

STATEMENT
OF AIMS —

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No womens liberation without
socialist revolution —

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STATEMENT OF AIMS

This paper is the result of discussions at three North Eastern regional conferences of Women's Liberation, held between June and September 1972. Following our discussions of Selma James' paper 'Women, the Unions & Work', it was agreed that we should try to formulate a Statement of Aims starting from scratch to present to the National Conference. We hope that these aims will indicate what our long term view of liberation is and be relevant to the immediate struggle. We feel such a Statement of Aims is necessary for the following reasons:

1. To make a public statement about the Movement
2. To help co-ordinate the Movement, especially since organisation is so decentralised.
3. To clarify our own political thinking.

The Statement of Aims begins with the words:

No women's liberation without socialist revolution. No socialist revolution without women's liberation. We aim to change the social relations of reproduction as well as to change the social relations of production.

(This part of the Statement of Aims is essentially designed to communicate with other groups on the Left and with women already in the Movement; i.e. it need not be used on leaflets to hand out in the street etc.)

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND REPRESSION

WE AIM TO END THE IDEA OF 'FEMININITY' AND 'MASCULINITY' and therefore to end sexual repression and exploitation, e.g. an end to the use of women as passive sexual objects, as in advertising. We want to be able to live freely together, women with women, women with men, men with men.

EDUCATION

We aim at education geared to and controlled by the needs of the community and the individual in a socialist society.

- an education which does not define children as a separate species to be hived off from 'real' society
- an education which treats everyone as people and does not foster sex roles and age roles
- an education which is based on a more flexible system, not centred in compulsory schools but which uses community resources which now exist and which need to be developed
- an education which emphasises critical learning rather than 'being taught'
- an education which is open and readily accessible to all age levels

FERTILITY

WE AIM TO CONTROL OUR OWN FERTILITY. This should not be interpreted as an encouragement for individuals to please themselves, regardless of the community, but it does mean that any decision about contraception, abortion and sterilisation would be taken by the woman herself, NOT by doctors, social workers, psychiatrists etc. We also demand research into better and safer methods of birth control.

THE FAMILY

We recognise the role of the nuclear family as a prop to the capitalist system -

- using women to service the male labour force, physically, sexually, emotionally and psychologically

- containing the militancy of the male labour force by compelling them to support women and children
- providing a reserve of cheap unorganised female labour
- preparing the future labour force
- functioning as a multiplicity of isolated consumption units which provides capitalism with an inexhaustible market and encouraging wasteful production and rapid obsolescence.
- transmitting the dominant ideology (e.g. competitiveness, stereotype sex roles, possessiveness etc.).

The nuclear family is an oppressive institution. In theory it satisfies our emotional needs but in practise it stunts our emotional development. It restricts our intimate relationships to the family unit and divides us from each other. The nuclear family represses children by defining them as possessions of their parents and subjects them to their arbitrary authority. Their socialisation is largely determined by two people about whom they have no choice - their parents - and gives them only limited exposure to other role models.

The nuclear family oppresses women especially by giving her no option but to be a housewife regardless of whether or not she works outside the home. The survival of the family depends on her continuing unpaid labour, seven days a week. The housewife is in the classic colonised position - she is denied social, psychological, sexual and economic autonomy. She does not belong to herself.

WE AIM TO CREATE

- better ways of living and working in which the nuclear family will be only one of many alternatives. We must break down obstacles to group living (conventional architecture, the law, planning, social prejudice).
- community controlled child care facilities geared to the needs of those who use it. We want to end the idea that child care is women's work; men have as much right and as much responsibility as women for children.
- community care of the sick and the old, for which men and women have equal responsibility
- facilities for communalisation of household functions (cleaning, cooking, shopping) thus ending the enforced privatization of housework. This work is of course the equal responsibility of men and women.

In order that these responsibilities can be assumed by everyone, we must redefine 'work' - i.e. we must break down rigid job definitions.

ECONOMIC

From all according to their ability; to all according to their needs.

We aim to create a society where work is meaningful because we do it for ourselves in co-operation and not under someone else's orders or for someone else's profit.

We aim to work towards a society in which every individual enjoys as a right a fair standard of living not gained at the expense of other societies.

In working toward this we aim to take action in the following areas:

- we will encourage women to organise in unions and groups to fight for equal treatment and to fight against male chauvinism in the work situation and in the unions themselves.

ECONOMIC - contd.

- we will fight for an end to the trivialization of the work women do and their exploitation as a reserve of cheap labour.
- we will fight against the definition and divisions of 'men's work' and 'women's work'.
- we will fight for equal pay for work of equal value for everyone, male and female, old and young.
- we will fight for equal job opportunities but we are not just fighting for an equal chance to be unequal.

We will work for increasing ownership and control of the work situation by workers (i.e. organization of work, hiring, firing, promotion, an end to rigid work discipline and an end to the industrial hierarchy).

We aim to make the production unit more responsive to the needs of the community.

But the struggle for economic rights does not end in the factory.

WE AIM TO GET

- more control over real wages - i.e. what our money can buy. We aim to do this by such means as resisting price and rent increases, organizing consumer co-operatives and consumer protection
- more control over our welfare provisions either by working with existing groups or by setting up our own
- an end to sex discrimination in welfare benefits and we will fight attempts to erode welfare provisions.

We want to abolish the economic dependence of -

women on men
children on parents
the old on the young.

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This paper is the work of the following groups in the N.E. region:
York, Leeds, Hull, Durham, (Doncaster & Sheffield in preliminary discussions).

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