservative than Pat Sturdy's short-lived union), but the paper doesn't suggest that. However, since the paper also talks about a women's movement trying to unite what capital has divided, it seems to me that one of the most obvious and useful ways could be through women joining unions with a feminist consciousness, with the awareness that the first thing to fight is sexism, both in terms of union organisation and in terms of the way their own relationships with their men are affected.

A separate women's union could have the same effect; by organising separately women could force employers to recognise them as a group force, and also union men to realise that they won't sit down and shut up just because the union won't take them seriously.

However, given the existing situation, I don't know whether this would be practical, and as long as women see that sexism is as powerful a repressive force as capitalism, it would make more sense if more women joined the unions and worked on transforming them, on uniting a class which sexism (as a separate force or as a consequence of capitalism) has divided. Men have a lot invested in their conviction that women are inferior, and they won't change unless women force the issues.

Because the paper makes few distinctions between its objects of criticism—not distinguishing between criticisms of 'trade union consciousness' in general, and as it applies to women in particular it finally has a three-way see-saw effect; it seems at different times to be advocating feminist action, socialist action and radical feminist action, without linking them together, or clearly separating them. This confusion pervades the subject of this first criticism, and also the second.

2. The Demands

Firstly, I think it would have been more useful to use the existing four demands as a more concrete starting point. Three of them, Equal Pay, and Control over our Bodies, and Free Community control and nurseries remain. Why isn't equal education and opportunity included? Who are the demands for, and at whom are they directed?

The first and second demands (the right to work less and wages for housewives) raise enormous questions. They're attractive as ideas, but aren't based on any definitions or analyses nor do they have realistic potential. A shorter working week could only be demanded by a national workers organisation; if that is what's suggested why not organise this demand through the unions? And if we spend all our time asserting that we 'work' in the home—up to 70 or 80 grinding hours—then we have all the right in the world to demand that our men share the home responsibilities when they are there. Unless we fight sexism in the home, men will go on thinking that women have a cosy time of it at home all day.

The second demand is the most provocative and also, I think, the most dangerous. As far as I know it has come from groups like claimants, mothers in action—most of whom haven't chosen to be in a situation of economic dependence on the state, and don't see motherhood as a career. Obviously people in this situation need to defend themselves and make sure

they have enough to live on, and equally obviously, as long as they don't have jobs compatible with looking after children or there are good nurseries for the children, they will either be dependent on men or the state. They're forced to choose between two forms of insecurity.

It seems clear that women whom the state forces to depend on it, shouldn't allow themselves to be pushed around; but the final answer isn't to 'elevate' or 'reduce' housework and looking after children to the current alienated definition of 'work'. If anything it would make it harder for women to attack the conditioning and ideology of woman's role as wife and mother. And in practical terms, what does it mean?

Claimants and mothers on Social Security already have a social mechanism they can challenge; they can squat in SS offices, take cases to rent tribunals, demand things from local councils. By demanding wages for housework we are also demanding the setting up of machinery to fulfil this demand.

Who is going to pay the wages? The state? Or should men be paid according to whether they're single or married, and then pay their wives a salary? How is the scale to be determined. How could women withdraw their labour? It would only effect their families if they did—unless their men supported them.

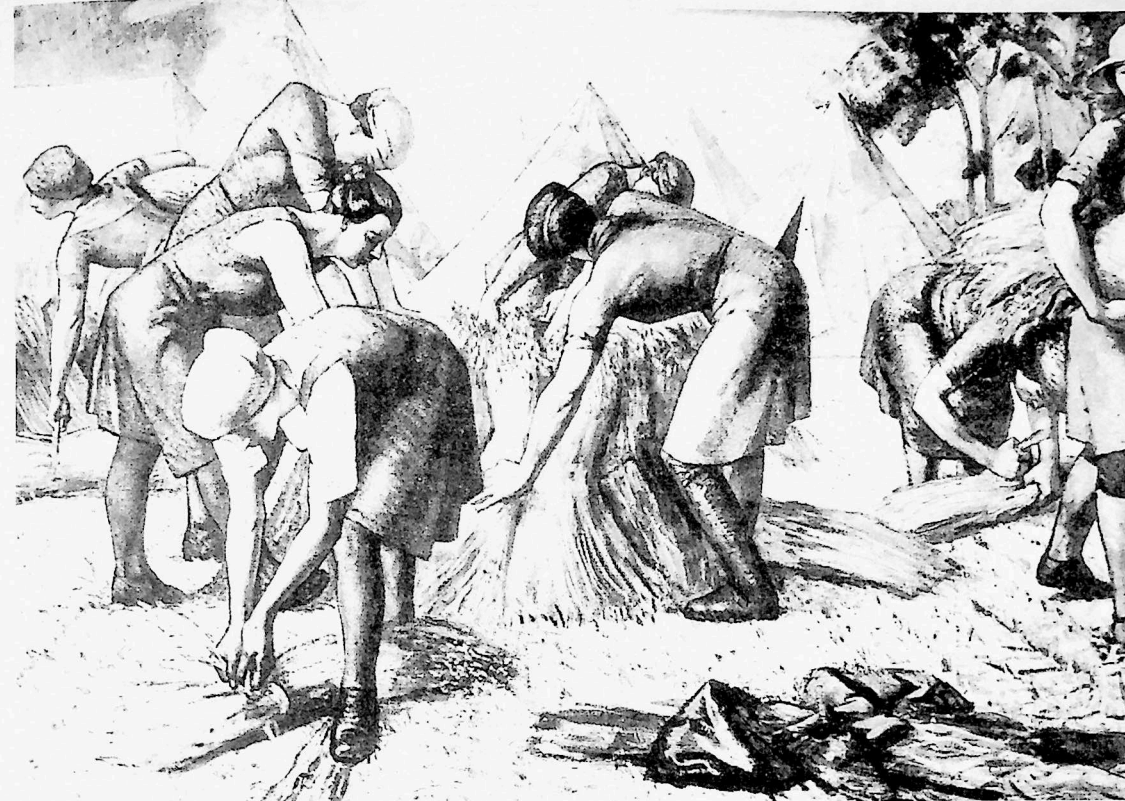
At present social security is calculated on some nebulous estimate of the cost of living, not according to any rate for the job. If wages for housework is calculated on the same scale as industrial wages, with overtime women would be probably the highest paid group in the country.

'Wages for housewives' is thus a provocative demand, but not in any way a realistic one. And if Women's Liberation is to continue questioning the division of labour according to sex, to assert that both men and women should be directly responsible for looking after children, that the myth of the mother-child bond is indeed a myth, then wages for housework is a diversion, and will exacerbate sexism rather than try and solve it.

This sounds to me like a demand which would be expected from radical feminists who don't think there are any possibilities for combating sexism at all, other than simply separating as much as possible from men.

I've heard it put as an argument for the 'wages for housework' demand that if women have economic independence then they'll be able to choose to work out alternative ways of looking after kids, and even possibly of communal living. This doesn't seem to me to follow. The demand for nurseries financed by local authorities and involving at least some, if not total, control by those who use them, will have far more effect in getting women out of the isolation of their homes. They will at least see themselves as part of a group, and it might be more constructive to organise around this demand ourselves rather than wages for housework.

The throwaway sentence at the end of the second demand about dumping kids in their fathers' laps is another example of the confused tendency towards pseudo radical



feminism in this paper. Who are we black-mailing? The men or the capitalists? And even if you say they're one and the same, I would have thought that women in Women's Liberation understand enough about oppression not to use their own kids as political pawns, especially since the kids wearing the nappies will be too young to understand what's going on.

The fifth demand is like the first two, and like them involves questions which are not confined to the women's movement alone. From whom do we demand all these ends of price rises? How? If she simply means that groups must organise themselves into direct community action, then we already know about this as a tactic. The need isn't to demand for it to happen (it already is) but to work out how actions like these lead to wider revolutionary activity and how they affect the women's movement in particular. After all, men are consumers too. Why *should* women lead rent strikes on principle? If the men in tenants' struggles exclude the women, then they must either force the issues on sexism within the group or organise separately. Which is meant here?

3. The Movement

The last section is most disturbing in its tone. The long paragraph just after the fifth demand sounds as though it's talking about a new, exciting and potentially revolutionary organisation for women; one almost expects the next sentence to say something like 'We must form a Women's Liberation Movement'.

What have we all been doing for the last three years, except all and more of the

various things suggested in this paper. It seems written from a peculiarly narrow, middle-class perspective of someone who has done nothing but contemplate what's been happening in her own small group.

Even those of us who have done very little direct political organising can't have failed to notice the general increase of militancy among women all over the country, the number of women who have become involved in the movement for vastly different reasons. Claimants and tenants' groups consist largely of women; and whether these women are directly involved in the movement or not, it seems likely that the activity surrounding women's position in society must have affected them in some way, even if it is only through the distortions of the media.

The paper talks as though there is a minute, embryonic movement; in fact, the problem is the opposite. How do we make sure we are in contact with each other, so that all the different things we're doing can cohere? How do we use what we already have learnt? The paper seems to think we've learned very little. It says 'in order to have our own politics we must make our own analysis of women and therefore our own analysis of the whole working class struggle'.

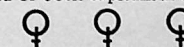
There is one form of women's analysis, which seems to have crept unconsciously into this paper, and that is the radical feminist analysis, which considers sexism as the primary oppressive force and fights it by separatism, by stating that the radical feminist analysis is *the* correct one, correct for men as well as for women. If this is what is meant by an 'autonomous women's

movement', I wish the paper had been clearer about it.

It seems to me currently the most crucial issue for women in the movement—to be aware of the areas in which what might appear as purely 'feminist' demands (like, say, wages for housework) could, if logically examined, be seen to stem from an analysis of sexism as the primary antagonism in society, that between men and women, and to which the answer is the overthrow of men by women.

And what happens then? While every area of analysis which has so far excluded women, and in fact the whole of the society, must be analysed by women themselves, does this analysis have to replace class analysis? Sexism doesn't make class analysis superfluous; it shows how ideological oppression can produce painful cross-class oppressions. A middle-class woman oppresses a working-class man because of the nature of class antagonism; but at the same time, a working class man who has been brought up to think all women are inferior to all men, oppresses that woman ideologically.

Any demands made by a women's movement must take these cross-oppressions into account. It isn't a question of class or sexism (as this paper and the demands in it imply beneath the confusion) but of how and where the two are joined, where they are separate, and whether as women we aim ultimately to separate them even more, or to make an analysis and organise a movement around a united aim to get rid of both capitalism and sexism.



What is Definitely Not To Be Done

Miner

Areas call for 30 hour week

YORKSHIRE and Scotland, two of the biggest NUM Areas, have sent forward resolutions for Conference calling for a 30 hour week. Yorkshire's resolution calls for a six-hour working day for underground workers and a

seven-hour day on the surface. The Scottish Area workers with 30 hour week resolutions for surface Group No. 1 resolution on bus with winding etc. The Area four-... Ye people callin' shift-work

KENT DEMAND

£40 FOR

N.I.P.L.A. MEN



THERE ARE four wages resolutions on the Agenda for this year's Annual Conference — and only one, from Kent, contains hard facts. And the Kent resolution calls for a £40 minimum a £32 minimum for underground workers, and £30 for the surface. The resolution also calls for "corresponding increases in Grades and Craftsmen" and "in the event of an untimely strike, the National Executive Committee should co-operate with a view to taking various forms of industrial action."

None of the other three resolutions on wages states figures. COSA's resolution "charges the National Executive Committee with ensuring that the wages of all the members are adequate account, not only of the cost of living and other living standards, but also of ensuring that members benefit from increased productivity and efficiency and that their real living standards are steadily improved."

The Derbyshire resolution calls for the reduction of threshold agreements on all future wage negotiations "so that the living standards of members can be more easily protected."

The other wages resolution, from Group No. 2, "regrets that the Union's claim was not met in full. It goes on to call for realistic wages in the industry and for the National Executive Committee to negotiate a substantial increase in order to further improve the living standards of our members."

A further resolution from Group No. 2 deals with craftsmen's differentials. It regrets that the last wage award "failed to resolve the problem of the wage differentials existing between craftsmen working in different environments, and also between craftsmen and other mineworkers."

WELCOME BACK! Since Penny Lane looks welcoming... perhaps she's happy to see "The Miner" back on the job again. And just to make sure that your branch gets enough, please fill in the form on the back page. It helps to keep our records up to date.

IT IS a great pity that Selma James' pamphlet should be so muddled, contradictory, uninformed and negative that it is of very little help to the Women's Liberation Movement in its search for a programme.

On the contrary, it could well, if accepted, divert the movement from its main tasks.

The pamphlet is on firmest ground when it attacks the sexist nature of trade unions, for there can be no doubt that on the whole they have failed to meet even the elementary needs of the nine million women going out to work in this country.

It is all the more surprising, therefore, that the pamphlet only scratches the surface in its indictment of the shameful way the unions have ignored women workers.

Aside from the basic criticism of the unions for failing to campaign vigorously for equal pay, for acquiescing in the differential between men and women in the form of percentage pay rises and discriminatory grading, the only other evidence produced for the unions' sexist role is that 'they have not tried very hard to get us into unions.'

This understates a situation which—in a country with the most highly organised labour force in the world—only two out of every nine women going out to work belongs to a union.

Destiny—Domesticity

Although this can, to some extent, be explained by women's overall difficulties in our society, the onus must lie with a trade union movement that fails to take a woman seriously in her role as worker. Far too often this is seen as little more than a temporary diversion from her real destiny—domesticity.

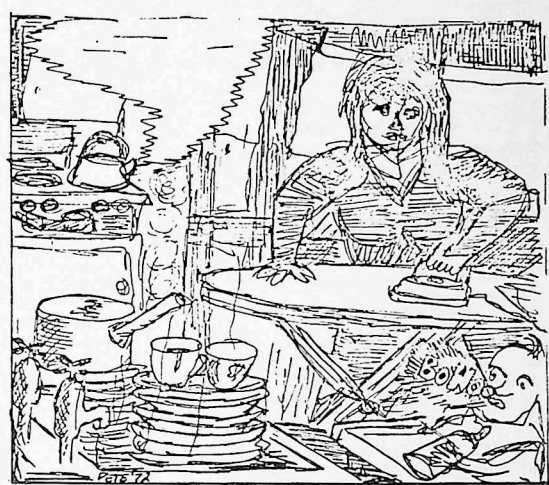
Of course, this point is not really developed in the pamphlet because, as will be shown later, it basically falls for the same notion. And for some reason the pamphlet does not really touch on the many other important ways women's interests are shunned in the unions. As badly as women may be represented in union membership, virtually none are included in the leadership.

Some unions, particularly in the crafts, often practice open discrimination by actively keeping women out of many trades.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE PUZZLE



ANSWER HER HUSBAND IS AT A POLITICAL MEETING



HER HUSBAND IS AT THE PUB

Equal pay is only one of many issues on which the trade union movement has failed to fight for women: child care facilities, equal opportunity for training and promotion, abolition of 'men only' jobs and restriction of women to 'women's work', equal pension rights—all these and more must be won before women can enjoy any semblance of parity with men in industry. Most unions have not even declared war yet.

With these nasty facts clear, what should the Women's Liberation Movement's attitude be to the problem of organising women going out to work. This has really just begun to be discussed in the movement, partly because so few women have had any experience—through no fault of their own—of the organised Labour Movement, and partly because the movement has rightly been concerned with becoming an autonomous force.

This problem has not been helped by those on the Left who have ignored sexism within the Labour movement, while mechanically asserting the primacy of the trade union struggle.

Thus, for a compound of reasons, some in Women's Liberation have shaken off any suggestion of work within the unions. So when Selma James says 'a major issue on which we have... been co-opted to defeat our own movement has been on the question of unionising women' she may be reflecting the doubts of some within women's liberation. But this pamphlet goes beyond raising doubts, and positively affirms instead 'the struggle of the women of the working class against the unions.'

This is a strange conclusion at a time when the Government itself is waging what it regards as a decisive battle against the power of the trade unions. But Selma anticipates this reaction and attempts to add an apparently revolution-

ary perspective to her anti-union approach. She implies that the unions must be fought not only in women's interests, but also in the interest of the entire working class, for unions are not only sexist, they obstruct the class struggle.

Stand in the way

Firstly unions are portrayed as inherently reformist organisations which not only divide the working class and stand in the way of militant action, but also serve the ruling class by mediating between workers and employers.

Secondly, unions are mainly concerned with improving conditions and with the demand for jobs when unemployment looms. The pamphlet argues that women's liberation will not come through work; if we want to fight capitalism and oppression our role should be to encourage women to abandon productive work altogether, and avoid the exploitation that comes from working in a capitalist system.

Unfortunately these rationalisations show that Selma James has little understanding of what unions are. She also has a naive approach to building a revolution, and—even more surprising for someone so involved in the women's movement—a tacit acceptance of women's traditional role.

She recognises that the miners strike was one of the most dynamic recent actions of the working class, but comes to the extraordinary conclusion that it was momentous because the miners 'didn't depend on their union, but on their own self-organisation and methods of struggle... this is not the first attempt at autonomous class action, but it is the first major success.'

This misses the vital point (which is also missed far too often by union officials) that the workers are 'the union' and

'the union' is by definition the self-organisation of the workers.

So when miners—all members of the National Union of Mineworkers—refused to man safety crews, or defended their picket lines by every means necessary, it was the union. We shouldn't be blinded to that simply because some union officials might not have liked it.

The miners won because: their high level of organisation, gained after decades of union struggle, made a national strike possible. (If only half the pits had been self-organised could the strike have succeeded?)

their high level of consciousness made it impossible for that section of workers who no longer remember whose side they are on not to control the struggle.

the wave of solidarity from the rest of the organised trade union movement meant the strike could not be broken.

It is fantasy to say that the 'mining community went its own autonomous way' divorced from the trade union movement.

Doesn't understand

Just as the pamphlet does not understand what a union is, neither does it understand what a union is not. It calls for a movement to unite the whole working class population against capitalism, combining the struggles of productive workers, blacks, housewives, the unemployed, the old, the ill and children—a call that all revolutionaries would support.

But its validity is submerged under Selma James' naive and indignant discovery that unions don't fulfill this function. 'It is not simply that they don't organise the shoppers; it is that the unions

prevent such organisation by fragmenting the class into those who have wages and those who don't.

Again, this misses some fundamental points: It is not the unions who divide the working class—it is the ruling class which attempts to divide and rule workers by separating black from white, male from female and wage earners from the wageless—even though the unions themselves may perpetuate and reinforce these divisions.

Given these existing divisions, unions were organised to unify at least that sector of the working class involved in production to protect their immediate interests.

This is a vital function, particularly since virtually all working class people are at some time or another involved in productive work.

But since the working class is divided, this essential function in no way rules out the necessity of parallel organisations among other sections of the working class with special interests in need of protection: claimants unions among the wageless, Women's Liberation groups among women and the black liberation movement among black people.

More important, we should understand that these special interest groups can never remove the necessity for an independent and consciously revolutionary movement which links all these immediate struggles into a conscious and united confrontation against the capitalist system itself.

The trade union movement on its own can never become this revolutionary focus, and no Marxist-Leninist has ever viewed it this way.

Lenin, in *What is to Be Done* (despite Selma James' apparent misreading or non-reading of it) made precisely this argument: 'Trade union consciousness' will not automatically lead the workers to



revolution. It is the responsibility of revolutionaries to inject their theories into the trade union movement.

This point escapes the pamphlet, however. It castigates the unions for not fulfilling a task that was never theirs, and then fails to appreciate the importance of the task the unions can and do fulfill.

Unions may not always see the need to end the wages system, but they are attempting to limit the degree to which the bosses freely exploit workers.

Unions may not all be pledged to socialism, but they are working to eliminate the squalid and de-humanizing conditions in which so many have to labour.

Unions may not always demand that the workers control industry, but they are struggling to carve into the bosses' hitherto inalienable right to make ALL the decisions.

No Excuse

This does not excuse the trade union movement for its weaknesses. We have

mentioned the prevalence of sexism, and this is only matched by the prevalence of racism.

The long tradition of small craft organisations has helped, in part, to generate an elitist hierarchy within the movement, which is only beginning to be undermined by the impact of huge industry-wide unions.

And no one can deny that a section of the union leadership has consistently snubbed militant struggle and has too often sold out.

But it would be mindless to view these problems as Selma James does as diseases injected into an otherwise pure and uninfected working class by a corrupt union bureaucracy.

One cannot abstractly separate the trade union movement from the working class from which it springs—unions are sexist because the working class is sexist.

But the weaknesses of the trade unions are also a measure of the failure of revolutionaries to combat the bourgeois ideology which cripples large sections of the working class and allows reformist leadership full rein.

However, we must reject the characterisation of the trade unions as agents of the capitalist class. 'What else does capital have to control the workers when they move? How else can they get us to participate in our own exploitation . . . And if we are not depending on unions, who else would we depend on but ourselves and other workers? That would be dangerous, for unions and government.'

Ferocious Fight

Some individual unions, of course, have been either set up or bought off by the management in an attempt to keep out militant organisation. But let Selma explain why most bosses have fought so ferociously against any attempts to



establish unions in unorganised industries, or why the highly organised industries have the best pay and conditions, and the least organised the worst. Let her demonstrate where and when workers have 'moved' successfully or stopped 'participating in their own exploitation' as a result of the non-existence of a union.

Individual workers cannot move successfully on their own in a capitalist society. To advocate abolition of unions has all the logic of knocking down the dyke because it was leaking. What we must do is plug the hole, nor surrender to the flood.

But this previous argument does not end the pamphlet's onslaught against the trade union movement: 'Finally,' it states, 'there is the question of women and "unemployment".' From this is developed a rather confused argument, which on the one hand condemns the unions for their unconcern for unemployed women:

'It is characteristic that the unions and the labour exchanges . . . in Scotland have made a deal not to give jobs to married women,' and then attacks them for their concern over unemployment.

'They're desperately trying to shove 'we want jobs' placards into workers' hands. You would think it is immoral to be disengaged from exploitation.'

The pamphlet then makes an uncharted leap from its not too startling assertion, that the 'only thing "wrong" with unemployment is that you don't get paid,' to the even more dubious and unfounded notion that 'the unions are trying to lead exactly the kind of struggle that would make Ted Heath . . . a happy man: they are demanding jobs.' To demand the 'right to work' is to demand the right to be exploited, states the pamphlet, implying that the only revolutionary approach is

rather to drop out of production altogether with the demand of 'the right not to work.'

Thus the women's movement, if it wishes to struggle for the true liberation of women—including those 50 per cent of women unable now to work outside the home, though not necessarily unwilling—must not see the demand for jobs (or for conditions making work outside the home possible) as a central issue—for work will not bring liberation but 'another degree of capitalistic control and regimentation.'

Make or Break

According to Selma James this is 'where the movement can be made or broken,' and it is on this issue that the dividing line between 'reformism and revolutionary politics within the women's movement' will be drawn.

Here Selma James may be right; it may indeed be on this sort of issue that the direction of the women's movement will be decided. But if a revolutionary role is sought by the Movement, it will never be found in the quicksand of the uninformed and itself reformist rhetoric put forth here by Selma James.

The capitalist system needs the unemployed and is inherently unable to offer full employment of all its citizens. This is an economic fact, admitted to in perhaps unguarded moments by even bourgeois economists.

It is certainly partly for this reason that women as a group have been convinced by our society that their real place of employment should be the home, for what arrangement could suit the capitalists better than to have a large group of unemployed who accept their unemployment, some of whom can be drawn into production when needed and then thrown back into the home when not.

One can see from the experience of the 30s, here and in the United States, that the capitalist system can survive even massive unemployment when there is not an equally massive struggle on the part of workers demanding the right to useful work. There can be no doubt that the Tories would have welcomed the opportunity to dole out money to all the shipworkers of Clydeside, if it could have prevented the united struggle which demonstrated so clearly to the working people of Britain the potential power that is theirs.

There are even more fundamental misunderstandings made by the pamphlet when it urges women to abandon social production. It states correctly that women's liberation will not come through work but then implies that liberation can be found through some other channel.

No Individual Solution

The vital point, that is missed is that no working-class person—man or woman—has ever or will ever find their personal liberation within a capitalist society. There is no individual solution to the oppression and exploitation that are necessary foundations capitalism; if there were, there would then be no real need to overthrow the system.

It is this search for such answers by tampering with our present system that diverts from the difficult though unavoidable task of building a revolutionary movement that will challenge, not social production, but the right of the ruling class to control this production, and thereby our lives.

And this diversion is the heart of reformism, whether the obvious economism of those trade union leaders who see a wage claim as the end in itself, or the more

WOMEN AT WORK IN A MUNITIONS FACTORY 1941 by Henry Rushbury (Imperial War Museum)



subtle appeal of Selma James who suggests that women can individually avoid exploitation by not working.

But even more than this, though Selma James seems to consider herself a revolutionary, she also seems not to understand what a revolution entails.

A revolution is essentially concerned with power—taking power from the oppressing class and giving it to the oppressed class. Most of the potential power of the working class lies in their role as producers. To ask workers to give up this role and to take up a position of powerlessness on the dole queue, whether adequately paid or not, is to accept the existence of a society where the only alternatives are the exploitation of the wages system on the one hand or the demoralisation of dependence on the other.

It is, of course, women who understand most clearly what these alternatives entail. Women when they work do have the worst pay, worst conditions and most boring jobs. But they know full well what the alternative means: the individual isolation from the outside world, the absence of whatever stimulation comes from adult company and conversation, the hours of

repetitive and boring work, and most degrading of all, the absolute dependence on a man for their very existence.

The experience of the Women's Liberation Movement has certainly indicated 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. It is not enough to say, like the pamphlet, that 'we have worked enough', unless it is proven that another alternative does in reality exist.

Private Servant

Selma James' offer to housewives of 'the struggle itself', in place of a role in social production is simply not sufficient.

And most tellingly, her subsequent demand of wages for housework, far from being an answer, rather accepts and further institutionalises woman's traditional role as private servant to her husband and children. For there is nothing in this pamphlet which really does challenge women's unequal role.

It criticises what it calls the 'barrenness' of the four demands of the Women's

Liberation Movement, though three of the pamphlet's demands are derived from these (nurseries, abortion and contraception, and equal pay). But her three added demands—whatever their intrinsic merits—have little to do with solving the specific problems of women.

Demands for a shorter working week, and an end to price rises are commendable, but should they be the province of a movement that exists to deal with the special oppression of women. (Unless we believe, along with Ted Heath, that women are specially suited to such 'domestic' issues as food prices). Would we not here run the risk of once again being asked to submerge our special fight beneath the 'general struggle'?

The demand for wages for housework seems in this case to be a superficial attempt to avoid confronting the real problems facing women: 'If we raise kids, we have a right to a living wage . . . Let them pay us, or else we can go to the factories and offices and put our children on their father's laps. Let's see if they can make Ford cars and change nappies at the same time.'

In this vision of the future, it seems clear that nothing basic has really changed. Father's still the real breadwinner, out in the world producing things and Mother's still at home, changing baby's dirty nappies (though she is now a paid private servant instead of a wageless one).

Narrow Horizon

But why should it be necessary for the Women's Movement to retreat to such a narrowed horizon. The problem is not that women are not paid to do housework, it is rather that they are expected to do housework, that housework is considered their true vocation, and thus women do not need education or training or opportunity or equal pay, and thus a woman's real job is sexually defined and she does not need to be taken seriously in any other role.

For the Women's Movement not to challenge all these assumptions is to acquiesce in the sexist nature of our society—this unfortunately is where Selma James' proposals lead.

The women's movement must not fall into this trap. It must instead insist at every level that it does not accept the traditional definition of a woman as wife and mother. It must instead assert that women have a right to any job, any training and any education they might want. It must instead expose the sexism that permeates our society and meet it head on. And it must instead force the trade union movement to realise that it is not really an all-male enclave and to finally begin to fight militantly on the whole spectrum of issues affecting women workers.

All this will be difficult, and the first step may be, as Selma James says 'to make our own independent evaluation of the political situation.'

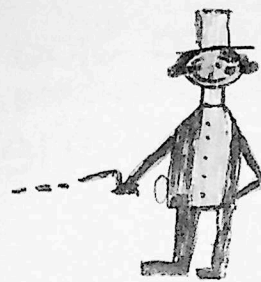
But let us make sure this evaluation is based on the political realities of women's experience in a class society, and as a response to the concrete needs of women, and not of rhetoric born of frustration and confusion.'



ARMY TAILOR AND A.T.S. TAILORESSES 1943 by Evelyn Dunbar (Imperial War Museum)

Molly Dunthorne

he earns the money



she spends it wisely

IN the mining valleys of Wales there is a strong tradition of militant left wing activity and the union movement is strong but this is also an area of strong paternalistic tradition. Dad dominates the house. He is expected to go to work in harsh conditions and the wife and daughters are expected to do all the housework and to look after him when he comes home.

It is an area also of poor housing now aggravated by unemployment and the running down of the coal industry. The majority have no chance of escaping from the grim housing and harsh working conditions. Life follows an established pattern. The boys grow up to be men and work in monotonous and often dangerous jobs, the girls get married, have children and spend the rest of their lives looking after the husband, children and home.

The man earns the money, the woman must spend it wisely. The money represents the hours of uncongenial work done by the husband, and it is the responsibility of the wife to see that the children and the home are well looked after with it. Otherwise it is the man's life she is wasting. He has worked to get enough money to live on and perhaps one or two luxuries, but another result of his work is the increase of the profits of someone else.

Small wonder then that the fairy tale land of television should have such a great appeal. On the TV screen large happy families dressed immaculately and fashionably live exciting lives in the comfort of 'dream homes' equipped with a vast number of shining labour saving devices and beautiful and expensive furniture. Most of the things that these families take for granted are out of the reach of most people, but by buying those goods which are within reach financially the housewife can identify more easily with the dream families.

They can convince themselves that some of the glamour will rub off onto them that their lives resemble the TV families' lives more closely than they in

fact do. The television spends a lot of its time creating wants in the minds of ordinary housewives. It also, however, spends some of its time not very subtly suggesting that the unions are self seeking, short-sighted opportunists who are responsible for rising prices. The rising prices help to prevent the family from enjoying the high standards of living portrayed on the TV screen and so housewives tend to blame the unions for being 'greedy' and holding down their standard of living.

Hence when women do go out to work to try to get that 'little bit extra' or even through sheer economic necessity they are so much less likely to join a union and therefore less likely to realise their real enemy is not the union movement but the capitalist system which exploits the majority in order to increase the profits, wealth and power of the minority.

It is no coincidence that the TV's ideal family is a couple and their offspring. They are shown as being emotionally self-sufficient and seem to suffer from none of the stress that accompanies such relationships in reality. This is important to their position of ideal family unit leading an ideal life. By dividing society up into the maximum number of isolated and competing units (to see who can achieve the nearest possible approximation of idealised dream home existence) Big Business can sell the maximum number of items and so achieve the maximum profit.

Big Business, and its mouthpiece the mass media, recognises the threat posed by Women's Liberation Movement calling for equality and co-operation. Hence they seek to discredit the movement by ridiculing it (like the massive publicity accorded to bra burning) and giving no publicity to its political implications.

Demands by women for day nurseries have met with much pseudo-moralistic criticism but little action while rich women enjoy the services of a nanny with no censure. Nannies are not frowned upon because the women who can afford to pay

a nanny belong to the class which profits from the existing class structure and therefore these women do not pose a real threat. Providing an adequate nursery service would end the effective imprisonment and isolation of mothers in the home. Men must go out to work and women must stay at home and consume.

Men go to work to compete against each other for jobs, promotion, etc. and the harder they work to outstrip each other, the greater the profits for the ruling class. The wives are taught by the mass media to see their lives only in relation to one man and his children and therefore encourage him to compete to enhance their status, for alone they have no status.

The social stigma of being classed as an 'old maid' is one example of this. The only way the mass media suggest that success and status can be measured is in lavish spending on fashionable (and therefore always changing) goods. Hence the capitalist class gains from both the increased production of the men at work and from the increased consumption of the wives at home. Both are exploited by the capitalist system.

That this is so is illustrated by the heavy income taxes but relatively insignificant wealth taxes. Because of the tax structure it is difficult to earn a great deal but easy to continue to enjoy great wealth (and therefore power). In this way the ruling class prevent any disruption of the status quo while at the same time paying lip service to egalitarian principles. Hence workers at all levels are exploited by the owning class, the class with real wealth and power. Women are exploited and oppressed not as a class in themselves, but in so far as they belong to an oppressed class within the present class structure of society.

Women's Liberation calls for equality for women but at the same time, because of the class structure of society, it is also a struggle for equality for men.



Monica Sjoo

WOMEN, Claimants Unions and the Cohabitation Ruling

This article by Monica Sjoo, Bristol Women's Liberation Group and Claimants' Union is to clarify what Selma James means by the demand 'a wage to the house-worker' (not housewife—but the persons doing housework, whether male or female) since she has quite close contacts with the C.U.'s

The demands of the Claimants' Unions are:

- 1 The right to an adequate income without means-test for ALL people.
- 2 A free welfare state for all with its ser-

vices controlled by the people who use it.

- 3 No secrets and the right to full information.
- 4 No distinguishing between so-called deserving and undeserving.

Part of the first demand is a guaranteed adequate income for every woman, whether she is married or not, and this is why the Claimants' Union nationally decided to have a campaign against cohabitation ruling from the 21st to the 25th August.

This ruling is, along with the 'four-week ruling' (the 'right' to cut off a single man from his benefit after four weeks) and the

'wage-stop' (designed to keep poor families poor), the most vicious of the Social Security practices.

The cohabitation ruling is used to terrorise unsupported mothers who are given a measly allowance—as if it were a charity—for themselves and their children to survive on (and survive is the word, too). Not only are they given very little money but what little they are given is taken away from them at the first opportunity if the Social Security can prove that there is a boy-friend or lover about. The way they do this is by using 'special investigators' who hang around your front-door early in the morning to see if a man leaves, or listen to neighbours' gossip etc. And although just having a lover is not cohabitation according to the act, because cohabitation is defined as sharing board and lodge as well as bed, many women are terrorised into believing that they are cohabiting if they have a boy-friend. Many women have their books taken away from them, many end up in court, and some even in prison—all because the Social Security will NOT recognise a woman's right to an independent income.

There are in England today something between 200,000 and 300,000 'unsupported mothers', i.e. women who have either chosen to have children and remain on their own, or widowed, separated or deserted women with families. These women do a full day's work, doing housework and looking after children, and they should be entitled to a wage irrelevant of whether they are living with men or not. If children are taken into care the state have to pay a lot more for them than they are in fact now paying for their mothers to look after them.

Why are 'unsupported mothers' treated like this?

It is because they are not working for an employer and in capitalist society you are worth nothing if you are not doing so. Unsupported mothers are not 'productive members' of society—they can't go out to work. They are a drag on the economy because they haven't got the money to consume. They are no good as the 'pillar' of the family unit. They are not servicing a man out at work.

But we say TO BRING UP CHILDREN IS WORK and we want a WAGE for all the work we do—whether cleaning offices OR homes, producing electrical parts OR babies.

What is really at stake when one attacks the cohabitation ruling is the status and economic dependence of the MARRIED woman since the aim of the ruling is to make it impossible for the unsupported mother to be more independent and economically better off than the married

SMASH THE COHABITATION-RULING!



WE DO A FULL DAY'S WORK - HOUSEWORK & LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN - & ARE ENTITLED TO OUR SOCIAL SECURITY ALLOWANCE WHETHER WE ARE LIVING WITH A MAN OR NOT!

woman. A married woman in England who cannot 'work' because of non-existent child-care facilities (the nursery situation is almost worse in England than anywhere else in Europe), bad pay if she does go out to work etc., becomes totally dependent on the man's income. To be economically dependent on somebody is NOT the best basis for a relationship with that person; NO other worker is required to make love and bear children by their employer, or have them around after the end of the week-day. (This of course apart from that great numbers of working-class families suffer because the man's wage isn't enough to live on in any case.)

When women 'work' they are always channelled into the boring, dull, monotonous, badly paid service-jobs and the employers are confident that women who are resigned already to slavery in the homes won't protest at slavery and exploitation in the factory. Since women are NOT paid for the work they do in the homes, and for their children, they will also accept being paid less and be given shitty jobs when they work for an employer.

It is this situation in our society of women's economic dependency—always getting paid less for a job OR having to get the money from the man—that is reflected in the way that women are treated when they are living on the S.S.

When a man becomes unemployed and goes to claim he can claim for wife and children but a woman who becomes unemployed—even if she has been the ONLY breadwinner and paid her full stamps, etc—cannot claim for husband and children.

The Social Security ALWAYS treats the woman as a dependant and forces her into that situation. The social security act says that when a man and a wife claim the benefit it is always assessed as the husband's and paid out to him. Although the only reason he can claim the benefit according to their own rules is because of his family (since a single man would get cut off after four weeks). There is NO guarantee that the wife and children ever see that money. A woman has no right to her husband's income—many women don't even know what their husbands earn—and has to rely on his kindness and sense of responsibility. The Social Security makes sure that her situation remains equally insecure when her man is out of work. The wife cannot claim on her own account or for her children.

On the other hand a father on his own with children is being almost forced out to work since according to the S.S. a man is always a worker and breadwinner and is not meant to be at home with children.

It should say something about the degrading situation of many 'housewives' that if they become 'unsupported mothers' and go on Social Security that might be the first time for many years that they actually have money of their own that is regularly coming in and that they know IS theirs without directly having to arse-lick anybody. So women on Social Security allowance are often very reluctant to get again into the situation of having to depend on a man for money and will fight

hard against the cohabitation ruling which tries to do precisely this.

Many married women at home with children have been building up a resentment towards 'unsupported mothers' getting an allowance from the state because they look at their own situation and say, 'Why should they be able to get money for bringing up kids when I have to ask my old man for every penny'.

WHAT WE SAY IS LET US FIGHT TOGETHER FOR EVERY WOMAN'S RIGHT TO AN INDEPENDENT INCOME WHETHER SHE IS MARRIED OR NOT.

One of the ideas put forward for the week of action against the cohabitation ruling was that married women go and sign on as 'unemployed' and either claim unemployment benefit OR an allowance for doing housework and looking after children and if refused, dump their children in the offices.

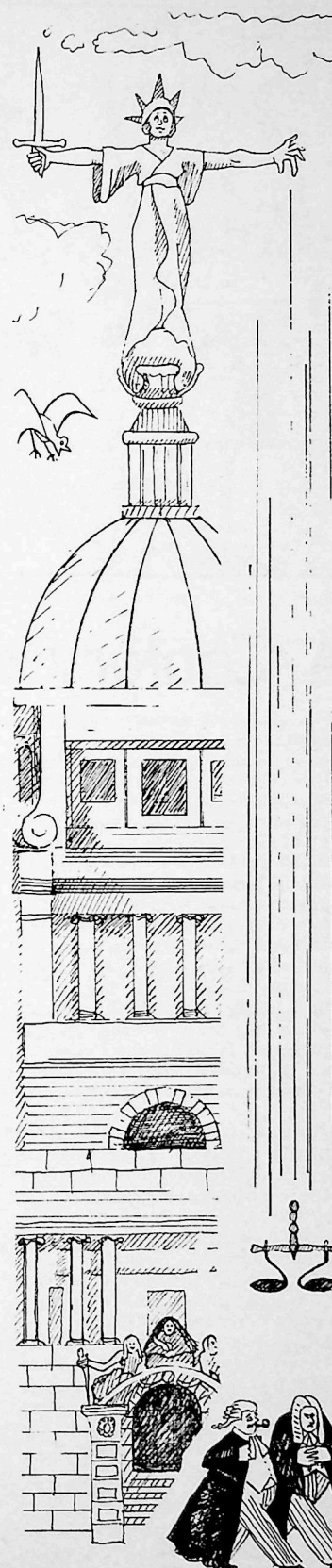
Behind the cohabitation ruling is the preposterous assumption that because a woman and a man sleep together the man should also keep any number of children that woman might have by other men, i.e. he is supposed to pay her for sexual services. Social Security force women into a form of prostitution like this. I have a friend who was told by an S.S. officer visiting her that it was okay if she slept with a different man every night as long as she didn't have any steady relationship with any one in particular because in that case her money could be cut off and the man be liable to pay also for her two children.

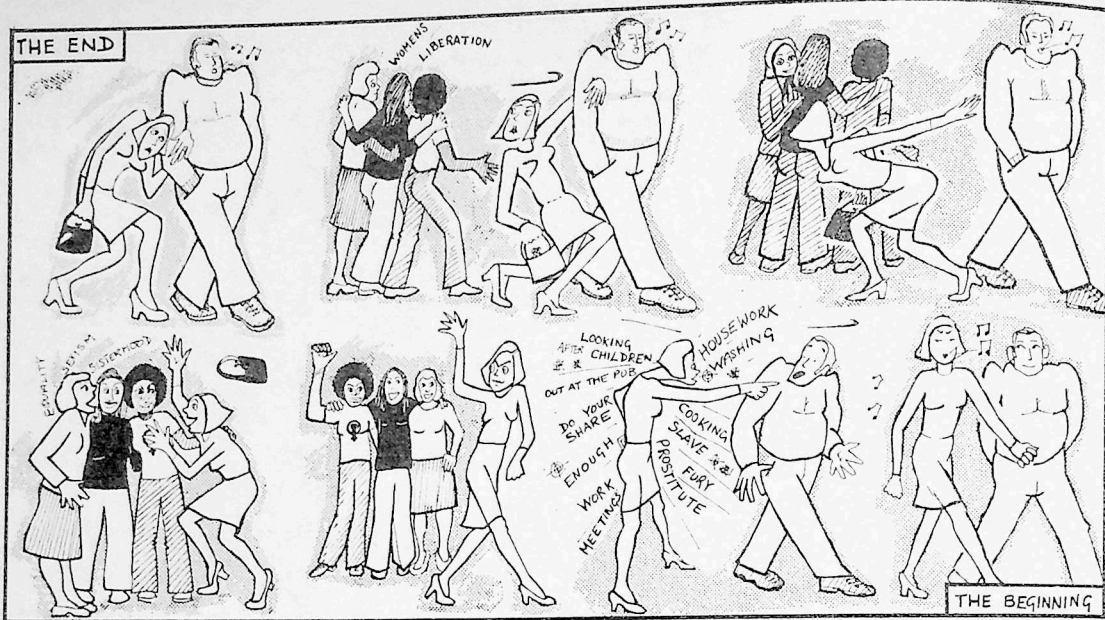
The result of this harassment is that many unsupported mothers fear to start even friendly relationships with men, and not only do they have the strain of bringing up small children on very little money on their own but they are not allowed to have any normal sexual outlets either. Many men will also think twice before starting going out with a woman when in a short while he may be forced to keep her and her family. It is no wonder that many women break down or live on tranquilisers.

There are now groups of unsupported mothers who are trying to work out new ways of living together, looking after the children communally, sharing the work. Groups of women squatting, demanding decent housing and a decent life for themselves and their children.

UNSUPPORTED MOTHERS ARE ORGANISING THEMSELVES IN CLAIMANTS' UNIONS FIGHTING FOR THEIR RIGHTS TO AN INDEPENDENT INCOME WHETHER THEY LIVE WITH A MAN OR NOT.

Apparently the Social Security now has a special directive that says that if a woman is cut off for cohabiting, she can get money for her children if they are not the children of the cohabitee for four weeks pending appeal and also if she loses the appeal, the man is NOT OBLIGED to support the children if they are not his children, they try to persuade him to do so, but he doesn't have to. Most people do not know this though and are too intimidated and afraid even to find out.





A Century of Liberation Robin Jardine

IN one of his more depressed moments towards the end of his long life, Sir Winston Churchill used the phrase 'the terrible 20th century'. From his point of view he was probably quite right, when he compared the century in which two-thirds of his life was passed to the one in which he was born, at a time when Britain was at the height of her pride and power.

There is, however, another point of view, much nearer, I believe, to the estimate that future centuries will make. I would call it 'the century of liberation', the century in which a beginning was made in freeing us from the social oppressions that men and women alike have had to endure, for the creation of a society 'in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'.

There are many liberation movements active today, from the national liberation movements of former colonial peoples to sectional and professional movements in most countries. From a historical point of view the Women's Liberation Movement is as important as even the national liberation movements. This may seem a very exaggerated view, but just consider the matter in relation to the history of social development.

For the past 25,000 or so years, since the emergence of societies based on agriculture and stockbreeding, an outstanding feature of them all has been that they were male-dominated. Previous to the Neolithic Revolution, as it has been called, women played a much larger social role in such societies as there were, for one thing because, as bearers of children, they were the links ensuring the permanence of the society.

With the change in the economic basis woman's sphere now came to be regarded

as largely confined to what the Germans call the three K's—Kinder, Küche, Kirche.

The Women's Liberation Movement challenges that whole conception. It challenges the thought-ways, the ways in which people think, that have prevailed for thousands of years. That is why I say it is no exaggeration to consider it quite as important as any of the other liberation movements. It is not an easy matter to change the ways in which people think that have become fixed through hundreds of generations. But there comes a time when it becomes necessary to do just that. There comes a time when to continue in the old ways of thought means that any social change that occurs will be largely a mere reshuffling of already existing ideas, rather than the emergence of something qualitatively new.

That this is no fantasy is shown by the course events have taken in the socialist world in regard to the position of women. In last November's issue of World Marxist Review, Arpad Pullai, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, writes:

'In February 1970 the Party Central Committee plenum emphasised that equality under a law has been fully secured, but in practice this is not always consistently observed. And not because of some defects in our laws or policy or their underlying principles. The cause should be sought in restrictions resulting from backward views on woman's role in society and shortcomings in her material position.

'Besides, we have to reckon with the inadequate level of the general and political education of many women, and much remains to be done to raise their activity and interest in public affairs. Some are inclined to the view that since we have enough

nurseries and factory canteens, and since our industry produces enough household appliances, the whole question of woman's equality is solved.'

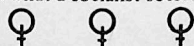
How true it is that there is only one race, the human race, and that we all live in one world, whatever our economic or social systems may be!

It is not only from Hungary that such reports come. Throughout the socialist world similar facts are being brought out into the open. The good thing about it is that such things are being discussed, so that we may hope that the many advances towards equality that women have received on paper will be fully implemented in practice in the years to come. The wind of change on this question is blowing in the socialist world. In the capitalist world too it is beginning to be felt.

This movement is not just to improve the lot of women and right the social injustices under which they have so long laboured. It is that. But it is also a great deal more. Some countries are farther advanced on the road to socialism than others; but there is still a long way to go before a socialist society is created, in which the old thought-ways have vanished and been replaced by new, socialist thought-ways.

To do this means that men must cease to think as they have thought these many thousand years in terms of their holding a leading place in society, assisted by their women help-mates. Instead the thought must be of co-operation on a completely equal footing of all individuals in the development of their society.

That, I believe, is what Women's Liberation ultimately involves. That, I believe, is what a socialist society means.



LETTERS

Dear Red Rag,

I FEEL that politics should also relate to the poetry of experience; and I feel that this is what is lacking in your rag. (I'm not trying to sound like D. H. Lawrence). For that reason, I think 'Bread and Roses' is a very good slogan: we need bread, but we also need roses (I'm not trying to sound like Boris Pasternak). Perhaps the gap (which also relates to the gap between the intellectuals and The People) could be part way filled with a little humour, irony and so forth?

I'm not quite sure who you're aiming at. Are you trying to solidify the 'political' wing of Women's Lib? (i.e. those women who relate to W.L. chiefly via Left-wing-New-Left concepts) If so, then I am the prototype of the women for whom you are writing. And frankly, my reaction is this: impatiently, I say to myself, yes I know all this, I'll put it by for when I really haven't got anything else to do but read it, or for when I find I need that kind of argument, put in that way.

Now I am not an anti-intellectual, but there is a massive contradiction in your magazine: it is all about class, about women and the working class, about equal pay; not one paragraph of all this will be comprehensible, I'm suggesting, to these women that you're talking about. Now I'm sure you're aware of this criticism (it is after all one of the commonest of criticisms around that the Left makes on its neighbours). I do think in this case though it's valid.

Now I know that one of the most nauseating things one can do is to patronise a potential working-class audience by deliberately 'talking down' to them—crassly over-simplifying everything, spattering around phrases that we fancy makes our style sound casual and unpretentious and sincere, and Every-Womanish—but still, we must find some way out of the problem of always just talking to ourselves.

Do we have to talk in this boring, second-hand language stripped of 'feminine' things like subjectivity and individual eccentricities of style? Isn't it all a bit of a strait-jacket on us? Aren't there better, more biting ways of saying intelligently what needs to be said? (I can see your reply: 'All right, Sister, you say them'.)

I'm sorry this is pretty 'unconstructive criticism', but I can't think of any very constructive things to say. I'm not suggesting the kind of self-indulgent drivel that fills the pages of SHREW as an alternative either.

I'm afraid I'm in most people's position. I just don't know. I know roughly what I don't like. I don't know what I do like or might want because I don't think it's in the world yet.

ANN PETTITT

Dear Red Rag,

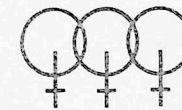
WE thought the presentation of it was excellent. The title is great too. Articles were all interesting, although the overall effect was a bit academic.

It would be better to include some articles of a more practical nature to vary it a bit, we felt, e.g., an account of an equal pay struggle by a woman involved, or something by May Hobbs on trying to unionise the night cleaners. I also wondered whether you could include a little humour in the form of cartoons etc?

There seems to be a great demand for this sort of magazine. I've sold mine to Communist Party members, a Labour Councillor, Women's Lib group members, International Socialist women. It's something you can feel proud to sell, anyway, as an example of Women's Lib opinions.

Another idea—could we get articles from other countries, e.g., a woman from the German Democratic Republic on how they got the abortion law reform, a woman from a Common Market country on what the EEC has meant as regards women's employment, etc.

SHEILA TAYLOR



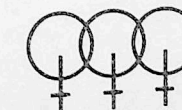
Dear Red Rag,

THE Women's Lib Movement has provoked us to a realisation of the way in which we, as men, are involved in the oppression of women. You have made us aware of the prevalence of sexism in the labour movement and in ourselves, and of the necessity for the eradication of this oppression for the attainment of socialism.

We owe this awareness, also, to Red Rag, a journal crucial for the development of a Marxist analysis of women's oppression and liberation. As men we have found it thought provoking, and a sound basis for discussion and action.

We therefore offer you our support, and look forward to the second issue.

DAN MUIR
MARTIN SMITH
LESLIE ZEEGAN
DAVID KESSEL
(for the MEN AGAINST SEXISM GROUP)



Dear Red Rag,

I'm Sorry.

Julian Doyle (male)

SONG

to the tune of

"Our Favourite Things!"

words by Jackie & Liz

Chip pans and brillos and dustpans and brushes,
Jeyes cloths and dusters and curly eyelashes,
Washing machines all filled up with clothes,
These are a few of our favourite things.

'Woman' keeps telling me that I should look pretty,
When most of the time I'm feeling quite shitty,
Skin that's like baby's, and teeth just like pearls,

So I can be just one of the girls.
Acne and hairyness,
We mustn't look a mess,
Our men would desert us
And we would be surplus
And make us feel so bad.

When we have intercourse, its not for us,
of course,
Having a tumbles not as good as a jumble!
We really dont like that sort of thing,
Babies and bottles are really our scene.

Politics and arguments are not in our sphere,
Thats for the men when they're out drink-
ing beer,

We just wash the dishes and tidy the floor,
Then look attractive when they're at the door,

Our defender!
Our protector!
Without him we'd crumble
We'd blunder and fumble
And make us feel so bad.





154

Forward to a Proletarian Revolutionary Women's Movement!

An Answer to the Reactionary Selma James

"Without a revolutionary theory there can be
no revolutionary movement"

"In its struggle for power, the proletariat has
no other weapon but organisation"

V. I. LENIN

Union of Women for Liberation

CONTENTS:

	page
Two articles written by U.W.L.comrades in reply to Selma James' article 'Women, the Unions and Work':	
What Must the Women's Liberation Movement Do? - an answer to Selma James.	1
What is to be done with Selma James.	32
Notes	42
Bibliography	46
Aims of the Union of Women for Liberation	47
Forthcoming meetings of the Women's National Co-ordinating Committee	inside back cover
List of available literature	back cover

WHAT MUST THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT DO? -

an answer to Selma James.

In April 1972 the Notting Hill Women's Liberation Workshop group published a pamphlet written by one of its members, Selma James. The title of this pamphlet is: 'Women, the Unions and Work. OR What is not to be done.' Every sentence in this pamphlet, as we will shortly demonstrate, is a distortion or a concentrated expression of reactionary thought, or both.

SUMMARY OF S. JAMES' VIEWS AS EXPOUNDED IN HER PAMPHLET, AND THE REASON FOR OUR REPLY
To anticipate, and by way of a brief summary of this pamphlet, we may state that Madam James pursues in this pamphlet the following objectives:

(1) She seeks to 'organise' women against men, to set women and men on each other's throats, rather than unite together in their common fight against their common enemy, monopoly capitalism/imperialism;

(2) She seeks to 'organise' women in order to disorganise the working-class movement. She seeks to build a 'movement' (only God and reactionary Selma James know what this would mean as used by Selma James) whose main aim, it appears from the pamphlet, would be to disorganise and to campaign against organisation as such. In other words, in the circles in which our petty-bourgeois author, Selma James, moves, to organise and to be part of any organisation, particularly a working-class organisation, is considered the worst misfortune - an utter humiliation;

(3) She makes an attempt to discredit and refute Marxism-Leninism; launches open as well as veiled attacks on the thoroughly scientific Marxist theory, as fully propounded by Engels in his 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State', concerning the cause of the oppression of women and the way forward to their liberation; and tries her best to embellish the thoroughly reactionary idea of 'liberating' women, not by introducing them into public production, but by paying them for housework i.e. by keeping them chained to the kitchen sink and, therefore, also to the bourgeois ideology which has such a hold over women because of their backwardness - a product of the previous confinement of women in the kitchen etc.;

(4) She seeks to 'organise' women in order to abolish the family and not for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. With the consistency and accuracy of a petty-bourgeois intellectual she always manages to hit the wrong target.

In brief, her pamphlet is a reactionary diversion and should be understood as such by everyone in the women's movement. A consistent fight should be waged against the ideas contained in it. It is only by so doing that we shall be able to build a revolutionary women's movement, which is part and parcel of the general working-class movement and which does not weaken the revolutionary struggle of the working class for the overthrow of capitalism by causing women to fight against men, by causing them to disorganise, by disarming them politically by preaching the renunciation of revolutionary theory, and by causing them to fight against an imaginary enemy - the family - rather than the real enemy - capitalism.

It is, then, for these reasons that we have found it necessary to refute the petty-bourgeois rubbish and reactionary nonsense contained in Selma James' pamphlet.

Selma James, on page 1 of this document, says

"It is impossible any longer to sit in the protection of a group and see the potential of the movement squandered."

We must say that for us, too, it has become "impossible any longer to sit and see the potential of the movement squandered" by the reactionary preachings of the servile lackeys of the bourgeoisie such as Selma

James, who have set themselves the task of adding to the confusion in the women's movement, disorganising this movement, splitting it and of thus rendering a useful service to the bourgeoisie. Whether this service to the bourgeoisie is rendered by our petty bourgeois intentionally or unintentionally is of no concern either to us or to the movement. That such service is in fact rendered remains a most important fact which calls for a resolute ideological, political and organisational struggle against those rendering this service. Hence the present pamphlet. Let us therefore deal with Selma James' distortions in some detail.

Madam James establishes her credentials as a "revolutionary" by stating in the preface to this pamphlet of her's:

"Ultimately the only demand which is not co-optable is the armed population demanding the end of capitalism. But we feel that at this moment these demands can be a force against what capital wants and for what we want."

The anxious reader shall search in vain to find a single idea in the whole of this pamphlet which, if followed, could contribute to the overthrow of capitalism. There is nothing in it with respect to ending capitalism, there are no "demands" in it which "can be a force against what capital wants and for what we want", because "what we want" (and "what we want" according to the author of this pamphlet, Selma James, are such wonderful things as setting women against men, "organising" to disorganise, renouncing revolutionary theory, cringing before spontaneity and achieving the continued enslavement of women and, therefore, the continuation of capitalism) is precisely "what capital wants".

Continues Selma James:

"They [the demands] are intended to mobilise women both 'inside' and 'outside' the women's liberation movement. They could provide a perspective which would affect decisions about local and national struggles. After discussion and modification they could become integrated and far-reaching goals which the women's movement could come to stand for." (p i)

Supposing the demands contained in the pamphlet could actually mobilise women, what kind of "perspective" could they provide to the women's liberation movement, in what way could these demands "affect decisions about local and national struggles"? A careful reading of the pamphlet leaves no doubt whatsoever that the only "perspective" "these demands" could provide is a reactionary perspective and the only way these demands could "affect decisions about local and national struggles" would be in a reactionary way. This we say because "demands" such as the setting of women against men, renunciation of revolutionary theory, promoting the idea of disorganising, the continued enslavement of women in the kitchen etc, - such "demands" cannot but be considered as reactionary demands. By mobilising women on the basis of these "demands" the women's liberation movement will not become a revolutionary fighting force against capitalism, but a reactionary force fighting on the side of decadent and decaying capitalism; on the basis of these "demands" our movement will not be working for any "far-reaching goals", it will only be working for the preservation of those "goals" which, in Britain, were achieved by the bourgeoisie a long while ago i.e. capitalism. What we, therefore, need is not a "modification" of the "demands" in this pamphlet but their complete rejection and the acceptance in their stead by the movement of those demands and premises which are truly revolutionary.

SELMA JAMES' OPPOSITION TO WOMEN WORKING

Says Selma James

"There are more ways than one in which the women's movement can be coopted and be cut off from the possibilities of becoming an autonomous [our emphasis] and revolutionary political movement. One is that we will assist capitalism to introduce and integrate women into new facets of its exploitative relations."

In support of this argument she then goes on to quote a passage from

the Financial Times of March 9th, 1971 which runs as follows

".....The thousands of trained girls who come out of the universities every year are desperately anxious to escape from the triple trap of teaching, nursing, or shorthand-typing

"Many of these girls are clearly of high ability, and they constitute a pool from which skilled middle management could be drawn. They would be as hard working and conscientious as only a grateful outsider could be, and it is conceivable that, in spite of the equal pay legislation, they might not cost as much as male equivalents, at least in the first instance. We will use such women, in increasing numbers, when we realise that they exist and feel able to recognise their qualities. Until then, a good deal of talent that is costing a lot of money to train in our universities will continue to be wasted, and British industry will have failed to see a source of renewed energy and vitality that is before its very eyes." (p.1)

We wish to make the following observations on the above argument.

Firstly, it is not explained by the author as to what is the meaning of the words "autonomous and revolutionary political movement". Does "autonomous" here mean independent of the working-class movement and proletarian politics? Does it mean a movement which in every way is opposed to men? Or does it simply mean a separate women's organisation? Rereading of the whole pamphlet confirms that only the first two of the above three meanings are intended by the author. When Selma James advocates an "autonomous" women's movement, it can only mean one of the following two things: either she wants an "autonomous" women's movement which is independent of and cut off from the working class or that she wants a movement which is independent of the bourgeoisie. There can be no third meaning attached to this expression, for there can be no movement which is "autonomous" in the sense of not being bound up with the interests of one class or the other, either the working class or the capitalist class. Selma James, we repeat, wants an "autonomous" women's movement of a kind which is independent of the proletarian movement and proletarian ideology, and which is, therefore, completely dependent on the bourgeoisie and on bourgeois ideology.

Secondly, just because the Financial Times says that women graduates ought to be drawn into middle management, it does not at all constitute a justification for us to oppose the introduction of women as a whole into industry. It does not constitute such a justification because -

(a) the women graduates are not the only women with which the women's liberation movement ought to be concerned; in fact women graduates form a tiny minority of the female population, and therefore the interests of this tiny minority (and a privileged minority at that) cannot and should not be given preference over the interests of the overwhelming majority of women i.e. proletarian women;

(b) whenever the bourgeoisie draws any section of the population into public production they are motivated by nothing else than the simple desire to make a profit. Nevertheless, its subjective desires notwithstanding, it ends up by producing not only profit but also its own grave-diggers - the proletariat. Selma James is only able to see the exploitative aspect of wage-labour. She is either unable or unwilling to see the revolutionary aspect of it. She cannot see that if women are drawn into industry that represents an advance over their present condition, for it breaks the isolation and economic dependence of the women and provides them with an opportunity to organise themselves. No one is asserting that the drawing of women into industry automatically makes them revolutionary, anymore than has been the case with men. What we are saying is that the introduction of women into social production lays the basis, prepares the way as it were, for their introduction to truly revolutionary proletarian politics. We must, therefore, on no account oppose the introduction of women into social production. The bourgeoisie is drawing women into social production to make profits - to

exploit women. We must seize this opportunity and organise working women and bring to them truly revolutionary politics and raise their consciousness to a revolutionary consciousness. Such is the nature of the task confronting the women's liberation movement in this regard - a task which is beyond the comprehension of our petty-bourgeois author.

"Another, but connected, way of co-optation has in some measure already measure already taken place, and its agent has been left organisations.For them [left organisations] the 'real' working class is white, male and over thirty. They effectively want to make us auxiliary to the 'general' struggle - as if they represented the generalisation of the struggle; as if there could be a generalised struggle without women, without men joining with women for women's demands." (p 2)

Selma James' feminism and her burning hatred not only of men but also of proletarian politics emerge clearly from the above paragraph from her pamphlet. She charges all left organisations with racism, male supremacy and age supremacy without giving a single example to substantiate her accusations. Far be it from us to even want to defend many of the so-called left organisations. What we demand is that if there are some 'left' organisations which practice racism and male supremacy then they should be named and should justly stand exposed. We know that there are some 'left' organisations which are the purveyors of bourgeois ideology into the ranks of the working class. Among such 'left' organisations can be included the Communist Party of Great Britain (C.P.G.B.), various Trotskyite organisations and the so-called Labour Party. These organisations peddle bourgeois ideology within the proletarian movement and fail to conduct a fight against the various forms of bourgeois ideology such as racism and male supremacy. These organisations deserve to be condemned for spreading or for failing to check the spread of bourgeois ideology within the working-class movement. But the example of these organisations, 'left' in name but bourgeois in essence, cannot be used to condemn all proletarian organisations, truly proletarian organisations. To do so would be bourgeois trickery aimed at confusing ordinary women and making them hostile to proletarian organisations and proletarian politics. Yet this is precisely the kind of trickery Selma James has indulged in. We believe that she has 'good' reason, for she is a feminist - a female supremacist - and is, therefore, just as much guided by bourgeois ideology as is any male supremacist. She has not the slightest desire to fight against bourgeois ideology. What she wants is the perpetuation of this ideology. This alone can explain the fact that she wants a female dominated society - a society in which female capitalists dominate - rather than a society in which neither men nor women dominate, a society in which both men and women are equal. Such a society can only be a socialist society - a society which Selma James certainly does not desire to see because a socialist society would not ensure female domination.

SELMA JAMES' DISTORTIONS OF LENIN'S VIEWS, & OUR REFUTATION OF HER DISTORTIONS.

Continues Selma James in her attack on left organisations:

"A major issue on which we have swallowed their [left organisations] orientation and been co-opted to defeat our own movement has been on the question of unionising women.

"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?'. In many ways it is a brilliant pamphlet, but it was written in the early days of the Russian movement, in 1902. Lenin learnt from the workers and peasant of Russia in 1905 and 1917 and repudiated a good deal of what he wrote before these two revolutions. Left people do not speak of Lenin's later conclusions, and in my view much of what passes for left theory (and practice) today is pre-1902. In 1972 this is a serious charge, and I think it can be proved. They can read Lenin and quote him. But unlike Lenin, they are not able to learn from the actions that workers take." (p 2)

A superficial reading of this paragraph might lead an inattentive reader to gain the impression that it is full of praise for Lenin. As a matter of fact every line here is a distortion:

The reader is left with an impression that Lenin was in favour of a "trade union consciousness". No libel could be more malicious than this. The facts are just to the contrary. Lenin's pamphlet "What is to be done?" is full of biting criticism of those who advocated "lending the economic struggle itself a political character" - i.e. subservience to spontaneity i.e. subservience to trade union politics. The whole of this pamphlet is a brilliant attack on economism - on those, like the petty-bourgeois Selma James, who cringe and kneel in prayer before spontaneity. It is a pamphlet that demands of the revolutionaries the ability to convert trade union consciousness, which the workers acquire without any assistance from the revolutionary intelligentsia, into revolutionary consciousness, that is "to convert trade union politics into Social Democratic political struggle."

Here is what Lenin says:

"The demand to lend the economic struggle itself a political character' most strikingly expresses subservience to spontaneity in the sphere of political activity. Very often the economic struggle spontaneously assumes a political character, that is to say, without the intervention of the 'revolutionary bacilli - the intelligentsia', without the intervention of the class-conscious Social-Democrats. The economic struggle of the English workers, for instance, also assumed a political character without any intervention on the part of the socialists. The task of the Social-Democrats, however, is not exhausted by political agitation on an economic basis; their task is to convert trade-unionist politics into Social-Democratic political struggle, to utilise the sparks of political consciousness which the economic struggle generates among the workers, for the purpose of raising the workers to the level of Social-Democratic political consciousness. The Martynovs, however, instead of raising and stimulating the spontaneously awakening political consciousness of the workers, how to spontaneity and repeat over and over ad nauseam, that the economic struggle 'impels' the workers to realise their own lack of political rights. It is unfortunate, gentlemen, that the spontaneously awakening trade-unionist political consciousness does not 'impel' you to an understanding of your Social-Democratic tasks." (Lenin: What is to be Done? footnote, p.415)

And further:

"For the secretary of any, say English, trade union always helps the workers to carry on the economic struggle, he helps them to expose factory abuses, explains the injustice of the laws and of measures that hamper the freedom to strike and to picket (i.e., to warn all and sundry that a strike is proceeding at a certain factory), explains the partiality of arbitration court judges who belong to the bourgeois classes, etc., etc. In a word, every trade-union secretary conducts and helps to conduct 'the economic struggle against the employers and the government'. It cannot be too strongly maintained that this is still not Social-Democracy, that the Social-Democrats' ideal should not be the trade-union secretary, but the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat. Compare, for example, a leader like Robert Knight (the well-known secretary and leader of the Boiler-Makers' Society, one of the most powerful trade unions in England), with Wilhelm Liebknecht, and try to

apply to them the contrasts that Martynov draws in his controversy with Iskra. You will see - I am running through Martynov's article - that Robert Knight engaged more in 'calling the masses to certain concrete actions', while Wilhelm Liebknecht engaged more in 'the revolutionary elucidation of the whole of the present system or partial manifestations of it'; that Robert Knight 'formulated the immediate demands of the proletariat and indicated the means by which they can be achieved', whereas Wilhelm Liebknecht, while doing this, did not hold back from 'simultaneously guiding the activities of various opposition strata', 'dictating a positive programme of action for them' ; that Robert Knight strove 'as far as possible to lend the economic struggle itself a political character' and was excellently able 'to submit to the government concrete demands promising certain palpable results', whereas Liebknecht engaged to a much greater degree in 'one-sided' 'exposures'; that Robert Knight attached more significance to the 'forward march of the drab everyday struggle', whereas Liebknecht attached more significance to the 'propaganda of brilliant and completed ideas' ; that Liebknecht converted the paper he was directing into 'an organ of revolutionary opposition that exposed the state of affairs in our country, particularly the political state of affairs, insofar as it affected the interests of the most varied strata of the population', whereas Robert Knight 'worked for the cause of the working class in close organic connection with the proletarian struggle' - if by 'close and organic connection' is meant the subservience to spontaneity which we examined above, by taking the examples of Krichevsky and Martynov - and 'restricted the sphere of his influence', convinced, of course, as is Martynov, that by doing so he deepened that influence'. In a word, you will see that de facto Martynov reduces Social-Democracy to the level of trade-unionism, though he does so, of course, not because he does not desire the good of Social-Democracy, but simply because he is a little too much in a hurry to render Plekhanov more profound, instead of taking the trouble to understand him. " (ibid p 423)

We could quote many more passages from 'What is to be Done?' which irrefutably put on record Lenin's irreconcilable struggle against trade-union consciousness and trade-union politics. But all these passages have 'escaped' the attention of Selma James who, since she makes a reference to it, must have read this book of Lenin's. In fact she says: "In many ways it is a brilliant pamphlet". We are quite entitled to ask, - what is left of the "brilliance" of this pamphlet if the main theme of this pamphlet - a struggle against trade-union politics and for revolutionary politics - is either ignored, or misunderstood or deliberately distorted? What kind of honour are we doing the author of this "brilliant pamphlet" if we ascribe to him ideas which are the complete opposite of those he has actually expressed in the pamphlet? In all fairness, it must be said, that the 'praise' heaped by Selma James on Lenin for having written a "brilliant pamphlet" turns out to be a kiss of Judas which Lenin could well do without. In all fairness, it must be said, that Selma James is using the name of Lenin to fight against revolutionary Leninism.

Having described Lenin's pamphlet as "brilliant", Selma James continues: "But it was written in the early days of the Russian movement, in 1902. Lenin....repudiated a good deal of what he wrote Much of what passes for left theory today is pre-1902."

The unwritten conclusion is : we need not take seriously anything in this "brilliant pamphlet" of Lenin's because it was written in 1902 and Lenin himself "repudiated" at a later date not only what he wrote in this pamphlet, but also "a good deal of what he wrote before these two [1905 and 1917] revolutions." Is that really so? NO, it is not so. It is an absolute lie that Lenin repudiated "a good deal of what he wrote before these two revolutions". What would be left of Leninism if Lenin had repudiated "a good deal of what he wrote before these two revolutions"?

NOTHING, is the answer. Selma James is making a futile attempt - she is not the first nor will she be the last to indulge in such a reactionary attempt - to divide Leninism into two parts, the supposedly rubbishy and useless Leninism of the period lasting up to 1917 and the good Leninism of the post 1917 era. It is well known that such an attempt was made by Trotsky as well. Selma James is doing no more than following in the wake of Trotskyite slanders. She is "free" to follow anyone she likes but she must answer our question: where and when did Lenin "repudiate a good deal of what he wrote" before the revolutions of 1905 and 1917? If she cannot answer this question (and we know that she cannot) then she must stand exposed as an ordinary despicable bourgeois liar whose main aim is to sow confusion in the women's liberation movement, divert it from the revolutionary path and channel it along the reformist bourgeois path. This and this alone can explain why Selma James has resorted to such distortions and utter falsehoods in presenting Lenin's views.

One more point on this paragraph. Perhaps there are some 'left' organisations who say that "we must bring women to what is called a 'trade-union consciousness'? We know that such 'left' organisations do actually exist in the form of the C.P.G.B., the various Trotskyite organisations such as the Socialist Labour League (S.L.L.), International Socialists (I.S.) and the International Marxist Group (I.M.G). Therefore, the correct thing would be to wage a resolute struggle against the economism of these organisations and to expose their anti-Leninism. But what Selma James does is to deliberately confuse the above reformist organisations with really proletarian organisations and she deliberately confuses the anti-Leninism of these organisations with Leninism. In brief, she makes an attempt to confuse Leninism with anti-Leninism, for if Lenin "repudiated a good deal of what he wrote before these two revolutions", as Selma James asserts that he did, then, what passes for Leninism generally (and correctly) stands "repudiated" by Lenin himself! The overall impression is created in which Leninism and anti-Leninism become indistinguishable from each other! The result can only be to cause confusion in the minds of those who are but little acquainted with revolutionary theory and the great writings of Comrade Lenin. It is therefore the duty of all revolutionary women to become infected with the spirit of intolerance towards all bourgeois intellectuals, such as Selma James, who join the women's movement in order precisely to subvert it by sowing confusion and causing theoretical chaos.

SELMA JAMES OPPORTUNIST VIEWS ON ORGANISATION

Having presented a distorted version of Lenin's standpoint, our author, Selma James, goes on to discuss the miner's strike, as a result of which strike, says Selma James

"We have all had a leap in consciousness as a result of the action of the class. Therefore what we consider possible is expanded. This is the immediate reason for our restlessness. We are not satisfied any more to stand aside and let the world go by. After three years of our movement, Northern Ireland, Zimbabwe and then this strike, we want to do something, but not just anything." (p 3)

We, in the Union of Women for Liberation, are always glad to discover people who have had a "leap in consciousness" provided that it is a leap forward and not a leap backwards. But unfortunately in the case of Selma James, as indeed is the case of the bourgeois intelligentsia generally, this "leap in consciousness" turns out to be a leap backwards. It is always the case with the petty-bourgeois radicals, such as Selma James, that after "many years' consideration" (p 1) they come out with some really old reactionary rubbish about which they talk ad nauseum as though they had discovered a New America; and this reactionary rubbish they represent as a "leap in consciousness". To what conclusions has this "leap in consciousness" led our author? The conclusion to which this much trumpeted "leap in consciousness" has led our author, Selma James, is : "we want to build a movement which is at once political and new, one which speaks specifically to the needs of women." (p 3) (our emphasis - U.W.L.) That the real meaning of this statement is the

advocacy by Selma James of the abolition of unions, the renunciation of revolutionary theory under the pretext of "making our own analysis", (p6) the setting of women against men, the working for the abolition of any imaginary enemy - the family - rather than for the revolutionary overthrow of the real enemy - capitalism -, the continued enslavement of women, and general support for capitalism, can be seen from the following statements in her pamphlet:

on the abolition of the unions -

"There is no doubt that certain slave conditions are done away with when a factory is organised, and usually when workers in factories organise into unions (or against them). It seems the only alternative to slavery. The whole history of the class is bound up with this institution. But it is the way workers get unions formed, organising together and almost always going on strike, that abolishes the slave conditions, not the unions. It is their power that brings the union in and it is their power that abolishes slave conditions." (p7)

on keeping women out of social production -

"Here is where the movement can be made or broken. We can be the modern suffragettes, only more dangerous, since where they invited women to vote and be free, we will be inviting them to achieve freedom through work." (p 13)

and further

"We demand wages for housework" (p 15)

on renunciation of revolutionary theory -

"I would like to quote from a forthcoming document which does not analyse women from the point of view of Marxism, but Marxism from the point of view of women" (p8)

and further

"The first step in the process of our liberation at this stage is to make our own independent evaluation of the political situation in this country (and later in the world - with the help of women in other countries) on the basis of what our guts and people like those in the mining areas have told us, and then act on it." (p 19)
(our emphasis - U.W.L.)

Such then is the nature of the "leap in consciousness" achieved by our petty-bourgeois author. One cannot help laughing at the pathetic sight of someone, whose authorship has given birth to such gems as are contained in the above quotations, going around boasting about having had a sudden "leap in consciousness". The whole thing would really be funny if it was not so tragic! The truth is that the only thing that has caused our author to make a leap is her restlessness; in her case the "leap in consciousness" is not the result of scientific understanding of either the position of women in any class society, capitalist society in particular, or the position and role of classes generally. The result, therefore, has been a "leap" backwards. This is how matters stand with regard to the notorious "leap in consciousness" with which you have been afflicted, Madam James.

To return to the subject of unions. Selma James demands the abolition of the unions because she thinks that unions hinder the unity of the workers and militant action on the part of the workers.

"What distinguished the miners", says Selma James, "is that they didn't depend on their unions but on their own self-organisation and methods of struggle. More than once during the strike, the union tried to dictate the terms of struggle. For example, when the union asked workers to man safety crews, or tried to discourage them from violent defence of picket lines, or stood in the way of the women organising independently. But the mining community went

its own autonomous way. As a result, it won, among other reasons because in this way it won other workers to its cause." (p 3)
(First and last emphasis - U.W.L.)

Selma James is here hopelessly confused.

She confuses unions with union bureaucracy. It is right and proper for us to denounce and expose the trade union bureaucrats of the T.U.C. and of the individual unions and expose them as class-collaborators and the betrayers of the interests of the working class. But on no pretext should these class collaborationist policies be confused with the organisation of workers formed to resist the daily encroachments of capital on their wages. And yet this is precisely what Selma James is guilty of. She advocates the disbandment, the abolition of the unions, the organisations of workers to protect their living standards, on the grounds that the union leadership has become bureaucratized and that this privileged bureaucracy subordinates the interests of the workers to its own selfish interests and its policy of class collaboration. The correct conclusion, however, would be a demand for a resolute struggle against the trade union bureaucracy, thorough exposure of this bureaucracy, resulting in the isolation from the workers of this bureaucracy. It is our duty to enlighten rank and file members of the unions, to raise their consciousness and make them aware of the tasks facing them. But this cannot be done, Selma James' assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, without an organisation, outside of an organisation, by-passing an organisation, as it were. The role of the organisation must not be underestimated. Without organisation the working class is nothing; with organisation it is everything. But it has become fashionable once again for the bourgeois intelligentsia to assert that all organisation is the cause of all evils - all our troubles; only if the working class could get rid of this burden, organisation, weighing heavy on its back, then it would be able to achieve miracles. Historical experience shows just the contrary. Our bourgeois intelligentsia rush to their conclusion regarding the need to get rid of organisation only because they find the ideological, political and organisational tasks, requiring many years patient and painstaking work, in order to organise the working class and to prepare it for its historical mission of overthrowing capitalism, too difficult and beyond them. And with usual modesty they think that if this task is too difficult and beyond them then it must be too difficult and beyond everybody else. Rest assured ladies and gentlemen, this task, difficult though it is, shall be performed by truly proletarian revolutionaries. There is no royal road to revolution. But our unstable intelligentsia want a revolution, like everything else, on the cheap. So, finding the revolutionary tasks difficult and beyond them, they advocate such 'solutions' as the disbandment of all organisation so that the working class, no longer fettered by organisational ties, may, one fine morning (when our intelligentsia are fast asleep), rise up without any leadership, overthrow capitalism, wake our intellectuals up, -not too early - and put them in positions of authority as the guardians of the interests of the working class. NO, friends we can guarantee nothing of this sort will ever happen. The working class will be victorious only when, among other things, it is led by the highest form of organisation - a revolutionary proletarian party. Here is what Lenin says on the importance of organisation to the proletariat;

"In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation. Disunited by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by forced labour for capital, constantly thrust back to the 'lower depths' of utter destitution, savagery, and degeneration, the proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only through its ideological unification on the principles of Marxism being reinforced by the material unity of organisation, which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class. Neither the senile rule of the Russian autocracy nor the decrepit rule of inter-national capital will be able to withstand this army. It will more and more firmly close its ranks, in spite

of all zigzags and backward steps, in spite of the opportunist phrase-mongering of the Girondists of present-day Social-Democracy, in spite of the self-satisfied exaltation of the retrograde circle spirit and in spite of the tinsel and fuss of intellectualist anarchism*" (Lenin, 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back' p 211)

Selma James says that the miners won their victory⁽³⁾ because they were successfully able to prevent the union from "leading" them. What she should be saying is that the miners were able to prevent the union bureaucracy, not the union, from "leading" them. The miners won also because of their excellent organisation and not simply by preventing the union bureaucracy from "leading" them. The correct conclusions to draw from the miners' strike would, in our view, be:-

(a) the need for a determined struggle against the bureaucrats of the unions who are always attempting to enter into sell-out agreements with the employers and the Government.

(b) the need for an excellent organisation of workers headed by such leaders who truly represent the interests of ordinary workers.

But what are Selma James' conclusions? The conclusions she draws are totally erroneous. She says: let us have done with the organisation. The "mining community" she says won because "it went its own autonomous way. As a result it won, among other reasons because in this way it won other workers to its cause." This sentence seems to indicate that the non-existence of a miners' organisation was a condition precedent to the other workers showing solidarity with the miners. The general principle, therefore, seems to be that only on the basis of the non-existence of an organisation can the working class be united. The conclusion again is: let us have done with the organisation. But, we repeat, this is a thoroughly erroneous conclusion. In order to unite the whole of the working class, what is needed is the creation of the highest form of organisation known to the working class - a revolutionary party - and not the disbandment of all organisation.

It is well known that unions were formed by workers to be able successfully to resist cuts in wages. The existence of such organisations to defend the economic interests of the workers is dictated by the very existence of the system of capitalist production. What had Selma James to offer by way of a replacement if the unions are to be abolished? Her answer is the class itself, or, if you please, the "autonomous" action of the class itself. But "the class" cannot act except through an organisation. All classes have their organisation. This is true of the bourgeois class as well as of the proletarian class. The bourgeoisie is highly organised. It has in Britain, for instance, not one but a number of bourgeois political parties, who mislead the working class in the interests of the ruling financial oligarchy; it has state power at its disposal - the army, the police, the bureaucracy; it controls the media and so on and so forth. In these circumstances to say that the "class", without an organisation to coordinate its activities, will defeat the bourgeoisie, is tantamount to saying that an army without a general staff will defeat another army with a general staff. In these circumstances to demand the abolition of any form of organisation is to demand the disarming of the working class - it is to demand its defeat. Nothing could be more criminal, more treacherous, than such a demand. It is a demand which all revolutionary women (and men), who are fighting for their liberation, must reject in an unequivocal way.

If the present unions are no good (and we know the defects they suffer from e.g. narrow and reactionary craft mentality, sectionalism, their domination by bureaucracy and bourgeois ideology, etc.) then, those who are demanding their abolition have a duty to suggest alternative substitutes. Maybe the present unions have indeed become obsolete and should be replaced by some other type of organisation. The amount of

*of which Selma James provides a prime example.

investigation done so far does not entitle us to declare ourselves on the subject. One thing, however, is certain. Whatever happens to the present unions, the workers will certainly not be able to get by, let alone make any advances, without an organisation. This simple truth seems to be beyond the comprehension of Selma James.

TRADE UNIONS AND SELMA JAMES

Having drawn incorrect, and reactionary conclusions from the miners' strike, Selma James turns her attention to the particular away from the general. Hitherto she had 'informed' us that organisation as such was a hindrance to the working class, "class" if you please, solidarity. Now, she goes on to argue that women should not join the unions because of the specific role that the unions have in the past played "in relation to women". (p 3) In this context she draws our attention, very correctly in our view, to such evils as the toleration by the unions of the maintenance of unequal rates of pay, their failure to organise a struggle for equal pay, acceptance by the unions of job categories which keep women as the lowest paid, the lack of enthusiasm that the unions have shown in the recruitment of women. These are all valid points with which we agree completely. But what should be our conclusions, what should be our attitude, our line of action in the face of the prevalence of these evils?

In our view, the only correct course to adopt would be to organise women, get them to join the unions and fight against discrimination on grounds of sex. In our view, the only correct course to adopt would be to conduct revolutionary propaganda and make our men comrades realise that the discrimination against women also, in the end, constitutes a discrimination against them. For instance a low paid woman can always be used by the bourgeoisie to undercut and replace men - to reduce men's wages. More than that - the toleration by men of discrimination against women divides the working class on sex grounds, it sets one half (female) of the working class against the other half (male). It further postpones the day of proletarian revolution. What is required is the maximum unity of the members of the working class, men and women, not their disunity. Yet disunity is the only consequence of pursuing the policy advocated by Selma James. She would have women taken out of social production (more on this anon) and those who insist on working outside of the home - she will give them the orders to march out of the unions. She will then collect them all in a women's organisation (!! Previously we were told that all organisation was a hindrance to "class" action and solidarity.) and then begin the task of making "our own independent evaluation of the political situation in this country (and later in the world [!!!!] with the help of women in other countries) on the basis of what our guts and people like those in the mining areas have told us, and then act on it."

We leave aside for later discussion the wealth of reactionary thought contained in this passage. We shall, on the basis of this passage, simply note the burning desire that our author has for rejecting all evaluation, all theory, with which men had anything to do, the burning desire that she has for turning men and women into arch enemies of each other. We can judge from this alone what she means when she talks about "class" action, and since on page 9 she uses the word "class" as being synonymous with women, "the class acting for itself" must mean an army of women fighting against men. Such is the nature of Selma James' class action that it gets men and women fighting each other, rather than uniting in order to fight monopoly capitalism.

Selma James then makes the silly point that unions do not recognise the existence of housewives, that housewives are not protected by the unions because "unions are organisations which are supposed to protect

(some) workers in (some) work institutions." (p 5) - quite so. Yes, trade unions, as the very name implies, are organised on the basis of trade to protect workers in that trade. If women (or men for that matter) are not in that trade or stay at home, then, surely the particular trade union cannot in anyway protect them. This, in our view, would all the more be an argument favouring the introduction of women into social production and their joining the unions and not, as Selma James would have them, by women "refusing the myth of liberation through work" (p 11) and by their whole-sale walk out from the unions. Unions, by their very nature, cannot protect the general interests of the working class. For that a higher form of organisation of the working class - a proletarian revolutionary party - is required. For such a party there can be no substitute. If the unions were a substitute for a revolutionary party, we would have had a revolution by now. How little this simple truth is understood by Selma James is clear when we read her innocent complaint that the unions "structurally make a generalised struggle impossible". (p 6) We repeat, the unions are not meant to look after the general struggle of the working class. That precisely is the job of the party which is the vanguard of all the toilers and is for that very reason not organised on the basis of trade. Madam James thinks she has really made an earth-shattering discovery with her realisation that the unions "structurally make a generalised struggle impossible".

Another reason why, according to Selma James, women should not join the unions is that all unions ever do is to secure a wage rise. Displaying brilliance of logic and mastery of economics continues Selma James: a wage rise is as good as no rise.

"Until recently the capitalist class with the help of unions had convinced men that if they got a rise in pay they got a rise in standard of living. That's not true, and women always know it. They give men a pay packet on Friday and take it back from us on Saturday at the shops." (p 6)

No need to say that Selma James has got it wrong again. As a matter of fact a wage rise does constitute a rise in the standard of living of the workers i.e. a rise over and above that standard of living which the workers enjoyed before the wage rise. A wage rise at the same time constitutes a fall in the profits of the capitalists. That is precisely the reason why the capitalist ever resist demands for wage rises; if a wage rise has the same effect as no rise, then the capitalist would never make any fuss and never put up any resistance, such as they do now, to demands for higher wages. Here is what Marx had to say in answer to the similarly childish assertion of Citizen Weston who claimed that the amount of real wages, that is to say, of the wages as measured by the quantity of the commodities they can buy, is a fixed amount, a constant magnitude :

"Since the capitalist and workman have only to divide this limited value, that is, the value measured by the total labour of the working man, the more the one gets the less will the other get, and vice versa. Whenever a quantity is given, one part of it will increase inversely as the other decreases. If the wages change, profits will change in an opposite direction. If wages fall, profits will rise, and if wages rise, profits will fall. If the working man, on our former supposition, gets three shillings, equal to one-half of the value he has created, or if his whole working day consists half of paid, half of unpaid labour, the rate of profit will be 100 per cent., because the capitalist would also get three shillings. If the working man receives only two shillings, or works only one-third of the whole day for himself, the capitalist will get four shillings, and the rate of profit will be 200 per cent. If the working man receives four shillings, the capitalist will only receive two, and the rate of profit would sink to 50 per cent., but all these variations

will not affect the value of the commodity. A general rise of wages would, therefore, result in a fall of the general rate of profit, but not affect values. (our emphasis - U.W.L.) (Marx: 'Wages, Price and Profit.' p 61)

Should the working class ever try to improve its economic position by demanding wage rises? Here is the answer given by Marx:

"..... the general tendency of capitalistic production is not to raise, but to sink the average standard of wages, or to push the value of labour more or less to its minimum limit. Such being the tendency of things in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital, and abandon their attempts at making the best of the occasional chances for their temporary improvement? If they did, they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation. I think I have shown that their struggles for the standard of wages are incidents inseparable from the whole wages system, that in 99 cases out of 100 their efforts at raising wages are only efforts at maintaining the given value of labour, and that the necessity of debating their price with the capitalist is inherent in their condition of having to sell themselves as commodities. By cowardly giving way in their every-day conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement." (ibid p 77)

But this in no way means that the working class should limit itself to economic struggle alone; political action to abolish the wages system itself is of the utmost importance. Continues Marx:

"At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these every-day struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!' they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!'" (ibid p 78)

So much then, for the assertion of Selma James that wages rises are worthless. What can be said of such people who assert that wage rises do not mean a rise in the standard of living because "they / the capitalists / give men a pay packet on Friday and take it back from us on Saturday at the shops" ? We can only say that either these people are ignoramuses, or, worse still, that they are deliberately trying to help the capitalist class in its desperate efforts to depress the wages of the working class. That this is exactly what Selma James seems to be trying to achieve becomes even more clear when we read her next sentence which says: "we have to organise the struggle for the other side of wages - against inflation - and that can only be done outside the unions ... " (p 6) The whole paragraph in which these two statements appear, which these two statements appear, might as well have been written by a bourgeois Chancellor of the Exchequer. Have we not heard our present Tory Chancellor, Mr. Barber, repeat again and again that the main thing bedevilling British industry was inflation, and that higher wages were the chief cause of inflation? Have we not heard him again and again appeal to the working class to be more 'sensible' and use 'restraint' in the sphere of wage-claims so that the 'nation' might deal with inflation

and get over its present difficulties? Have we not heard him say again and again that higher wages did not lead to prosperity but were a way to disaster? And so on and so forth. Mr. Barber is right in so far as he is speaking for the bourgeoisie. Inflation, if allowed to continue at the present rate, could certainly lead to disaster for the bourgeoisie both economically and politically. Inflation is, therefore, a problem for the bourgeoisie mainly; it is not a problem for the working class. But Selma James' opportunist views in the matter of organisation have led and could not but have led her to take the same stance as a bourgeois chancellor, and come out in support of the bourgeois class by her advocacy of abolition of unions in particular and organisation in general, by her admonishing the working class for demanding wage rises, and by her crusade against inflation. What the Tories wish to do with the help of the Industrial Relations Act and the whole might of the state, Selma James wishes to achieve by persuasion and simple deception. That is the only difference. That is where Selma James' opportunist views on organisation have landed her. Such is the slippery slope of opportunism that those who step on it quickly roll down to the bottom!

SELMA JAMES' OPPORTUNIST VIEWS ON THEORY

Selma James, not being content with her sabotage and subversive activities in the sphere of organisation, extends her wrecking activities to the realm of theory. She says "... I believe in order to have our own politics we must make our own analysis of women and therefore our own analysis of the whole working class struggle. We have been taking so much for granted that happens to be around, and restricting, segregating ourselves to speaking and writing about women, that it looks like we are only supposed to analyse and understand women after others (men) have analysed the class 'in general' - excluding us. This is to be male-dominated in the profoundest sense." (p. 7)

And further on p. 19 of her document she says, "The first step in the process of our liberation at this stage is to make our own independent evaluation of the political situation in this country (and later in the world - with the help of women in other countries) on the basis of what our guts and people like those in the mining areas have told us, and then act on it."

Here, our author, Selma James, shorn of all scientific pretensions, stands exposed as an out and out feminist; as an extreme reactionary. So we must, according to her, reject all historical experience, all revolutionary theory, because to rely on revolutionary theory and past historical experience is "to analyse and understand women after others (men) ..." and "is to be male dominated in the profoundest sense." So from now on the criterion for our acceptance or rejection of a theory is not going to be the correctness or otherwise of the particular theory concerned; on the contrary, the only thing that matters is whether that theory was put out by a woman or a man.

The rejection by Selma James of revolutionary theory on the ground that this theory is the work of men is as reactionary as would, for example, be the rejection of Scientific Socialism, Marxism-Leninism, by the oppressed peoples of the world (most of whom are black) on the ground that Marx, Engels, Lenin etc. were white. What is needed, on the contrary, if exploitation and oppression of the working class, of women and of the oppressed peoples is to be ended, is the realisation that scientific socialism is the only theory which can guide the workers and oppressed peoples of the world to victory in their struggle: the victories of the heroic people of Viet Nam and the Chinese Revolution are proof of this.

Selma James, however, not content with dividing women from men and depriving both of the weapon of scientific socialism, seeks also to divide white workers from black workers:

"For them the 'real' working class is white, male and over thirty." (p. 2) Once again, Madam James proves herself to be the handmaiden of Imperialism in the efforts by the bourgeoisie to divide and weaken the forces of the working class, notwithstanding all her attempts to provide herself with 'certificates' to the effect that she is for the oppressed peoples in their

struggle against Imperialism -

"The unions are trying to lead exactly the kind of struggle that would make Ted Heath (except for the mining community, the Northern Irish Catholic community and the Zimbabwe community) a happy man: they are demanding jobs." (p. 10)

and that she advocates the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism -

"A hell of a lot of us are fighting capital not because it is backward but because it exists." (p. 18),

and again,

"Ultimately the only demand which is not co-optable is the armed population demanding the end of capitalism." (p. i).

No, Madam James, we are not taken in by these 'certificates!', which cannot conceal your reactionary politics.

Rejection of all historical experience cannot but cause the greatest possible harm to the revolutionary women's movement. If past historical experience had been rejected mankind would never have progressed; each successive generation has been able to make an advance over the previous precisely by the former relying on the experience of the latter. Our ancestors were not fools but we are much wiser because we have learnt from their experience - both positive and negative. Would there have been such a thing as the Great October Socialist Revolution had it not been for the historical experience of the Paris Commune? Would there have been a Peoples' Republic of China had not the salvos of the October Revolution brought socialism to China?

Likewise, rejection of revolutionary theory, even if it is accompanied by the fraudulent facade of "making our own independent evaluation" cannot but cause the greatest possible harm to the building of a revolutionary women's movement.

ENGELS' VIEWS ON THEORY

We hope that we shall be forgiven for quoting in this context a long passage from Engels' introduction to his 'Peasant War in Germany'. Here is what Engels says on the importance of theory and the importance of learning from past historical experience:

"The German workers have two important advantages over those of the rest of Europe. First, they belong to the most theoretical people of Europe, and have retained the sense of theory which the so-called 'educated' classes of Germany have almost completely lost. Without German philosophy, particularly that of Hegel, German scientific socialism - the only scientific socialism that has ever existed - would never have come into being. Without the workers' sense of theory this scientific socialism would never have entered their flesh and blood as much as is the case. What an incalculable advantage this is may be seen, on the one hand, from the indifference to theory which is one of the main reasons why the English working-class movement crawls along so slowly in spite of the splendid organisation of the individual trades, and on the other hand, from the mischief and confusion wrought by Proudhonism in its original form among the French and Belgians, and in the form further caricatured by Bakunin among the Spaniards and Italians.

"The second advantage is that, chronologically speaking, the Germans were about the last to come into the workers' movement. Just as German theoretical socialism will never forget that it rests on the shoulders of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen - three men who, in spite of all their fantastic notions and all their utopianism, stand among the most eminent thinkers of all time and whose genius anticipated innumerable things the correctness of which is now being scientifically proved by us - so the practical workers' movement in Germany ought never to forget that it developed on the shoulders of the English and French movements, that it was able simply to utilise their dearly paid experience and could now avoid their mistakes, which were then mostly unavoidable. Where would we be now without the precedent of the English trade unions and the French workers' political struggles, and

especially without the gigantic impulse of the Paris Commune?

"It must be said to the credit of the German workers that they have exploited the advantages of their situation with rare understanding. For the first time since a workers' movement has existed, the struggle is being waged pursuant to its three sides -- the theoretical, the political and the economic-practical (resistance to the capitalists) -- in harmony and in its interconnections, and in a systematic way. It is precisely in this, as it were concentric, attack that the strength and invincibility of the German movement lies.

"Due to this advantageous situation, on the one hand, and to the insular peculiarities of the English and the forcible suppression of the French movement, on the other, the German workers stand for the moment in the vanguard of the proletarian struggle. How long events will allow them to occupy this place of honour, cannot be foretold. But let us hope that as long as they occupy it they will fill it fittingly. This demands redoubled efforts in every field of struggle and agitation. In particular, it will be the duty of the leaders to gain an ever clearer insight into all theoretical questions, to free themselves more and more from the influence of traditional phrases inherited from the old world outlook, and constantly to keep in mind that socialism, since it has become a science, demands that it be pursued as a science, that is, that it be studied. The task will be to spread with increased zeal among the masses of workers the ever more lucid understanding thus acquired and to knit together ever more strongly the organisation both of the party and of the trade unions. Even if the votes cast for the Socialists in January have formed quite a decent army, they are still far from constituting the majority of the working class; encouraging as are the successes of propaganda among the rural population, infinitely more remains to be done in this field. Hence, we must make it a point not to slacken the struggle, and to wrest from the enemy one town, one constituency after the other; the main point, however, is to safeguard the true international spirit, which allows no patriotic chauvinism to arise and which readily welcomes every new advance of the proletarian movement, no matter from which nation it comes. If the German workers progress in this way, they will not be marching exactly at the head of the movement -- it is not at all in the interest of this movement that the workers of any particular country should march at its head -- but will occupy an honourable place in the battle line; they will stand armed for battle when either unexpectedly grave trials or momentous events demand of them added courage, added determination and energy." (Marx and Engels: 'Selected Works' p 249.)

But where does all this talk about the need for women to rely on their own analysis, to reject all past historical experience, reject revolutionary theory, and form a women's movement which will spontaneously, of its own, work out its own theory, lead to? It leads nowhere but to the subservience of the women's liberation movement to spontaneity; it leads to the belittling of the role of the 'conscious element' and it means, whether Selma James realises it or not, the growth of bourgeois ideology in the women's movement:

"All subservience to the spontaneity of the labour movement, all belittling of the role of 'the conscious element', of the role of Social-Democracy, means, whether one likes it or not, the growth of influence of bourgeois ideology among the workers. All those who talk about 'exaggerating the importance of ideology', about exaggerating the role of the conscious elements, etc., imagine that the pure and simple labour movement can work out an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers 'take their fate out of the hands of the leaders'. But this is a profound mistake." (Lenin: 'What is to be Done?' p 382.)

In any case Selma James' talk about developing an "independent" ideology, "an independent evaluation" if you like, is nothing but an attempt on her

part to conceal dragging her bourgeois ideology into the women's liberation movement; for, as Lenin says:

"Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers in the process of the movement* the only choice is: either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a 'third' ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle socialist ideology in any way, to deviate from it in the slightest degree means strengthening bourgeois ideology. There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the spontaneous development of the labour movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology, leads to its developing according to the programme of the Credo, for the spontaneous labour movement is pure and simple trade unionism, is 'Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei', and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers to the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the labour movement from its spontaneous, trade unionist striving to go under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy." (Ibid. p. 384.)

And what is true of the labour movement in this regard is even more so of the women's liberation movement: subservience to spontaneity leads to the dominance of bourgeois ideology, economism in the trade union movement and in the women's movement, feminism. Our task, therefore, is to combat spontaneity in the women's liberation movement, combat those who belittle the role of the "conscious element", combat those who belittle the role of revolutionary theory, and talk about making an "independent evaluation", to declare an all out ideological war against such people, and to wrest the women's liberation movement from their corrupting, bourgeois influence, and bring it under the influence of those elements in the movement who put forward a really scientific and truly revolutionary view-point on the question of the cause of the oppression of women and the way to their liberation. A ruthless struggle against bourgeois opportunism in matters of organisation and theory in the women's movement; such must be the slogan that permeates all our work and actions.

"LEFT ANALYSIS" OF THE CAUSE OF WOMEN'S OPPRESSION & THE WAY FORWARD TO LIBERATION
Selma James' "justification" for desiring an "independent evaluation" is to be found in the following sentence in her pamphlet:

"I think that some of us who have refused to relate women's struggle to the class struggle have done this in self-defence, in order to get away from the left analysis of class which left us out completely." (p.7)

It is a dishonest argument, and Selma James knows it, for the "left analysis of class" has not "left us /women/ out completely." It is a dishonest argument because Selma James herself refers to this "left

*Footnote by Lenin:

"This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. But they take part not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, like Proudhon and Weitling; in other words, they take part only to the extent that they are able, more or less, to acquire the knowledge of their age and advance that knowledge. And in order that workingmen may be able to do this more often, efforts must be made to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers generally; care must be taken that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of 'literature for workers'; but that they study general literature to an increasing degree. It would be even more true to say 'are not confined' instead of 'do not confine themselves,' because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia and it is only a few (bad) intellectuals who believe that it is sufficient for the workers' to tell them a few things about factory conditions, and to repeat over and over again what has long been known."

analysis" (which is supposed to have "left us out completely") on p.11 when she refuses the "myth of liberation through work".

Well! What is this "myth" that Selma James is referring to? We must inform the reader that this "myth" is nothing but that part of "the left analysis of class" (which is supposed, according to our learned author to have "left us out completely"!) which specifically deals with the cause of the oppression of women and the way they can, and will, achieve liberation. This "myth" is to be found in about the only scientific and comprehensive work of its kind on the subject under consideration, that is, in 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State,' by Frederick Engels. We would urge everyone to read this work, remarkable for its scientific analysis and scientific conclusions, clarity of thought and vividness of expression. We cannot here summarise this work. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped, that it will not be considered out of place for us to state here the main points of this book. Engels points out:

- (a) that the question of the oppression of women is a class question; the oppression of women was not caused by their biological functions but by the appearance of class society;
- (b) that there was a time when women were not only not oppressed but were equals of men and even occupied a place of honour;
- (c) that the oppression of women coincides with, that is, it dates back to, the first division of society into classes, into exploiters and exploited;
- (d) that the division of society into classes, into exploiters and exploited, are rooted in one and the same cause, viz. the private ownership of the means of social production;
- (e) that this private ownership of the means of social production, and the consequent division of society into classes, as well as the domination of the female sex by the male sex, became a possibility only after the increase in production in all branches - cattle raising, agriculture, domestic handicrafts - enabled society to produce a surplus over and above that which was necessary for its maintenance;
- (f) that since this increase in productivity of human labour took place in that sphere which traditionally was the man's, it had the consequence of belittling by comparison woman's activity, i.e. domestic labour;
- (g) that the domination of the woman by the man had become a necessity in order to enable the man to pass his newly acquired riches to children that were his and no one else's;
- (h) that this domination was ensured through the introduction of the "monogamous" (in the historical sense of the word) family;
- (i) that the introduction of the "monogamous family" had the effect of isolating the woman in the home and removing from her activity the character of social production which it had had in the primitive communistic household, so that it became a private service for her husband; and that the "first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished." (Engels: 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' p 24 in 'Marxism and the Liberation of Women')
- (j) that the oppression of women (and of men) will come to an end when the cause that gave rise to that oppression, i.e. the private ownership of the means of social production, is removed, is put an end to. Here is what Engels says:

"The increase in production in all branches - cattle raising, agriculture, domestic handicrafts - gave human labour power the capacity to produce a larger product than was necessary for its maintenance. At the same time it increased the daily amount of work to be done by each member of the gens, household community, or single family. It was now desirable to bring in new labour forces. War provided them; prisoners of war were turned into slaves. With its increase of the productivity of labour, and therefore of wealth, and its extension of the field of production, the first great social division of labour

was bound, in the general historical conditions prevailing, to bring slavery in its train. From the first great social division of labour arose the first great cleavage of society into two classes: masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited.

"As to how and when the herds passed out of the common possession of the tribe or the gens into the ownership of individual heads of families, we know nothing at present. But in the main it must have occurred during this stage. With the herds and the other new riches, a revolution came over the family. To procure the necessities of life had always been the business of the man; he produced and owned the means of doing so. The herds were the new means of producing these necessities; the taming of the animals in the first instance and their later tending were the man's work. To him, therefore, belonged the cattle, and to him the commodities and the slaves received in exchange for cattle. All the surplus which the acquisition of the necessities of life now yielded fell to the man; the woman shared in its enjoyment, but had no part in its ownership. The 'savage' warrior and hunter had been content to take second place in the house, after the woman; the 'gentler' shepherd, in the arrogance of his wealth, pushed himself forward into the first place and the woman down into the second. And she could not complain. The division of labour within the family had regulated the division of property between the man and the woman. That division of labour had remained the same; and yet it now turned the previous domestic relation upside down, simply because the division of labour outside the family had changed. The same cause which had ensured to the woman her previous supremacy in the house - that her activity was confined to domestic labour - this same cause now ensured the man's supremacy in the house: the domestic labour of the woman no longer counted beside the acquisition of the necessities of life by the man; the latter was everything, the former an unimportant extra. We can already see from this that to emancipate woman and make her the equal of man is and remains an impossibility so long as the woman is shut out from social production ^{and restricted to private domestic labour} about. The emancipation of woman will only be possible when woman can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time. And only now has that become possible through modern large scale industry, which does not merely permit of the employment of female labour over a wide range, but positively demands it, while it also tends towards ending private domestic labour by changing it more and more into a public industry." (ibid pp 3,4,5,)

The above, then, constitutes the "myth" to which Selma James made a reference; "the left analysis of class" which is supposed to have "left us women out completely". Let the reader now form his/her own judgement as to whether it is the "left analysis of class" which has "left us women out completely" or whether it is Selma James who is resorting to dishonest arguments and downright falsehoods. For our part we say that the "left analysis of class" has not only not "left us women out completely", but has actually provided a comprehensive and scientific analysis of the cause of the oppression of women and the way forward to their liberation. ^{analysis} It is quite another thing to say that this scientific/ and the solutions suggested are not to the liking of Selma James. That is hard luck. It is not sufficient for Selma James, a la bourgeois intelligentsia, to say that, she does not like Engels' scientific and correct views, and that, therefore, these views do not exist for her (hence her unfounded assertion that the "left analysis of class" has "left us out completely"); what she has to do, if she wants to disagree with Engels, is to scientifically refute Engels. Since that task is impossible, Engels is being correct, our petty-bourgeois author, Selma James, is reduced to the idealist position of having to deny the very existence of Engels views - and this in a pamphlet which makes an obscure reference to his ideas, or "myths" if you like, such as "liberation through work". NO, our worthy feminist, such trickery will not do and it stands out starkly for what

it is - trickery!

Engels' viewpoint has been justly vindicated by history itself, particularly by the history of proletarian revolution. With the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia a basis was laid for the ending of the oppression of women. For as Lenin said:

"... Take the position of women. Not a single democratic party in the world, not even in any of the most advanced bourgeois republics, has done in this sphere in tens of years a hundredth part of what we did in the very first year we were in power. In the literal sense, we did not leave a single brick standing of the despicable laws which placed women in a state of inferiority compared with men, of the laws restricting divorce, of the disgusting formalities attending divorce proceedings, of the laws on illegitimate children and on searching for their fathers, etc.. To the shame of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, be it said, numerous survivals of these laws exist in all civilised countries. We have the right a thousand times to be proud of what we have done in this sphere. But the more thoroughly we have cleared the ground of the lumber of the old, bourgeois, laws and institutions, the more apparent has it become to us that we have only cleared the ground for the structure; the structure itself has not been built as yet." (Lenin: 'A Great Beginning' 1919 - pp 33/34 of Marxism and the Liberation of Women)

The structure referred to by Lenin was actually built in the U.S.S.R. during the period of the building of socialism. Unfortunately, comrade Lenin did not live long enough to see this structure.

The same has happened in China, Albania, The Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, North Korea, etc.. As a result of the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production, building of socialism and the drawing of women into public production the inequality of women is progressively becoming a thing of the past (see 'Women in Socialist China' published by the Union of Women for Liberation). The inequality of women in the above countries has been abolished on the basis of the very same "myth" of "liberation through work" which our bourgeois intelligentsia so contemptuously reject.

THE NEED OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA TO JUSTIFY THEIR OWN SEXUAL ABNORMALITY AND THEIR "MASKED RESPECT FOR BOURGEOIS MORALITY"

But our intelligentsia, used as they are to a parasitic existence, have very good reason for rejecting the "myth" of "liberation through work", for work is the thing they hate most. "Work is often painful and dangerous", says Selma James, "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." (p 16)

It can now be clearly seen that the aim of our author is not to promote the aim of the real liberation of women, which aim can only be pursued by building a revolutionary women's organisation which will be a part and parcel of the struggle of the working class against monopoly capitalism/ imperialism, her real aim is to get women out of social production so that they can "develop sexually"; her real aim is to develop women's "physical feeling" by the introduction of unlimited "kinds of sexuality", for she complains bitterly that "our physical feeling is further destroyed by the limited kinds of sexuality"; her real aim is to create a movement of women for the lessening of "the scarcity of times and places where we can make love".

Such is the petty-bourgeois idea of building a "revolutionary" women's movement - a movement, which our petty bourgeois sincerely thinks will constitute a death blow to capitalism, but which is in fact precisely the kind of movement which capitalism wants. Whether the petty - bourgeois intelligentsia realise it or not, the result can only be the creation of a women's movement which promotes sexual promiscuity and objectively helps capitalism by being the vehicle of spreading among women its (capitalism's) decadent ideology. We have no doubt that the majority of women, working-class women, will reject decisively the various sexual theories being put forward as essentially the product of the need of the intelligentsia to justify their own sexual abnormality and their "masked respect for bourgeois morality". For as Lenin said in a conversation with Clara Zetkin:

"The extension of Freudian hypotheses seems 'educated', even scientific, but it is ignorant, bungling. Freudian theory is the modern fashion. I mistrust the sexual theories of the articles, dissertations, pamphlets, etc., in short, of that particular kind of literature which flourishes luxuriantly in the dirty soil of bourgeois society. I mistrust those who are always contemplating the sexual tions, like the Indian saint his navel. It seems to me that these flourishing sexual theories which are mainly hypothetical, and often quite arbitrary hypotheses, arise from the personal need to justify personal abnormality or hypertrophy in sexual life before bourgeois morality, and to entreat its patience. This masked respect for bourgeois morality seems to me just as repulsive as poking about in sexual matters. However wild and revolutionary the behaviour may be, it is still really quite bourgeois. It is, mainly, a hobby of the intellectuals and of the sections nearest them. There is no place for it in the Communist Party, in the class-conscious, fighting proletariat.

"Young people, particularly, need the joy and force of life. Healthy sport, swimming, racing, walking, bodily exercises of every kind, and many-sided intellectual interests. Learning, studying, inquiry, as far as possible in common. That will give young people more than eternal theories and discussions about sexual problems and the so-called 'living to the full'. Healthy bodies, healthy minds!

"The revolution demands concentration, increase of forces. From the masses, from individuals. It cannot tolerate orgiastic conditions, such as are normal for the decadent heroes and heroines of D'Annunzio. Dissoluteness in sexual life is bourgeois, is a phenomenon of decay. The proletariat is a rising class. It doesn't need intoxication as a narcotic or a stimulus. Intoxication as little by sexual exaggeration as by alcohol. It must not and shall not forget, forget the shame, the filth, the savagery of capitalism. It receives the strongest urge to fight from a class situation, from the communist ideal. It needs clarity, clarity and again clarity. And so I repeat, no weakening, no waste, no destruction of forces. Self-control, self-discipline is not slavery, not even in love." (Marxism and the Liberation of Women - p 51)

There is another aspect to what Selma James has said in the above passage. She advocates women not going to work, for work she says, destroys "our physical feeling" etc. What about men? Is their "physical feeling" not destroyed when they go to work? What is good for women must also be good for men. Perhaps men too should not go to work? But in that case who will produce the necessaries of life to maintain and propagate the human race? Selma James does not raise, let alone answer these questions. We can only come to the conclusion that what Selma James probably wants is that working-class men and working-class women (for them there is no other choice) should go to work while Selma James and her ilk - the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia - continue their parasitic existence and "develop sexually", enhance their "physical feeling" by frequently practising unlimited "kinds of sexuality" not hampered "by the scarcity of times and places where we can make love". This, then,

This is the *raison d'être* for the type is what all the fuss is about. This, then, is what all of women's movement advocated by Selma James. This, then, is what all of Selma James' talk about the need for the "class" to take action against capitalism boils down to. If this is all that Selma James and others like her want, why don't they just do what they feel like doing? Bourgeois society, after all, provides ample opportunity and encouragement to those who have even the slightest inclination and desire to "develop sexually" and gain experience in unlimited "kinds of sexuality" (one has only to walk past news agents and look at the front covers of the literally hundreds of decadent bourgeois magazines for one to realise the truth of what has just been said). As to "the scarcity of times and places to make love" this really is no problem for the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, with whom Selma James is mainly concerned; as regards the working-class women they have neither the desire nor the time to indulge in practices which only show a "masked respect for bourgeois morality" and which represent a desire to justify one's own sexual abnormality.

SELMA JAMES AND THE FAMILY

Having preached her anarchistic views on organisation in general, and the unions in particular, Selma James moves on to the family. Here she asserts that the family is just as much of an evil as are the unions; she says that the family constitutes a major prop for capitalism. Therefore, she convinces herself, that the destruction of the family is a pre-requisite to the destruction of capitalism. Here is what she says:

"We are in a similar dilemma with the family of the working class. I would like to quote from a forthcoming document which does not analyse women from the point of view of Marxism, but Marxism from the point of view of women (and therefore I believe of men). It comes from the Italian women's movement: [the extract is from 'Women and the subversion of the community' by Mariarosa Dalla Costa. "Radical America", Boston, Jan-Feb 1972.]

'The working class family is the more difficult point to break because it is the support of the worker, but as worker, and for that reason the support of capital. On this family depends the support of the class, the survival of the class - but at the woman's expense against the class itself. The woman is the slave of a wage slave, and her slavery ensures the slavery of her man. Like the trade union, the family protects the worker, but also ensures that he and she will never be anything but workers. And that is why the struggle of women of the working class against the family is decisive.' "

(p 9)

In perverted reasoning, typical of the anarchistic and unstable intelligentsia, this paragraph registers a new low. Everything in it is upside down. Instead of saying that a particular type of family is the product of the economic and social conditions of a given epoch, we get the impression from the above passage as though it is the family (not any particular type of family) which gives rise to and sustains a given epoch. Instead of stating, as would be correct to do, that a particular type of family, being the product of given economic and social factors, will itself disappear with the disappearance of the economic and social factors that gave rise to it, our learned author informs us that it is only the disappearance of the family that can effect a successful dispersal of the very economic and social conditions that brought the particular family in their train. Instead of making a distinction between different types of family, e.g. feudal, bourgeois or socialist family, our author gets obsessed with the word "family" and lumps them all together; our author has failed to pay any heed to the scientific truth contained in the following sentence from Lewis Morgan's "Ancient Society":

"The family" says Morgan, "represents an active principle. It is never stationary, but advances from a lower to a higher form as society advances from a lower to a higher condition." (quoted by Engels in 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State') The present bourgeois family will certainly pass into history when capitalism, which gave rise to the bourgeois family, has itself been consigned to the museum of antiquities. In those countries where a socialist revolution has taken place the bourgeois family has been abolished and has been replaced by the socialist family. What does a "socialist family" mean? It means, first and foremost, that the "individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry" (Engels, *ibid*); it means that the care and education of the children becomes more and more a public matter; it means the ending of the domination of the male over the female, an end to the indissolubility of marriage; and it means the introduction of women into social production. Anyone can verify our statements by studying the history of the liberation of women in the U.S.S.R. from 1917 to the mid-fifties, or by now actually checking the position of the women in Socialist China or in any other socialist country. (7)

The only way, therefore, to abolish the bourgeois family is by taking the road of the October Revolution i.e. by overthrowing capitalism. Whereas, according to petty-bourgeois romanticism (stupidity would be more appropriate) if we want to overthrow capitalism, we must first overthrow the family. Our author has set herself the task of abolishing the family, not just the bourgeois family. Marx said that "Mankind sets itself tasks that it can accomplish". But our petty-bourgeois intelligentsia are such unlucky fellows that they are always setting themselves tasks that not only they cannot accomplish, but which mankind itself cannot accomplish either. How can the family be abolished? The family has in the past undergone, and will in the future undergo, changes but there shall always be a family reflecting the economic and social circumstances of the time.

"The family represents an active principle. It is never stationary, but advances from a lower to a higher form as society advances from a lower to a higher condition." (Morgan: *ibid*)

Thus it can be seen that the bourgeois family, let alone the family, cannot be abolished ⁽⁸⁾ before the abolition - before the overthrow - of capitalism. In view of this Selma James' appeal to unite women in order to "struggle" against the family, constitutes a reactionary diversion from what should be our main aim i.e. to build a revolutionary women's movement which unites women and which is a part and parcel of the struggle of the working class for the overthrow of capitalism. Selma James, by asking us to direct our blows at the wrong target - the family - is in fact, rendering the greatest possible support to our main and real enemy - capitalism - which stays unhurt and unscathed, for our blows are directed not against it but against a wrong target. This then is the essence of "decisiveness" of "the struggle of women of the working class against the family" of which Selma James speaks. Selma James' opportunist views on organisation are now supplemented by her opportunist views on the question of theory. The essence of Selma James' views may be summed up in the following words: opportunism in matters of organisation and theory. There is already in existence a great deal, of theoretical confusion in the women's liberation movement. What is required is an all out struggle to eradicate this theoretical confusion. And what do we get from people like Selma James? Demands for more confusion in the name of "making our independent evaluation". We cannot help remarking that in this period of theoretical confusion, making demands on the women's liberation movement for increased confusion is like wishing mourners at a funeral many happy returns of the day.

Before we deal with some of the demands in her pamphlet, let us, in passing, comment on some of her "brilliant" economic pontifications.

In relation to unemployment in Scotland and women, she says:
"It is characteristic that the unions and the labour exchanges (i.e. wage slave markets) in Scotland have made a deal not to give jobs to married women. In the explosive situation in Scotland of which the U.C.S. work-in was merely an indication, they -- the unions and the government -- figure we can be depended upon not to 'give trouble'. That is how we have been used all the time, and we have to prove them wrong or fold up. This damn capitalist class and their damn unions must not be able to count on our quiescence any more over anything. They have made this deal over our heads. They will make or have made others. We are expendable." (p 9)

The correct conclusion to reach from the above would be to organise women against this job discrimination. But the conclusion Selma James reaches is that women should "reject the myth of liberation through work". It only goes to show that as a matter of fact the "damn capitalist class and their damn unions" are "able to count on our quiescence"; that, though "they have made a deal over our heads" to exclude us from employment, we shall nevertheless cooperate with them, for we stand for rejecting "the myth of liberation through work" !

She goes on to say on page 10 that:

"You would think it is immoral to be disengaged from exploitation. the only thing 'wrong' with unemployment is that you don't get paid." Petty-bourgeois romanticism cannot refrain from delivering sentimental moral sermons about "exploitation"; it is incapable of either understanding, in a truly scientific way, the position of the exploited, or putting forward a scientific solution. We have never said that "it is immoral to be disengaged from exploitation". What we do say, however, is that it is impossible for the working class to be "disengaged from exploitation" so long as capitalism exists, it is impossible for the working class to liberate itself by opting out of exploitation, by-passing or evading this exploitation.⁹ The working class by its very class position is forced to live by the sale of its labour-power. Labour-power is only bought on the condition that it produces profit and thus strengthens capital. So, in order to live the working class has to work and thereby strengthen capital. Yet it is this very exploited class, which strengthens capital daily, that overthrows capitalism. Its class position leads the working class inexorably to such a position. Such is the operation of this dialectical law. That people like Selma James little understand dialectics is shown very clearly by their sermons on exploitation. It is our duty to expose capitalist exploitation and fight against it. This can only be done by working people (not parasites) organising and finally overthrowing capitalism. The working class (this includes women as well as men) cannot opt out. The option of opting out is limited to precisely those sections of our society that are not forced to live by the sale of their labour power i.e. the bourgeoisie and their hangers-on who do not have to work in order to live. Thus it is our duty in the women's liberation movement to encourage women to take part in social production, organise, gain higher consciousness and become a militant fighting force against capitalism. We must on no account confine ourselves to the sloppy sentimentalism of the philistine which sermonises on opting out of exploitation. This is what Marx had to say on the subject of the introduction of women into social production:

"However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless modern industry

by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economical foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes. It is, of course, just as absurd to hold the Teutonic-Christian form of the family to be absolute and final as it would be to apply that character to the Ancient Roman, the ancient Greek, or the Eastern forms which, moreover, taken together form a series in historic development. Moreover, it is obvious that the fact of the collective working group being composed of individuals of both sexes and all ages, must necessarily, under suitable conditions, become a source of humane development; although in its spontaneously developed, brutal, capitalistic form, where the labourer exists for the process of production, and not the process of production for the labourer, that fact is a pestiferous source of corruption and slavery."⁽¹⁰⁾
(Marx: Capital Vol. 1. p239 also in 'Marxism and the Liberation of Women' p 18)

Selma James then goes on to say that "The government has created unemployment" (p 10) One gets the impression that, according to her, unemployment is not an inherent feature of capitalism but something that is "created" by this, that or the other government. The implication is that if we got rid of the present government, then, without ridding ourselves of capitalism we shall be able to solve the problem of unemployment. Understand that if you can!

Two sentences later in the same paragraph she makes the startling statement: "... the capitalists are busy exporting their capital all over the world, for example to South Africa (and hope, by the way, to export white unemployed workers behind it)".

The last few words of the above quoted sentence show clearly that Selma James has parted with all logic. In view of her earlier statement "The government ... has created unemployment" is it nonsensical for her to go on to say that the capitalists hope "to export white unemployed workers". What good can come out of the Government "creating unemployment" if the effects of such unemployment are nullified by the capitalists "exporting white unemployed workers" to South Africa etc.? Only God and reactionary Selma James can possibly know the answer.

SELMA JAMES' IMPERIALIST AND REACTIONARY VIEWS ON INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRIES OF ASIA, AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA

Another example of the reactionary striving to go backwards, rather than forwards, is contained in the sentence which seeks to make a parallel "between under-development in the Third World and under-development in the metropolis -- to be more precise, in the kitchens of the metropolis." Continues Selma James: "Capitalist planning proposes to the Third World that it 'develop'; that in addition to its present agonies, it too suffer the agony of an industrial counter-revolution." (p 11)

Development of industry is presented by our author as a "counter-revolution". Here no attempt at all has been made to analyse the causes of the misery of the proletariat that necessarily accompanies, historically, the development of capitalist industry. Selma James either does not want to state the truth or is incapable of stating it, viz that it is not the development of industry in itself which is the cause of the misery and utter poverty and degradation, physical and moral, of the working class, but the capitalist relations of production.⁽¹¹⁾ She does not appear even to want to realise that machines -- industry -- are not only not the cause of the misery of the workers, but on the contrary, they lay the basis for the liberation of the working class.* If machines under capitalism appear to be a subjugating factor, (and

* But even under capitalism, there is a progressive side to the use of machines, and this is something Selma James cannot understand.

are in a certain way) it is only because of the narrow framework of the capitalist relations of production within which they operate. That machines are the liberators of the working people is amply demonstrated by the experience of the U.S.S.R. in building socialism, and now by that of China and other socialist countries.

So, again, Selma James, hits, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, at the wrong target. Instead of blaming capitalism and the capitalist relations of production, she blames machines. Instead of wanting to get rid of capitalism she wants to be rid of machines! Yes, if Selma James did succeed in getting rid of machines, we would in a sense have got rid of capitalism, but what we will get then would be, not socialism, but feudalism !!! Such are the reactionary dreams of Selma James. But, of course, there is no question of anybody being able to get rid of machines. Historical development has its laws, independent of the will of man (independent of even the will of reactionary Selma James). History is moving forward and no one can turn the clock back.

As a matter of objective reality, in economic and political terms, Selma James' statement (quoted above) is a justification for imperialist exploitation of the oppressed peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin-America. It is in the interests of imperialism to let the peoples of these three vast continents carry on, as before, producing raw materials for the imperialist countries. Imperialism is not particularly interested in developing strong industrial economies in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin-America. Reading Selma James one gets the impression of a benevolent imperialism proposing "development", "industrial counter-revolution" if you please, to these countries and the latter refusing "the agony" of the proposed "industrial counter-revolution". Nothing could be farther from the truth. The more one reads Selma James' pamphlet, the more one gets the firm conviction that Selma James is soft on imperialism - has a weakness, a liking, for imperialism - and is out to help it in every possible way e.g. by preaching the idea of disorganising, by attempting to discredit revolutionary theory, by attempting to persuade women to "refuse the myth of liberation through work", by advising the "Third World" to refuse to suffer "the agony of an industrial counter-revolution", and so on and so forth.

There are a lot of other absurdly reactionary ideas contained in this pamphlet which, it will take a lot of time and space to deal with. At this juncture, we do not consider it necessary to go into them all. We have, therefore, confined ourselves to the main points in it. That said, let us now pass on to the 6 specific demands put forward by Selma James.

A FEW COMMENTS ON SELMA JAMES' DEMANDS

Demand 1: The demand for "a shorter work week for all". (p 15) This is a demand which is of interest to the whole of the working class, not just women. Even though we do not see its special relevance in the women's liberation movement, we in the U.W.L. support such a demand on the part of workers - men and women.

Demand 2: "WE DEMAND WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK". (p 15) We in the U.W.L. do not support this demand. We oppose this demand. This we do because this demand is reactionary in the extreme; because the fulfilment of this demand will keep women, as heretofore, backward, it will divide men and women, and strengthen the bourgeoisie. The fulfilment of this demand will mean nothing less than the continued enslavement of women in the kitchen, nursery etc. For as Lenin said: "Notwithstanding all the liberating laws that have been passed, woman continues to be a domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and to the nursery, and wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive,

petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real emancipation of women, real communism, will begin only when a mass struggle (led by the proletariat which is in power) is started against this petty domestic economy, or rather when it is transformed on a mass scale into large-scale socialist economy." (Lenin: 'A Great Beginning', 1919, p 34 of Marxism and the Liberation of Women).

We in the U.W.L. take our stand on Lenin's side and seek the liberation of women through transforming the petty domestic economy "on a mass scale into large-scale socialist economy"; we want to put an end to the domestic slavery of women. Selma James, on the other hand, would like women to be domestic slaves who are crushed, strangled, stultified and degraded by "petty housework"; she wants women to be chained to the kitchen and to the nursery" and waste their labour on "barbarously unproductive, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery". So long as women are paid for this drudgery and barbarously unproductive labour, then, says Selma James, there is nothing wrong with it. Like almost everything else in this pamphlet, this demand is reactionary. We in the U.W.L. stand for the "myth of liberation through work" and reject all reactionary utopias. We demand an end to discrimination against women in jobs. We demand the provision of all facilities - creches, nurseries, kindergartens, public dining rooms, etc. to make it possible for every woman who wants to work, to work.

Selma James, by way of a preface to her demands, states that: "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." (p 15) By putting forward the demand: "we demand wages for housework", she is actually asking the movement to demand the continued enslavement of women in the performance of petty, stultifying, crushing domestic drudgery. So much for Selma James' proud rejection of the "oppression and exploitation of women" !

Demand 3: "WE DEMAND CONTROL OF OUR BODIES" - "free abortions for whoever wants them". (pp 15/16) Our view in the U.W.L. is that women in capitalist society are driven by want and destitution to resort to the evil of abortion. Capitalism, which drives women to this evil, has no right to punish innocent mothers who, for reasons of economic necessity, have their pregnancy terminated artificially. Therefore, our job is to expose capitalism which forces women to undergo abortions and to expose the hypocrisy of the capitalist ruling class who, having driven women to the evil of abortion, seek to punish innocent mothers. It is in this context alone that we support the demand for "free abortions for whoever wants them."

But the women's liberation movement must on no account make the error of presenting the demand for "free abortions for whoever wants them" as an absolute demand for all times. When socialism has been built in Britain, and the economic basis for women being driven to abortions has been abolished, then, the demand for "free abortions" on demand would have become obsolete, and would have to be replaced with the demand for abortions only on the grounds of the health, mental or physical, of the woman.

In this context, the experience of the U.S.S.R. is very instructive indeed. On October 18th, 1920, the Soviet Government passed a decree legalising abortion on demand. In order to make clear the reasons for such a decree and the measures contained in it, we quote this decree in full:

"During the last decade the number of women who terminate their pregnancy prematurely increases both with us and abroad. The legislation of all countries struggles against this evil by punishing both the woman who is guilty and the operating physician. This method of struggle has been ineffectual. Abortions were necessarily made in secret and the woman very often became the victim

of mercenary ignorant persons who traded in this secret operation.
"As a result 50% of women fell ill of infections after abortions and 4% of them died.

"The workers' and peasants' Government realising the dangers of such a situation has undertaken a campaign against secret abortions among working women.

"It foresees that this phenomenon will gradually disappear with the building up of socialism.

"But until now the surviving traditions of the past and the heavy economic conditions of the present compel a good many women to have recourse to this operation. The People's Commissariat of Health and the People's Commissariat of Justice are convinced that methods of repression are completely useless in this case.

"In order to preserve the health of women and the interests of the race from ignorant and greedy quacks these two Commissariats decree:

1) The operation known as abortion may be lawfully performed free of charge in Soviet hospitals where the conditions guarantee a maximum of insury.

2) All persons who are not licensed doctors are strictly prohibited from performing abortions.

3) The midwife guilty of performing this operation is deprived of the right of practice and is liable to punishment by the People's Courts of Justice.

4) The physician performing abortion in the course of his private practice with a mercenary purpose is liable to punishment by the People's Courts of Justice." (see 'The Proletarian Approach to the Question of Abortion' published by U.W.L. in 'Women's Struggle' Vol 2 No4 - the journal of the Women's National Co-ordinating Committee)

But by 1936 the conditions had completely changed in the U.S.S.R. The conditions prevailing in 1920, when the People's Commissariat of Health and the People's Commissariat of Justice wrote, "the moral heritages of the past and the difficult economic conditions of the present still force a section of the women to submit to this operation [abortion]" (ibid) had disappeared. The abolition of capitalist exploitation in the U.S.S.R., the growth of the material well-being and the gigantic advance in the political and cultural level of the toilers made it possible to raise the question of a revision of the 1920 decree on abortions. After wide-ranging discussions up and down the country, in factories, mines and on collective farms, in town and country, taking scientific as well as public opinion into account, and putting the interest of the health of women in the forefront, the Soviet Government, in its decree of June 27th, 1936, "illegalised abortion, except on grounds of health both physical and mental". (ibid)

This correct measure of the Soviet Government designed to promote the health of women, excited then, as now, all reactionaries, the Trotskyites, revisionists and feminists, into fiery denunciation of this decree. These reactionaries tried then, as now, to represent this decree as the incarnation of "thermidorean reaction" *

In brief, our position is, that as long as capitalism exists, we support the demand for "free abortions for whoever wants them". But at the same time we put this demand in its proper perspective by demonstrating the inextricable connection between this demand and the capitalist economic conditions, which force women to have recourse to abortions and thus give rise to this demand. With the ending of the system of exploitation of man by man, the doing away of the conditions of destitution, poverty and misery for the toiling women (and men) and the

* Note - Trotsky: 'Revolution Betrayed'. For a more detailed account of the Trotskyite position see our article: 'Trotskyism and the Women's Liberation Movement', Women's Struggle Vol 2 No 4)

building of socialism, it will no longer be necessary for women to take recourse to abortions except on grounds of health. Such is our perspective, and such must be the context in which we put forward the present demand: "free abortions for whoever wants them".

Demand 4): "WE DEMAND EQUAL PAY FOR ALL". (p 16) We in the U.W.L. unreservedly support the demand for equal pay for men and women for work of equal value. We demand an end to all discrimination based on sex. (14)

Demand 5; "WE DEMAND AN END TO PRICE RISES" (p 16) i.e. inflation. We have already commented sufficiently on this demand and we refer the reader to what has been stated above on page 12.

Demand 6: "WE DEMAND FREE COMMUNITY CONTROLLED NURSERIES AND CHILD CARE." (p 16) We in the U.W.L. are very much in favour of the demand for free nurseries and child care (see aims 3 and 5 of the U.W.L. *). But we completely disagree with and dissociate ourselves from Selma James, who, while putting forward the correct demand for free nurseries, utters the following anarchistic rubbish: "We don't want them [children] to go to a state institution instead. 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." (p 17)

Here no distinction is made between the bourgeois state on the one hand, and the proletarian state on the other. Both are presented as being equally nasty. Moreover, the impression is given that by having "community controlled nurseries" we will be able to abolish the state, ** Which state? The bourgeois state or the state as such? Selma James seems to think that we will abolish, in this way, the state, as such. In other words, after the bourgeois state has been wished away by our "free community controlled nurseries" enthusiasts, the state (any state, not just the bourgeois state) will disappear - so there will be no proletarian state! To us, it seems more like a desire on Selma James' part to do away with the dictatorship of the proletariat rather than the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. NO, dear Madam, your reactionary dream will never come true. In the first place, the bourgeois state will not wither away, nor will it be got rid of in consequence of the institution of "free community controlled nurseries"! NO! The bourgeois state machine will be overthrown - smashed - by the proletariat; then, the proletariat, having smashed the bourgeois state machine, will go on to establish their own state, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat will last a whole historical epoch, during which epoch conditions, material and spiritual, will be created for the transference of society from the lower stage of communism, socialism, to the higher stage of communism, a classless society. It is only when this stage has been reached that mankind will be able to give effect to the motto: "From each according to his means to each according to his needs". It is only when this stage has been reached, when all

* Aim 3. To fight for free nursery education for all children from the ages of 2 to 5 with a free co-educational and genuinely comprehensive system of education for all children from the ages of 5 to 16 with the aim of educating the younger generation to the idea of full equality between girls and boys and between wives and husbands.
Aim 5. To fight for the establishment on a non-profit making basis of 24 hour nurseries, laundries and communal dining rooms.

** for a state from which "control" has been "wrested" is no state!

exploitation and oppression and all classes have been abolished that the proletarian state and the state as such will wither away.

Thus it can be seen that it is not the bourgeois state that withers away; it is smashed. The proletariat smashes the bourgeois state machine. Of this not a word is to be found in Selma James' pamphlet. So much for her fight against capitalism. The proletarian state, on the other hand, does, in the course of time, wither away. How soon the proletarian state will wither away cannot be forecast in advance. All that we can say with certainty is that after the world-wide victory of proletarian revolution, and the fulfilment of the necessary material and spiritual conditions, the proletarian state will disappear. The proletarian state is the latest and last type of state. But until the conditions for its withering away are created, the proletarian state is absolutely essential to prevent the restoration of capitalism and achieve the necessary conditions for a classless society. (15) People like Selma James are only causing confusion when they talk about "destroying the state's [U.W.L. emphasis] authority" by instituting "free community controlled nurseries" under capitalism; they are causing people to be hostile to the dictatorship of the proletariat by lumping it in the same category as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie; they are rendering service to the bourgeoisie by getting across the idea that the nurseries controlled by the state in socialist society are bad and that, even while capitalism lasts, we can here create something better by way of "free community controlled nurseries", for to do so is tantamount to destroying "the authority of the state" (U.W.L. emphasis). So, instead of a socialist revolution, we have "free community controlled nurseries", because socialism means nurseries controlled by the state, whereas capitalism gives us the opportunity of establishing "free community controlled nurseries" and this offers the opportunity of destroying the state! In other words, the proletarians of socialist countries were fools for having fought for a socialist revolution when all they needed was to establish "free community controlled nurseries". This is what all Selma James' humbug amounts to. This is what all her brave talk about the need to fight against capitalism comes to: opposition to state controlled nurseries (even if the state be a socialist state) and institution of "free community controlled nurseries". The reformist activity for more nurseries is here presented as the ultimate in revolutionary activity.

CONCLUSION:-

In the light of all that has been said above, the question arises: what must the women's liberation movement do?

The women's liberation movement must put an end to all the theoretical confusion, at present flourishing with tropical luxuriance, in the movement. It must utterly reject all bourgeois ideology, in matters of organisation and theory. It must adopt the only scientific and truly revolutionary theory regarding the liberation of women - that the oppression of women is inseparably connected with the system of exploitation of man by man, of private property, and that with the disappearance of this system the oppression of women (as indeed of men) will also disappear. It must, therefore, promote the understanding that, for achieving the liberation of women, it is necessary to fight against capitalism, that it is necessary to build a women's movement which is part and parcel of the general working class struggle for the overthrow of capitalism.

The women's liberation movement must bring home the truth to women: "Bourgeois democracy is democracy of pompous phrases, solemn words, exuberant promises and the high-sounding slogans of freedom and equality. But, in fact, it screens the non-freedom and infer-

iority of women, the non-freedom and inferiority of the toilers and exploited.

"Down with this contemptible fraud! There cannot be, nor is there or will there ever be 'equality' between the oppressed and the oppressors, between the exploited and the exploiters. There cannot be, nor is there or will there ever be real 'freedom' as long as there is no freedom for women from the privileges which the law grants men, as long as there is no freedom from the workers from the yoke of capital,

"Down with this fraud! Down with the liars who are talking of freedom and equality for all, while there is an oppressed sex, while there are oppressor classes, while there is private ownership of capital, of shares, while there are the well-fed with their surplus of bread who keep the hungry in bondage. Not freedom for all, not equality for all, but a fight against the oppressors and exploiters, the abolition of every possibility of oppression and exploitation - that is our slogan!" (Lenin: 'Soviet Power and the Position of Women', p 36 'Marxism and the Liberation of Women')

By way of summing up and in the sense of calling for the building of a truly revolutionary movement of women, which will fight shoulder to shoulder with the working class, in the latter's struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and thus put an end to all exploitation and oppression, we in the U.W.L. call upon women comrades to reject, with the contempt they deserve, Selma James' reactionary ideas on theory and organisation. We end this pamphlet by expressing the conviction, that despite all the zigzags of the struggle, despite all ups and downs, the overwhelming majority of women, working class women, will reject the reactionary twaddle and banalities put forward by Selma James, and go on to make their contribution towards the cause of the liberation of the working class and that of women.

FORWARD TO A TRULY REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN'S MOVEMENT !

10th October, 1972.

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(Tel; 0442- 55456)

(For relevant notes see page 42)

WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH SELMA JAMES?

Selma James' concern for a "revolutionary political movement" (page*1) of oppressed women is one that is shared by all who work for the real liberation of women. However, under the guise of rectifying the alleged one-sidedness of trade union work in the woman's movement, we are presented with the call for a revolutionary political movement as if it were something entirely new, opposed to Marxism. (page 2). According to Selma James, the "left" (page 2) stands opposed to revolutionary politics in the woman's movement. "They" (page 2) simply wish the women to serve as an auxiliary of a predominantly white, male, working-class movement. (page 2). She never actually specifies who this "left" is, but by shifty deed on her part, first in the form of a fatuous sub-title and then by direct reference to Lenin's pamphlet "What is to be done", the identity is unmistakable.

Selma James would have us believe that in opposition to a revolutionary political movement of women, Lenin believed that we should bring women to what is called "trade union consciousness" (page 2), a phrase of Lenin's which comes from "What is to be done". In this context, it would be helpful if Selma James could specify just where Lenin "repudiated" (page 2) the major thesis developed in "What is to be done". If people who are serious about developing a revolutionary theory feel they have made important discoveries, they would do well to voice them instead of wasting our time with rumour. Those of us who have made the effort to study Lenin see through her smear campaign. Nowhere in his pamphlet does Lenin state that our task is to bring working men and women to "a trade union consciousness", nor does he say, as Selma James would like us to believe, that the efforts of revolutionaries must be directed towards this end.

"The history of all countries," writes Lenin, "shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, ie, the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation etc." (C.W. page 375). You see, Selma James, trade union consciousness is something the working men and women develop themselves, by their own efforts, without the aid of revolutionaries. And it is the task of revolutionary men and women to lead workers away from trade union consciousness. As Lenin wrote: "The spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology...for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism...and trade-unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie." (Done page 384). Far from Lenin saying that we should "bring women to what is called trade union consciousness" (SJ page 2), he unequivocally declared that our task is to "divert the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary (politics)". (C.W. page 387).

Moreover, Lenin explains that the economic struggle of the workers is very often connected with bourgeois politics because their common striving to alleviate their conditions does not aim at the abolition of that condition, ie the removal of the subjugation of labour to capital. "That striving", wrote Lenin, "is common to the English trade-unionists, who are hostile to socialism.." (Done 387). And so you see, Selma James, if you set before yourself the task of weaning working women away from trade union consciousness and winning them over to revolutionary politics (though we doubt it from the evidence of your pamphlet), you are in very good company, even by someone whom you seek to distort, and whom you claim is dated, pre-1902 in fact. (SJ page 2). But, as Lenin has shown, there is politics and politics. (C.W. page 387).

*Selma James: "Women, the Unions and Work. OR...What is not to be done?"
**C.W.: Lenin, Collected Works - 'What is to be done?'
(see Bibliography)

Indeed, Lenin shows that it is the task of the progressive representatives of bourgeois democracy and not that of revolutionaries, to draw the workers into trade union politics, for, as Lenin explains, "trade unionist politics of the working class is precisely bourgeois politics of the working class." (C.W. p. 426).

Now, according to Selma James, the distinguishing feature of the miners' strike lay in the fact that unlike the struggle of the postmen, dustmen, electricity workers etc., the miners "didn't depend on their unions but on their own self-organisation and methods of struggle" with the result that the mining community "went its own autonomous way" and ultimately "won". (SJ page 3). To Selma James this represents "the first major success" to come out of "autonomous class action". Whereas all previous strikes had been "lost or at least drawn" this one succeeded. (SJ page 3).

Selma James would do well to pay more attention of Lenin's "What is to be done". There she would find that there is nothing new in bowing before the 'worker's own self-organisation and methods of struggle', that Russia, too had its fair measure of trade union consciousness in the movement which Lenin resolutely opposed. One paper, in fact, much in the spirit of Selma James, declared "The virility of the working-class movement is due to the fact that the workers themselves are at least taking their fate into their own hands, and out of the hands of their leaders." (C.W. p. 380). Actually, these phrases about workers depending "on their own self-organisation", of taking up "autonomous class action" and taking "their fate into their own hands" which sound so profound and revolutionary, serve as a screen to conceal what is in fact the traditional striving to degrade proletarian politics to the level of trade union politics.

What is it that the miners "won"? Was it higher wages and improved conditions or did their struggle signify a revolutionary advance? If they won better conditions of work than it was an economic and not a revolutionary political struggle. If the movement was advanced politically this can, and in many cases, does occur even if the economic struggle itself is "lost", so long as the workers become aware of the need for a political organisation which aims at the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, not merely higher wages but an end to the wages system.

But Selma James simply informs us that "every recent national strike" prior to the miners strike "has been lost or at least drawn" (SJ page 3). Thus it would seem that it is Selma James who is infected with trade union consciousness rather than the left since it is she who judges strikes to be successful purely on the basis of the economic concessions wrung from the bourgeoisie. But, surely, it is only those struggles, strikes or otherwise, which imbue the workers with a greater sense of revolutionary class consciousness and heighten their awareness of the need to wage a truly independent and genuinely revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie which can be called "successful".

Even strikes which are unfavourable to the workers economically can be revolutionary, as in the case of the textile workers in Britain in the 1860's who carried out a strike to prevent the British ruling class from entering the American Civil War on the side of slavery. They knew that the defeat of slavery in America would bring about unemployment in the textile industry in Britain, but they waged a hard struggle and finally won. That was true success. And it is precisely the task of revolutionaries to imbue workers with such a consciousness, by combatting all traces of bourgeois ideology which cling to the spontaneous struggles of the working-class movement against exploitation and oppression. As Lenin explained "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." (C.W. page 426). The fact that the miners "won" an "economic" victory and to some extent even participated in a political struggle against the Tory government does not itself make this political proletarian politics.

Nowhere in her pamphlet does Selma James speak of the need to abolish the private ownership of the means of production, the real cause of oppression. On the contrary, she interprets the striking miners as saying "take your mines and shove them". (page 10). This to her is the revolutionary lesson that women must draw their inspiration from. Thus she implies that it is not the private ownership of the means of production but the means of production themselves that are the cause of oppression; not the fact that work under capitalism means exploitation but work itself. She evades the question as to how men and women can live if there is no production to supply them with the necessities of life. The implication is that others (men?) can take care of that distasteful necessity, but more of this later.

Instead of helping women workers to go beyond their spontaneously developed "trade union consciousness" Selma James adopts an anti-trade-union position and criticises any attempts to unionise proletarian women. Having examined the "role of the trade unions specifically in relation to women" (page 3), she gives an account of the male-chauvinist ideology of the trade union movement, showing that the trade union movement has done precious little to organise women and raise demands on their behalf. She sees the function of unions to "control workers" and to get women "to participate in our own exploitation" (pg.5). Women, therefore, must avoid this snare and remain outside the trade union movement. Her alternative, of course, is this "autonomous and revolutionary political movement" which in her case does not break away from trade union consciousness.

We understand "autonomy" to mean freedom from bourgeois thinking and practices i.e. a proletarian movement guided by proletarian theory. Furthermore, the women's movement to be truly autonomous in this sense must be linked to the general working class movement. Any isolation from this movement will force it into the realm of bourgeois politics in which Selma James is trapped. It is clear from her pamphlet that "autonomy" for Selma James means freedom from proletarian theory and organisation and this means she is in service to the bourgeoisie. As Lenin states "The only choice is - either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a "third" ideology, and moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology." (C.W. page 384)

We hasten to point out here that while we fight to combat trade union consciousness in the ranks of the workers movement we fight at the same time for the right of women workers to defend themselves in the day to day struggle against capital by organising and participating in trade unions. Indeed, without such protection women workers will remain at the mercy of capital in the factories and labour markets. If unions do discriminate against women, a relentless struggle must be waged within the unions.

Selma James herself concedes that "there is no doubt that certain slave conditions are done away with when a factory is organised", but hastens to qualify this with the remark that it is "not the unions" that abolish the slave conditions but rather "the way the workers get unions formed, organising together and almost always going on strike" (SJ page 7). This is the tortured logic of a wolf in sheeps clothing. It is as if to say that it is the way people go about building a house that provides shelter and not the building itself. Selma James urges the workers to organise together and construct unions, but not to shelter in them. For her it is not the unions that abolish the slave conditions but "their power that brings the unions in" and it is this power that removes the more barbarous forms of capitalist exploitation. And where does she stand in relation to the present attack on the working class militancy in this country? The logic of her position would render her, at best, indifferent to the fight being waged by men and women in Britain to defend their hard won rights to unionise and to wage a militant struggle in defence of their interests.

For Selma James it is a matter of harnessing the energy and power of the workers that has hitherto gone into the organisation of unions and channelling it into an "autonomous political movement". And this she imagines can be accomplished from an anti-union standpoint. Lenin showed us, long before Madam James came on the scene, the need to overcome the trade-unionist mentality of workers and direct them towards revolutionary politics. But this, as he explained, can only be done by taking up and championing all the democratic rights of workers, however "bourgeois" these rights may be. Unless these rights are proclaimed, unless a struggle for immediate rights is waged, unless the masses are educated in the spirit of such a struggle, socialism is impossible. (Marxism and the Liberation of Women page 52). To be sure, the right for women to participate in union activities, like all democratic rights under capitalism, is conventional restricted, formal and narrow. But by speaking of "revolutionary politics" and at the same time refusing to mobilise the masses of women in fighting for any rights, how does Selma James hope to succeed in winning women away from trade union consciousness and into the arena of truly proletarian politics? She does not, of course, because her much flaunted "revolutionary politics" is none.

Selma James complains that unions do not organise "the unemployed, the old, the ill, children and housewives" that is "the wageless" (SJ page 6). According to her, trade unions "structurally make a generalised struggle impossible" (pg 6). One may just as well complain that the boy scouts movement does not organise the workers. The economic struggle is the collective struggle of the workers against their employers for better terms in the sale of their labour power, for better living and working conditions. And this struggle, as Lenin explained time and time again, is necessarily a trade-union struggle. Hence it is sheer chicanery on Selma James' part to berate the unions for failing to fulfill a function for which they were never intended. And it is by explaining and demonstrating that unions are necessarily limited in scope that we can win working women over to a more broader, generalised struggle against capital.

As Lenin said: " 'Everyone agrees' that it is necessary to develop the political consciousness of the working-class. The question is, how is it to be done and what is required to do it. The economic struggle merely 'impels' the workers to realise the governments attitude towards the working class. Consequently, however much we may try to 'lend the economic struggle itself a political character' we shall never be able to develop the political consciousness of the workers (to the level of revolutionary political consciousness) by keeping within the framework of the economic struggle, for that framework is too narrow." (C.W. page 42).

Lenin emphasized that a Communist "if he really believes it necessary to develop comprehensively the political consciousness of the proletariat, must go among all classes of the population" - the old, the ill, children, and housewives. Seeing Selma James distorts Lenin extensively, we make no apologies for quoting him extensively. This is what Lenin had to say about proletarian revolutionaries generalising the struggle:

"Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter what class is affected - unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a (revolutionary) point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts, and events to observe every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata and groups of the population. Those who concentrate the attention, observation and consciousness of the working-class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not (revolutionary); for the self-knowledge of the working-class is indissolubly bound up (with an understanding) of the relations between all the various classes of modern society, acquired through the experience of political life." (C.W. page 412).

"We must blame ourselves," (ie, not the unions and least of all the workers) "our lagging behind the mass movement, for still being unable to organise sufficiently wide, striking and rapid exposures of all the shameful outrages. When we do that (and we must and can do it), the most backward worker will understand or will feel that the students and religious sects, the peasants and authors are being abused and outraged by those same dark forces that are oppressing him and crushing him at every step of his life." (C.W.P 413).

Will Selma James still insist that "secondhand politics of trade union consciousness" has been presented to us "as the only viable alternative"?

Seeing that Selma James does not recognize any distinction apart from the formal aspect of wages between the housewife and the proletarian wage-slave it is perfectly understandable how she can be anti-union. As she says on page 5 "unionism is far removed from the domain of the housewife". This, of course, is what really needles her, that the unions have not "generalised" their activities to embrace the likes of her. "We" (as housewives), she claims, "work for the capitalist class. Let them pay us or else we can go to the factories and offices and put our children in their fathers laps." (SJ page 15). This, no doubt, reflects the "new" revolutionary spirit she wishes to inject in the movement.

To a limited extent the capitalists do provide the social amenities which allow for greater participation on the part of women in factories. Indeed, Lenin points out that public dining-rooms, cèches, kindergartens etc. are not new to socialism, but that they, like all material prerequisites for socialism, were created by large scale capitalism. But under capitalism he explains they remain, first, a rarity, and second, and what is particularly important, either profit making enterprises "or the acrobatics of bourgeois philanthropy". (MLW page 34) Under socialism, however, Lenin explained, the widespread use of these institutions will undoubtedly contribute immensely to the welfare of society as a whole and to the liberation of women in particular. As he points out "what a saving in human labour, what conveniences for the consumer, what a saving in products, what emancipation of women from domestic slavery and what an improvement in sanitary conditions can be achieved." (MLW page 35).

Now, while capitalism tends to incorporate women in the factory, it does at the same time place a special burden on her. As Engels writes: "The employment of the wife dissolves the family utterly and of necessity, and this dissolution in our present society, which is based upon the family, brings the most demoralising consequences for parents, as well as children." (MLW page 20).

It is capitalism, which, on the one hand, breaks up the family and, on the other, retains the family as the economic unit of society which has brought so much untold misery to women. Under socialism the position is reversed: family life is restored while the family as the economic unit is broken up.

And yet despite the fact that family life is all around us being shattered Selma James complains that "the working class family is the most difficult point to break." (SJ page 9). What rubbish! The bourgeoisie has long destroyed family life for the majority of workers throughout the world, and if we take one of her examples - South Africa - we see that this is clearly the position.

In South Africa families are daily destroyed at the stroke of a bureaucratic pen. At any moment a wife may lose the right to live with her husband if Capital should require her services elsewhere. Thus a wife may be sent out of an area with her children and the husband be left on his own as a "bachelor". In some cases even the act of conception is only possible by permission of the labour bureau, which may grant a woman permission to join her husband in an urban area for a short period for the purposes of procreation. (The African Communist - No. 18). This is something that is happening every day in South Africa and has been happening for years: husbands are separated from wives and parents from children.

Dealing with the latest attack on the working class family in South Africa, even that erstwhile bourgeois magazine Newsweek had this to say: "With pride and barbarity of apartheid. In Alexandra township on the outskirts of Johannesburg officials conducted newsmen on a tour of two huge, bleak dormitories, one for men

and one for women... The new hostels are a concrete expression of the South African Government's relentless assault on the family life of the country's 14.9 million blacks. The people who live in the hostels will be officially "single", whether they have a marriage license or not." (September 1972).

When liberals in the all-white South African Parliament did complain of the barbaric breakup of the family, back-benchers jeered and said that if husband and wife did not wish to separate they should not have married in the first place. The Deputy Minister of Bantu Affairs said: "Both the husband and the wife will have had prior knowledge of the implications of the step they have taken and will have to suffer the consequences." (The African Communist, as above.)

And so what are we to make of the likes of Germaine Greer who state: "If women are to affect a significant amelioration in their condition it seems obvious that they must refuse to marry... If independence is a necessary concomitant of freedom, women must not marry." (Female Eunuch). The Deputy Minister of Bantu Affairs could not have done better himself.

It should also be pointed out that the credo of the Gay Liberation Front has never become, nor is it likely to become a trend in the working class movement, despite the fact that men and women in South Africa are constantly being deprived of a normal sex life. When a newspaper reporter asked an official responsible for the Alexandra hostels scheme what its occupants were expected to do for sex as men and women are to be prohibited from entering each other's dormitories, the official replied that they would have to sort it out for themselves. After a pause he did, however, concede that this presented a problem and concluded: "In the future... we'll have to think this matter over." (The Guardian 22 September, 1972) Little does he realise that the GLF has already thought this matter over and come up with a neat little solution which would tidy the whole affair. Thus, the GLF and Germaine Greer, each in their own inimitable style, provide the bourgeoisie in South Africa with a "solution".

The demands of the workers in South Africa, as elsewhere, is for men and women to lead a life in which they may live together and have families - and this ultimately can only be made a reality under socialism. To call for the abolition of the family under capitalism is simply empty rhetoric which seeks to mask the real position of men and women who are forced to separate because of the dictates of capital. That Selma James, despite her intentions, is in the service of capital, is made abundantly clear.

She seeks to place emphasis on women as houseworkers, which minimises their role as wage labourers. This is consistent with the thesis put forward by Margaret Benston in "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation", in which she defines women as "that group of people who are responsible for the production of simple use-value in those activities associated with the home and family" and who are "denied an active place in the market". This being written in a country (USA) where just over 40 per cent of women are in the labour force. This, in fact, is the position in all the industrialised capitalist countries. In Britain, for example, nearly 40 per cent of the total industrial workforce are women (Labour Research Vol 61 No 3). It only reflects the petty-bourgeois position of Benston and others that they can turn a blind eye to the fact that rather than excluding women from the labour force, monopoly capitalism has increasingly drawn women out of the home and into the factory.

Selma James seeks to elevate the status of the woman as housewife rather than attack housework, which Lenin rightly characterised as "petty, stultifying, unproductive work." For Selma James, the work done by isolated women in their homes is not itself oppressive, but rather the fact that they are not paid for that work. For Lenin, woman continues to be a domestic slave because "petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and to the nursery and wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerveracking, stultifying and crushing drudgery." (MLW page 34). Revolutionary men and women do not put forward the demand that women should be paid for this "barbarously unproductive work" but that all members of society, above all those women who have housework thrust upon them, should be drawn into

social, productive labour. Most housework, wrote Lenin "is highly unproductive most barbarous and most arduous, and it is performed by women. This labour is extremely petty and contains nothing that would in the slightest degree facilitate the development of women." (MLW page 31).

Selma James reveals her true colours when she states "we are entitled to a social existence without having to take another job out of our homes." (SJ page 16). Selma James wants a social existence without participating in general social labour. She wants to have her cake, and eat it, but she certainly doesn't want to cook it. She evidently concurs with Lenin that housework does not "in the slightest degree facilitate the development of women"; but at the same time she exhibits that petty-bourgeois squeamishness about the revolutionary alternatives he proposes. We can see that everything about Selma James is a mess of confusion. On the one hand, housework has its "appealing" moments, on the other hand being in a factory has its "appealing" moments (SJ page 12). Like Dame Quickly, she doesn't know where to have it. In the end, however, she settles for neither. We are entreated to find a mode of struggle that leads us from the home, but also keeps us away from the factory. This, to her is the dividing line between reformism and revolutionary politics within the woman's movement (SJ page 12).

For Selma James, "women refuse the myth of liberation through work" (page 11). According to her, they have worked enough, and now intend to stop. As she sees it, if a woman labours in a factory she is exploited, whereas if she doesn't work she is not exploited, therefore she should stop working. For her the only thing wrong with "unemployment is that you don't get paid" (SJ page 10). Drawing women into social production as a prerequisite for their emancipation she sees as a move to exploit them. She contends that the right to work is reactionary because it is synonymous with the demand to be exploited. This garbled reasoning leads her to declare that if we merely limit ourselves to the demand for jobs "all we are doing is organising women to be more efficiently and mercilessly exploited." (SJ page 13).

To be sure, no revolutionary -let alone a Marxist - has ever confined her demands to simply one for work under capitalism. We in the UWL believe that only by the working-class seizing the means of production which the bourgeoisie uses to exploit us can we end exploitation and oppression, and that is the essence of Marxism as we understand it. But Selma James will have none of this. Her revolutionary call is for women to simply turn their backs on the instruments of production rather than seize control of them. Not only is she anti-union, she is also anti-work.

As once pointed out by Marx and Engels, the Roman "proletariat" lived off society (ie, the slaves) whereas contemporary society lives off the proletariat (ie, the wage slave). Selma James, however, wishes to return to the practice of bread and circuses. According to her "if we are not blinded by 'trade union consciousness' ourselves, we can see women even in the worst jobs and the most unorganised factories waging their struggle in completely new ways." (SJ page 14). This new form of struggle is, believe it or not, the "high rate of absenteeism" amongst women wage-slaves. This to her is an example of the workers struggling in their own way and standing on their own feet! In this "absenteeism" Selma James has perceived that a start to "independent organisation" has been made. To her it is a "rebellion against and refusal of woman's work" (SJ page 14). She complains, however, that this "new" method of struggle is insufficiently organised and that it is the task of the woman's movement to be ever increasing numbers of women to absent themselves from work!

Selma James even lacks the heroism of the luddites who sought to destroy the machines which they misguidedly considered to be their oppressors. These workers resisted the introduction of machinery because they sensed it would increase their dependence on capitalism. While sympathising with these workers Marx explained that machinery itself was not the enemy but rather the capitalist class which uses machines to exploit the workers. There is nothing in the physical conditions of production which forces exploitation to take place.

If the working class were dominant, if they were to produce for themselves, they would bring the mines and factories up to the standard of their needs. The very great difference between capitalism and socialism is whether the means of production confront the workers as capital or whether they serve, as instruments under the control of workers, to lighten their toil.

Here we should point out that while Selma James uses the term "capital", she has not the least idea of what it is. Capital is not a thing, but rather a definite social production relation belonging to a definite historical formation of society in which the means of production are monopolized by a certain section of society, the bourgeoisie, and used to exploit the workers. In order to bring about "the end of capitalism" (which Selma James claims is our long term objective) it is essential that the working men and women wrest control of the means of production in order to put them to their own use. Instead of calling on the workers to "shove the mines" the true revolutionary course would be to seize the mines and "shove" the capitalists. In short, it is a question of whether the capitalists use the means of production to employ the workers and produce profit for themselves or whether the workers use the means of production in order to produce wealth for ^{as a whole} society. By trying to find some third way out, Selma James places herself in the service of capital, for by leaving the capitalists in control of the mines and the factories the workers will ensure their continued exploitation. As Marx explains "since precisely from the fact that labour depends on nature it follows that the man who possesses no other property than his labour power must, in all conditions of society, and culture, be the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour" (ie, the mines, factories, land, etc). (Selected Works of Marx and Engels Vol 11 Page 18).

We would be grateful if Selma James could explain just how society is to function without work, or does she imagine that we can simply live off air; is she so removed from reality that she fails to realise that in all societies people must work in order to reproduce the material conditions of their existence? Selma James is a slave of idealism - little does she realise that freedom is the recognition of necessity.

In fact, nowhere in her paper does she raise the question of private ownership of the means of production. On the contrary, all she can declare is "to hell with production". (SJ page 14)

Her absurd position leads her to the ridiculous conclusion that the bourgeoisie has conspired with the unions to create unemployment simply so that the masses can demand the right to work and hence their right to be exploited. (SJ page 10) We demand work, higher wages and fewer hours - at the same time we fight for the abolition of the wage labour system itself. As Marx explained, only by bringing the material conditions under the control of the working class can there be freedom from exploitation and oppression.

Selma James would have women believe that "the left" put forward the proposition that women will simply liberate themselves through work. This is a gross distortion. Lenin himself pointed out that while the Soviet government has done more to eradicate traces of inferiority of women than bourgeois society, this was "only a beginning" (MLW 31). He pointed out that "we have only cleared the ground for the structure, the structure itself has not been built yet." (MLW 34). The tasks that lay ahead in emancipating women were twofold: drawing women into socially productive labour as well as into political life. This is something Selma James would like to hide from women who are not familiar with the writings of Lenin. She would have them believe that the "left" simply wishes to consign women to the capitalist assembly line. This is what Lenin wrote:

"We want women workers to achieve equality with men workers not only in law, but in life as well. For this, it is essential that women workers take an ever increasing part in the administration of public enterprises and in the administration of the state." (MLW 38).

"The political education of working women is of primary importance today when power has passed into the hands of the workers and peasants." (MLW 40).

So much for Lenin's ^{alleged} desire to bring women around to a trade union consciousness.

But having tried to lead us to believe that the "left" wishes to keep women out of revolutionary politics she writes: "in order to have our own politics we must make our own analysis of women and therefore our own analysis of the whole working class struggle." (SJ page 6). After first claiming that Lenin is dated and after having distorted him, she now takes up - albeit in a distorted form - one of the central theses if not the central thesis of "What is to be done", namely, that without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. Just as Lenin pointed out that the emancipation of women workers must be brought about by the women workers themselves, he would certainly have agreed that women must be ^{guided by} a revolutionary theory. We believe that the contradictions inherent in capitalism will lead to its fall and the establishment of socialism, through the action of politically conscious working men and women. You, Selma James, simply appeal to women not to work and somehow demand bread and circuses from some mythical source. There is nothing revolutionary in your theory.

You yourself recognize the inefficiency in your pamphlet (ie the absence of cohesive and coherent theory on the basis of which the revolutionary working class movement can be built) and simply blame it on those who have laboured under a "misunderstanding" as to the purpose of the pamphlet. You claim that your pamphlet was designed to put forward not a perspective of "what we want, finally, to have", but merely a means to "mobilize" women so as to ultimately bring about "the end of capitalism." (SJ Introduction). After all your nonsense about organising women to absent themselves from work and phrases like "shove your mines" and "to hell with production" you now turn around and say "there are times when we would be failing in our duty if we did not support and even encourage women to demand jobs." You then go on to say that "if we limit ourselves to this, if this is our programme and not just a tactic to help mobilize women...all we are doing is organising women to be more efficiently and mercilessly exploited (by the capitalists)" (SJ page 13).

Yes, these are very true and good words, and we would be fully satisfied if you understood them and if you refrained from saying elsewhere things that contradict them. All those who are serious about the emancipation of the workers will put forward a fight for such just demands as the right to work, the right to unionise, the right to divorce etc, in order to mobilise the masses of working people and oppressed. But we make it quite clear what we are mobilising the masses for. The deceitful tactic which you employ is one of dividing demands into two stages, first those that rally the masses and then those that put forward the revolutionary perspective. Such tactics, however, ensure that revolutionary consciousness will never be attained, no matter how zealously you strive to "mobilise" oppressed women.

Whoever speaks of a "revolutionary political movement" of women and does not at the same time raise the question of state power, does not put this question in the foreground, does not fight against concealing, hushing up and glossing over this question is, as Lenin has shown, the worst enemy of the toiling women, and a servant of the bourgeoisie. By calling for the need for revolutionary politics in the women's movement without directly linking it with the question of the seizure of state power, you show yourself to be nothing but the handmaid of the capitalists.

You point out that many women unfortunately have a complex about being middle-class in the women's liberation movement. Lenin himself in "What is to be done" explained why it is that some bourgeois intellectuals necessarily take Marxism to the workers. You do not have to apologize for having wall to wall carpeting, for having a life style which is so far removed from the working women of whom you speak. What we are criticizing you for is introducing the outlook of your class, your petty-bourgeois consciousness, into the ranks of the working women. You seek to confound them with your petty-bourgeois confusions. That is the unforgivable crime of which you are guilty.

You draw a parallel from the developed and underdeveloped countries on the one hand and the relation between men and women in the metropolitan centres on the other. (SJ page 11). You then argue that just as the bourgeoisie advocates industrialisation in the underdeveloped countries so too does the "left" implore women to go into industry to emancipate themselves. But you know better

and have "dutifully warned" that "going into industry will not help you" (SJ page 12). Better to rebel and stay away from work. Presumably, you would also advise underdeveloped countries not to industrialise? But here you take a bourgeois stand yourself. The bourgeoisie does not advocate industrialisation. Every text book on bourgeois economics states quite unequivocally that these countries should remain producers of raw materials and agricultural products for the metropolitan centres. They have good grounds for putting forward this theory, because they know that if these countries industrialised it would provide them with the means of fighting the metropolitan centres on their own terms and deprive the bourgeoisie of the superprofits essential to their continued existence. Similarly ~~the capitalists~~ ^{the capitalists} have good grounds for keeping women out of social production, because it would provide women with the means of fighting for their emancipation.

You admit that women in the home are "isolated" (page 12). You admit that the "level of organisation of women is low" (page 13); that the isolation of the home is stifling (although also appealing). So long as women remain isolated they will never be able to organise and strike capital at its source.

And so, Selma James, trade union consciousness has not been presented to you by the left as the "only viable alternative" (page 18). If this has been put forward to you as an alternative then please specify the source instead of falsely imputing it to those who have put forward real alternatives.

While you distort the truth in this way, Selma James, what is to be done with you? But the revolutionary proletariat - men and women - will provide the answer when they take up the struggle to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. Then all reactionary nonsense such as yours, Selma James, will be consigned to the rubbish heap of history where it belongs. Then you, like every other able-bodied member of society will have to share in the work of producing the necessities of life if you wish to share in the enjoyment of them. We know that nothing could be more horrible for the petty-bourgeois intellectual than this, which goes a long way towards explaining the hostility of such as you to revolutionary proletarian politics and to the working class.

UNION OF WOMEN FOR LIBERATION
26 September, 1972

NOTES

(1) The expression Social-Democracy was revolutionary in meaning until the First World War; the Communist Parties then used to be called Social-Democratic Parties. But after the betrayal of the proletariat and proletarian revolution during the First World War by the overwhelming majority of the Social-Democratic Parties belonging to the 2nd International, when the official Social-Democracy adopted the position of social chauvinism and defence of the fatherland (i.e. the defence of their respective bourgeoisie), Social-Democracy became a symbol of betrayal of the working class and that of proletarian internationalism. Therefore, the expression "Social-Democracy" in the writings of Lenin (indeed of socialists generally) prior to the First World War has a meaning which is just the opposite of what it has meant since the beginning of the First World War when "Social-Democracy became a stinking corpse".

(2) This argument is, throughout her pamphlet, used, by Selma James to preach the idea of disorganising and it runs like this: it is the workers who form unions, therefore, there is no need to have unions. Workers become a substitute for an organisation. No doubt, Selma James, could extend this logic further and say that it is socialists (men and women) who, for example, bring into existence a vanguard party of the proletariat, there is, therefore, no need for a party as long as we have individual socialists. Yet, historical experience teaches us, without the party of the proletariat the working class cannot achieve power, nor can it consolidate its power in order to build socialism and finally to achieve the goal of a classless society. We have no doubt that Selma James' opportunist views on organisation have of necessity placed her in a despicably disruptive and counter-revolutionary position.

(3) Though the miners did wage militant struggle in support of their economic demands and to a certain extent challenged the Tory Government, they did in no way raise the fundamental question of state power. It would have been surprising for them to have done so in the absence of a truly proletarian party which could have given them the leadership requisite for raising the question of the overthrow of the bourgeois state and the establishment of the state of the working class. Two lessons that we should learn from the miner's strike are:-

1) not to present the militant struggle of the miners as a revolutionary struggle and

2) recognise the utmost importance of the need for a proletarian revolutionary party of the working class, without which the working class cannot overthrow the rule of capitalism and establish socialism.

(4) "The Paris Commune was the first proletarian organ of state power in world history. On March 18, 1871, the French proletariat launched an uprising in Paris and seized power. Led by the proletariat, the Paris Commune was founded on March 28 through election. It was the first revolutionary attempt of the proletariat to smash the bourgeois state machinery and an unprecedented feat to substitute proletarian state power for the bourgeois state power which had been overthrown. Not being mature enough at the time, the French proletariat failed to unite with its ally, the peasant masses, was too lenient to the counter-revolution and did not launch resolute military attacks in good time. Thus the counter-revolution could unhurriedly muster its routed forces, make a comeback and perpetrate a savage massacre of the people who took part in the uprising. The Paris Commune fell on May 28." (Mao Tse-tung: 'Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-tung', p 108)

(5) By belittling the role of the "conscious element", people like Selma James are providing us with the clearest possible proof that it is they, not the "left", who are trying to bring "trade union consciousness" to women.

(6) It is also clear from this that the "left analysis of class" has not presented us with "trade union consciousness" as "the only viable alternative."

(7) For a more detailed account of the position of women in socialist countries see 'Women in Socialist China' and 'Women in the U.S.S.R.' published by the Union of Women for Liberation; and also the forthcoming series of meetings organised by the Women's National Coordinating Committee on 'Socialism and the Liberation of Women' (see enclosed leaflet).

(8) Though the family as such cannot be abolished, this does not at all mean that normal family relations cannot be destroyed under capitalism. Capitalism, while retaining the bourgeois family as the economic unit of society destroys all normal family relations. It tears husbands away from wives and parents from their children. Marx and Engels had had the occasion to point this out a long while ago:

"The employment of the wife dissolves the family utterly and of necessity, and this dissolution in our present society, which is based upon the family, brings the most demoralising consequences for parents, as well as children." (Engels: 'The Condition of the Working Class in England', p 20 on 'Marxism and the Liberation of Women'). (our emphasis- U.W.L.)

Note (8) continued on page 44.

(9) "If all the proletarians announced their determination to starve rather than work for the bourgeoisie, the latter would have to surrender its monopoly. But this is not the case - is, indeed, a rather impossible case" (our emphasis - U.W.L.) (Engels: 'The Condition of the Working Class in England' in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels 'On Britain', Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1953, p 110-111)

"Engels was the first to say that not only was the proletariat a suffering class, but that, in fact, the disgraceful economic condition of the proletariat was driving it irresistibly forward and compelling it to fight for its ultimate emancipation." (Lenin: 'Marx-Engels-Marxism' Moscow edition, 1951, p 60)

(10) "In particular, speaking of the transformation brought about by the factory in the conditions of life of the population, it must be stated that the drawing of women and juveniles into production is, at bottom, progressive. It is indisputable that the capitalist factory places these categories of the working population in particularly hard conditions, and that for them it is particularly necessary to regulate and shorten the working day, to guarantee hygienic conditions of labour, etc; but endeavours completely to ban the work of women and juveniles in industry, or to maintain the patriarchal manner of life that ruled out such work, would be reactionary and utopian. By destroying the patriarchal isolation of these categories of the population who formerly never emerged from the narrow circle of domestic, family relationships, by drawing them into direct participation in social production, large-scale machine industry stimulates their development and increases their independence, in other words, creates conditions of life that are incomparably superior to the patriarchal immobility of pre-capitalist relations." (Lenin: 'Collected Works' Vol 3 pp 546-547)

(8) continued:

"The wretched half-starved parents think of nothing but getting as much as possible out of their children. The latter, as soon as they are grown up, do not care a farthing, and naturally so, for their parents, and leave them". (Marx: 'Capital' Vol I p 469)

If Selma James and her ilk want to further help capitalism to destroy normal family relations, let, them do so and stand exposed as lieutenants of capitalism in the women's liberation movement.

Socialism, on the one hand, will destroy the bourgeois family i.e. it will abolish the family as the economic unit of society and, on the other hand, restore normal family relations.

(11) "...machinery, considered alone, shortens the hours of labour, but, when in the service of capital, lengthens them; since in itself it lightens labour, but when employed by capital, heightens the intensity of labour; since in itself it is a victory of man over the forces of Nature, but in the hands of capital, makes man the slave of those forces; since in itself it increases the wealth of the producers, but in the hands of capital, makes them paupers" (Marx: Capital Vol I p 441)

"The lightening of the labour, even, becomes a sort of torture, since the machine does not free the labourer from work, but deprives the work of all interest. Every kind of capitalist production, in so far as it is not only a labour-process, but also a process of creating surplus-value, has this in common, that it is not the workman that employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour that employ the work-man." (ibid p 423)

Commenting on the Luddite movement, Marx said:
"It took both time and experience before the workpeople learnt to distinguish between machinery and its employment by capital, and to direct their attacks, not against the material instruments of production, but against the mode in which they are used." (ibid p 429)

(12) Even as early as 1867 Marx pointed out:

"On the other hand, the cheapness of the articles produced by machinery, and the improved means of transport and communication furnish the weapons for conquering foreign markets. By ruining handicraft production in other countries, machinery forcibly converts them into fields for the supply of its raw material. In this way East India was compelled to produce cotton, wool, hemp, jute, and indigo for Great Britain. By constantly making a part of the hands 'super-numerary,' modern industry, in all countries where it has taken root, gives a spur to emigration and to the colonisation of foreign lands, which are thereby converted into settlements for growing the raw material of the mother country; just as Australia, for example, was converted into a colony for growing wool. A new and international division of labour, a division suited to the requirements of the chief centres of modern industry springs up, and converts one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production, for supplying the other part which remains a chiefly industrial field." (ibid p 451)

And it is even more true today, under the conditions of imperialism, than it was in Marx's day.

(13) "It goes without saying that this our opposition to Neo-Malthusianism - U.W.L. does not by any means prevent us from demanding the unconditional annulment of all laws against abortions or against the distribution of medical literature on contraceptive measures, etc. Such laws are nothing but the hypocrisy of the ruling classes. These laws do not heal the ulcers of capitalism, they merely turn them into malign

UNION OF WOMEN FOR LIBERATION

Statement of Aims

preamble:

We, the members of the Union of Women for Liberation, believe that it is necessary for the women of Britain to unite now to fight to bring about their liberation. Ever since the system of private ownership of the means of social production came into existence there has been subjugation of women. The present capitalist system is no exception. In capitalist society women are oppressed: they are denied equality of opportunity with men in education and in employment, are paid less than men when they engage in social production, but generally do not have even that opportunity, the majority being kept in the position of household slaves condemned to a life of stultifying petty drudgery and deprived of an independent existence either economically, socially or politically. Women must no longer allow themselves to be isolated in the home but must take part in social production.

The vast majority of women in this society are in fact doubly oppressed since they are members of the working class and are thus exploited as workers or workers' wives as well as oppressed as women. This double oppression makes it imperative for them to fight on two fronts, first as women against the system of domestic slavery and second as workers against the system of wage slavery.

Only women can change their situation and they can do this only by coming together to fight as a organised force against the source of their oppression: monopoly capitalism, which makes profits out of their own and their husbands' labour and is saved the expense of providing proper health, welfare and social facilities for the workers by using women as a vast army of unpaid workers to do the socially necessary tasks, especially bringing up children, catering, cleaning etc...

The economy of Britain is not just capitalist, it is imperialist since the ruling class draws profits from abroad as well as from the U.K.; it makes profits from the labour of foreign workers as well as from that of British workers. Imperialism in general, and British Imperialism in particular, is in the throes of an economic crisis. As this crisis deepens the capitalists will attempt to pass the burden of the crisis on to the shoulders of the working class; measures such as the Industrial Relations Bill are intended to help the capitalists achieve these aims when the time comes. Women would be the **worst** sufferers of such an attempt: in many cases women will be the first to lose their jobs; in others the capitalists will try to use women to replace the more expensive men workers; and in any case the burden of looking after the family on a reduced income falls on the woman. We are convinced that as a result more and more women will come to see the necessity of fighting against the system of imperialism which oppresses and exploits them.

WOMEN, UNITE TO FIGHT FOR YOUR OWN LIBERATION!
WOMEN, UNITE TO FIGHT WITH ALL OTHER WORKERS AND
OPPRESSED PEOPLE FOR AN END TO DOMESTIC SLAVERY AND
AN END TO ALL EXPLOITATION OF MAN BY MAN!

Aims:-

1. To raise the active role of women in social productive work.
2. To fight for the right to work and against discrimination in job opportunities, training and pay.
3. To fight for free nursery education for all children from the ages of 2 to 5 with a free co-educational and genuinely comprehensive system of education for all children from the ages of 5 to 16 with the aim of educating the younger generation to the idea of full equality between girls and boys and between wives and husbands.
4. To fight for equal opportunity for women in higher education, colleges and universities, scientific and technological work and in the professions, and equal provision for day-release facilities, apprenticeships and further training at work.
5. To fight for the establishment on a non-profit making basis of 24 hour nurseries, laundries and communal dining rooms.
6. To raise the active role of women in political and social life.
7. To uproot old conservative customs and habits, raise the self-reliance and develop the creative capabilities of women.
8. To support the struggles of the working-class and oppressed peoples of the world against imperialism and for national liberation and proletarian revolution.

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nant ulcers that are especially painful for the oppressed masses."
(Lenin: 'The Working Class and Neo-Malthusianism' in 'Marxism and
the Liberation of Women' p 53)

- (14) This particular demand is, in more than one way, erroneous and so we should comment on it at length at some other time.
- (15) We cannot here properly deal with the complex question of the state. For a thorough analysis of the subject we refer the reader to the pamphlet by V.I. Lenin: 'The State and Revolution'.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

WHAT MUST THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT DO ? - an answer to Selma James.

- a) V. I. LENIN, 'Collected Works' Vol.5., Progress Publishers, Moscow 1964 ('What is to be Done?').
- b) V. I. LENIN, 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back', Progress Publishers, Moscow 1969.
- c) KARL MARX, 'Wages, Price and Profit', Foreign Language Press, Peking 1969.
- d) KARL MARX and FREDERICK ENGELS, 'Selected Works', International Publishers- New York 1968, (Preface to the 'Peasant War in Germany').
- e) FREDERICK ENGELS, 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' (ibid), also extracts in 'Marxism and the Liberation of Women', published by the Union of Women for Liberation.
- f) V. I. LENIN, 'Collected Works' Vol. 29., (A Great Beginning'), also extracts in 'Marxism and the Liberation of Women'.
- g) CLARA ZETKIN, 'Lenin on the Emancipation of Women', Progress Publishers, Moscow 1934 also extracts in 'Marxism and the Liberation of Women'.
- h) KARL MARX, 'Capital' Vol.1., Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, also extracts in 'Marxism and the Liberation of Women'.
- i) 1920 Decree on abortion is published in 'Women's Struggle', Vol.,2. No.4.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH SELMA JAMES

- a) 'African Communist', No 18.
- b) Germaine Greer, 'The Female Eunuch', Penguin 1971.
- c) 'The Guardian', 22nd September 1972.
- d) 'Labour Research', Vol.,61, No.3- LRD Publications, March, 1972.
- e) V. I. LENIN, 'What is to be Done?', (as above).
- f) KARL MARX, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', Foreign Languages Publishing House, Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 1962.
- g) 'Marxism and the Liberation of Women', published by the Union of Women for Liberation.
- h) 'Newsweek', September, 1972.
- i) KARL MARX and FREDERICK ENGELS, 'Selected Works'. Vol.II.

NOTE: Some of the translations used differ slightly from those in the editions cited above.

H. B.,

400

A REPLY TO SELMA JAMES

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 feminism 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 work within trades unions, or whether or not to unionise women. Those who supported trades union 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 social 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 analysis and agree with much of Selma's criticism.

However, we feel that because her analysis is based on a primarily descriptive/empirical 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 theoretical 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, e.g. equal pay for all; and what are usually seen as more "ideological" demands, e.g. 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 "traditional" 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 were 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 value but is an essential function in the production of surplus value." We describe 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. That 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 then are they going to make their demands - the bosses? the government? their husbands? to all of these groups in a free-wheeling female holocaust? What is the basis of women's 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 we 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 the family, and the reasons why this role is crucial to capitalism.

Starting from 2) then, women are crucial in 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 parts 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.

So 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 reproduce 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 a 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 women'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 wage labourer is often banished from the scene altogether and women are thrown in a direct relationship with the state.

Section II

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, 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 (21.3.72) 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 the job and life outside or around the job. "Faced with the loss of the human elements which have made work in Covent Garden 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 Garden, and the imminent break-up 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 productivity deals are wage rises in return for less shop floor control, speed-up, 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.

2) The "lame duck" rationalisation policy in private and nationalised industry. This has meant profitable parts of 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 32 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 increased 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 £100-£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 the P.I.S. which still leaves them below the poverty line. But 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 up 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 that 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 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 the 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 in 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 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 the total refusal to work among sections of the youth culture ("work's 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 however 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 over-simplification, 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 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. 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, inturned "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 judgment that the anarchist movement is not autonomous, but exists on the margin of the other parties, 'to educate them.'"

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 new 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 need to be restated that it really is not good enough to reject working class women who are scared by 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 a probation officer.

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 a factory can get replacements for the girls on the assembly line and usually costs for a quick turnover 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 a 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 though the Temp. were the unfettered, roaming gipsy of our society, the truly free and ultimately liberated woman with no hang-ups about bourgeois 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 in 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 Berrondsey 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 house-cleaning and baby-rearing fodder, we hate being pen-pushing or managerial 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 bourgeois 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 mental and 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 be work connected to our position as bolsterers 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 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 only around negative issues of felt need as slum clearance systematically destroys the old working-class communities and our society

becomes even more fragmented. In suburbs or in housing estates the men go away to work leaving a purdah of young women and small children, and neither there nor at work is there a place for the 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. We have not had time in preparing this pamphlet to make concrete proposals as to what form this organisation should take, so we simply suggest that it should be a priority for discussion in 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 beginnings of our own analysis - however sketchy at present - is heavy and perhaps will be criticised for being too theoretical. Our aim however 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 the theory actions, such as we suggest, should spring.

August - October, 1972.