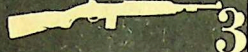


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THE RED
PAPERS



Women Fight for Liberation

50¢



International Women's Day rally, San Francisco, 1970.

**“Genuine equality between the sexes
can only be realized
in the socialist transformation
of society as a whole.”**

--Mao Tse-tung, 1955

International Women's Day

Though it started with poor women in America, today few Americans realize that March 8 is celebrated around the world as International Women's Day. The first Women's Day event took place 62 years ago, in 1908, when hundreds of poor women on the East Side of New York City came out from the factories and slum tenements to demonstrate in the streets for better working and living conditions.

Poor women had been working in factories, making approximately one-fourth the wages men earned, since the early 18th century, and had been organizing their own strikes and their own unions since 1824. Wealthier women had been fighting for women's suffrage for some forty years. And on March 8, these issues came together when women demonstrated for the right to vote as well as for decent housing, a minimum wage, and protective labor laws.

Two years later, in 1910, the International Socialist Congress adopted a resolution to make March 8 an international women's day. Marxist revolutionary V. I. Lenin and American labor leader Big Bill Heywood were among those who voted for it.

Red Papers 3: Women Fight for Liberation

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Women in the liberation struggle

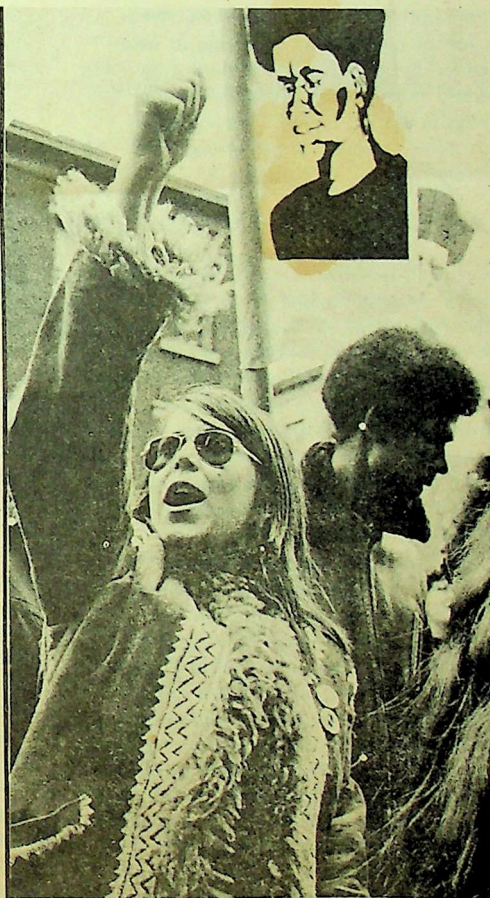
AN OVERVIEW

(The following is based on a speech given by Mary Lou Greenberg, a woman in the Bay Area Revolutionary Union, at the International Women's Day celebration in San Francisco, March 8, 1970.)

About 140 years ago, black slaves led by Nat Turner were rebelling against their masters and plantation owners in Virginia. A few years later, women factory workers in the textile mills in Lowell, Mass., walked off their jobs to protest a 13-hour work day and wages that came to less than \$1.25 a week. From these events and many others like them, American working class heroines began to come forward:

Women like the black slave Harriett Tubman, who began to rebel when she was 15 years old. Her master ordered her to tie up a slave who had tried to run away so he could be whipped. Instead, Harriett helped him to escape, the first of over 300 of her people she helped to reach freedom. She escaped herself when she was 29, and did such a fantastic job helping slaves escape on the "underground railway" that the slavemasters put a \$40,000 price on her head. Armed with a revolver, she defended her passengers, and she was recommended to John Brown as the person best able to help him carry through with his plan to free the South.

About this time a white woman named Mary Jones began to help working people all over the country free themselves from



Demonstration at the Women's House of Detention, New York City, March 8, 1970.

having to work long miserable hours for hardly enough to get by on. Called "Mother" Jones, she worked with the coal miners most of all, helping them plan and win strikes. One time she told the striking men to stay home and led an army of women, armed with mops, brooms, rocks, anything they could find, to chase the scabs out of the mines.

We're here today, International Women's Day, in the tradition of the rebelling black slaves, the Lowell Mill girls, Harriett Tubman, and Mother Jones. The Black Panther women in jail in New Haven, Conn.; brown women here in the Mission who are trying to fight the sweat shop conditions at Levi Strauss and are defending Los Siete; the hospital workers who are going on strike next week; the high school women who are trying to take education out of the hands of the ruling class and make it serve the needs of the working class--we can all take courage and inspiration from the past struggles of American women.

ALL PART OF THE SAME STRUGGLE

We're all here today, then, as part of the same struggle for liberation. But what is this "liberation" we're working for? Some might even say that the struggle for women's liberation is different from, say, the struggle for welfare rights. The program lists a speaker from the Women's Liberation Movement--but all the speakers here are part of the Women's Liberation Movement; just as Harriett Tubman and Mother Jones were.

Now, Mother Jones, for instance, didn't go around talking about women's rights. In fact, she was really pretty backward on this question. She felt that women shouldn't have to work, but should be able to stay home and raise the children. She wasn't about to go around urging that women should have the same jobs as men. She knew that women had worked in the mines once--stripped to the waist, crawling about in narrow tunnels on their hands and knees pulling heavy cars of coal. She knew that women's equality would mean that women would be free to die in the mines like men did.

One day she shocked a meeting of wealthy women suffragists when she



HARRIETT TUBMAN

said they didn't need the vote to raise hell like she did. They needed a strong hatred of injustice and a loud voice. She felt that politics was the bosses' game, and wanted to see economic justice achieved before anything else.

And in her own way, Mother Jones probably did as much for women's liberation as the suffragists or feminists. She taught the miners' wives to stand up and speak out and fight--and the miners themselves had more admiration and respect for her than they did for most men.

Of course, times are different now. Women are fighting for their rights as women. But the situation for working people and people without jobs is still a damned hard one. More and more workers are getting laid off every day. There are people on welfare who never thought they'd have to be there. And this situation is hitting women--especially non-white women--hardest of all.

WHAT IS "WOMEN'S LIBERATION" ?

All the speakers today have talked about women who are getting together and fighting back for their own survival and for the freedom of the entire working class. So what do we mean by "women's liberation," then?

Some people used to think that women's liberation meant a kind of personal liberation or freedom--the idea that by going bra-less, living in a commune, sleeping around with many men instead of just one, a woman could be "free." The idea was that it was possible for individuals to be free before--or even without--changing the basic structure of our present society.

But more and more people are realizing that individual solutions are available only to the rich--that there's no such thing as individual freedom for the masses of people--male and female--in a slave society like the one we've got now. Only socialism, where the working people own the industries and run the government for the benefit of all of us, can offer liberation for women as well as for men.

Women's liberation, then, really means a society where women and men take part equally in all aspects of that society--in the workplace, in the community, at home, and in the schools. Where women and men both will be able to work in the fields and factories without bosses telling us what to do. We'll be able to run things ourselves with no bosses or rulers who make us do all the work while they get fat.

There'll be warm, friendly child care centers for our children and top-rate medical care for all. Now, it's just the rich who can afford to get sick--as it's mostly just rich women who can get either abortions or good medical care when they're pregnant. It's the poor women who are forced to be sterilized and are told to use birth control because "the reason you're poor is that you've got too many kids." (This is nonsense; the reason people are poor is that food and resources aren't distributed evenly: the capitalists hoard them and use them to make profits.)

In the future socialist society, the schools will teach our true history--

about the struggles of women and the entire working class and of black, brown, and all minority peoples. There'll be no unemployment insurance or welfare because there'll be enough work for everyone and enough for everyone to live comfortably. Of course, if we get hurt or sick, or we're changing jobs, our workers' government will make sure our family is provided for. And older people and the disabled will be well cared for--not cast out. But this kind of assistance will be based on real concern for the welfare of the people. Not a degrading system like we have today that tries to make you feel like a beggar for demanding what you've earned. Or cuts you off without a penny if you give up looking for jobs that don't exist.

Under socialism all women can decide whether or not to have children, or get married. We won't be told we have to look sexy, or be dumb and helpless--that the only thing a woman is good for is to be a wife and mother. There will be a chance for men and women to be really creative and to take pride in what they do and who they are.

WOMEN UNDER SOCIALISM

For instance, in Vietnam women had few rights before the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was established under Ho Chi Minh in 1946. After the French were defeated, women were given immediate voting rights. Today in North Vietnam, women receive equal pay for equal work, and work in the fields and factories as well as fight alongside the men to defend their country. Married women are called by their own name, now, instead of their husband's as formerly, and the husbands take turns baby-sitting with the wives, so that both men and women can go to school and attend meetings.

In China, since the revolution, the situation of women has similarly improved, from one of feudal slavery to equal participation in society. Chinese women are now village officials, heads of agricultural stations, and play leading roles in all levels of society.

These changes were not accomplished without effort, however, and they are still going on. The male workers and peasants were reluctant to change after centuries of

women being subservient to men. But through the leadership and efforts of the Communist Party, led by the women in the Party, they realized that the full participation of women was necessary to defeat the landlords and rulers. When they saw the fine things women could do, they realized that women's liberation was a good thing.

Compare this to the situation in this country today where women workers are paid 40% less than male workers for the same job. Women are encouraged to stay in the home because that's where the big corporation owners want us. They need us there to raise the future workers for their factories and to take care of the present ones.

Just as the bosses use racism to keep white workers divided from non-whites, they use male supremacy to keep male and female workers, husbands and wives, divided from each other. Who benefits when the husband comes home tired and frustrated after a long work day--and takes out his anger at his wife instead of his boss? Who benefits when unions don't demand equal rights for women workers--and then the women scab on the men? The bosses come out ahead every time.

WHO IS THE ENEMY?

To build toward that socialist society and the women's liberation which must be a part of it, we have to recognize who the enemy is. Our enemy is not men. Our enemy is U.S. imperialism--the bosses, the big corporation owners, the politicians who work for them, and the police and the army who protect their interests. It's the same enemy the Vietnamese people are fighting--the rulers of this country who decide what the schools will teach, what our wages will be, what welfare crumbs they'll hand out, and who the police will shoot next.

Our enemy is U.S. imperialism, so we have to build a powerful United Front which will bring together all the women, men, workers, students, people on welfare--all people who will unite against the common enemy. This United Front will be led by working people at the point of production, particularly black and brown workers who are now leading the struggle in this country, because only workers at the point of production--the

industrial proletariat--have the power to shut the country down, take over the factories, and run them in the interests of all working people. The most courageous, the most self-sacrificing, the most far-seeing of these workers and their allies will form the core of the new communist party that we need to lead us in defeating the bosses and building socialism.

This United Front Against Imperialism will be formed:

In support of the national liberation of black and Mexican-American peoples, and the democratic demands of all oppressed minorities;

In support of the liberation struggles of oppressed peoples abroad, a struggle currently being led by the Vietnamese women and men;

To fight against the growing fascist repression in this country--the attacks by the police, supported by the courts, against the Black Panther Party, against Los Siete de la Raza, against working men and women on strike lines, against all those who are standing up against U.S. imperialism, like the Chicago 8. We must defend those currently under attack and remember that there will be many more "conspiracy" trials.

The United Front will fight against the oppression and exploitation of women under imperialism; and will fight against the increasing lay-offs, speed-ups, rising prices, higher taxes, and welfare cut-backs which are Nixon's answers to inflation.

WOMEN IN THE UNITED FRONT

Women must play a leading role in all of these areas of struggle--just as the fight against the oppression and exploitation of women is one of the key areas in the United Front. The fight for women's rights will take place in many ways: through women's caucuses, rank-and-file movements in the labor unions, and workers' solidarity committees to fight against all forms of on-the-job discrimination; through Welfare Rights organizations and tenants' unions--because everyone needs enough money to live on and a decent place to live; by fighting for good medical care for all--including the right of a woman to decide whether or not to

have children; through women's groups, where we can learn our problems aren't individual problems, but that they're caused by the kind of society we have. That we're having trouble with our husbands, for instance, not because we're neurotic, but because it's damn near impossible to have good relationships with anyone in this society. We've been trained to be competitive, mistrustful, individualistic, and only in a society based on cooperation and run by the masses of working people will it be possible for things to be different. Even then it will take a long time to get rid of the ruling class ideas that whites are "better" than non-whites, and men are "superior" to women. We must begin now to attack those ideas and to change the ways men and women relate.

To truly unite the working class, we have to help women become independent and not be dominated by men. We must fight against the idea that the only place for women is in the home. This means, for instance, when we set up child care centers, or Breakfast-for-Children programs like the Panthers have, men as well as

women should cook and watch the children. We have to encourage sharing household work at home, especially if the wife, as well as the husband, is working outside the home. Above all, we have to show by our actions that "women's fights" does not mean the right to be mean to men-- that equality between the sexes can mean better relationships between women and men. Revolutionaries, especially, and those who are trying to become revolutionaries, must live up to the idea of men and women being equal, and revolutionary men have a special responsibility to bring these ideas to the men they are working with.

Women being equal also means women taking part in armed struggle against the capitalist state. We know that the bosses don't give up anything without a fight. And we can only win if we gather together all our forces, women and men, to fight on every level.

If we unite with all who can be united under militant working class leadership, our United Front will be capable of defeating our enemy, U.S. imperialism, once and for all. And in defeating our real enemy, we, as women, will find our real liberation.

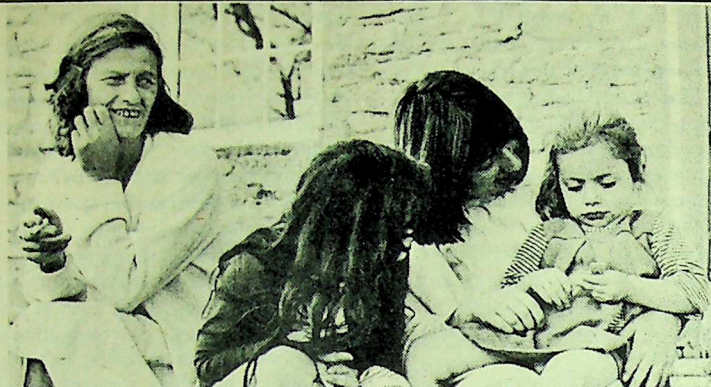
The Women's Army

None so fitted to break the chains
As they who wear them.
None so well equipped to decide
What is a fetter.
In its march towards freedom
The working class must cheer on the efforts of
Those women who, feeling on
Their souls and bodies the
Fetters of the ages have
Arisen to strike them off,
And cheer all the louder if, in its
Hatred of thralldom and passion
For freedom, the women's
Army forges ahead of the militant
Army of labour.

--James Connally, Irish revolutionary, friend of Lenin, leader in the Easter Rising of 1916, in his book, *The Reconquest of Ireland*.



Bernadette Devlin, 22, contemporary Irish revolutionary.



From "Women, a Journal of Liberation"

Women & the home

Women are rising up all over the country. Women's caucuses are forming in labor unions, demanding equal wages and equal job opportunities. Student women are getting together to form women's liberation groups. Housewives are meeting to organize and demand child care centers for their children. Strikers' wives are marching on their husbands' picket lines. Black, brown, and white women are marching with our brothers to resist the attacks on male and female revolutionaries like the hundreds of Black Panther Party members who have been murdered or jailed.

Women are saying that our "place" is no longer limited to "the home." The original division of labor between men and women--the biological fact that women bear the children--will continue, but we now have the technological and social means to deal with that division as equally as possible.

Women in this country and in capitalist societies everywhere are oppressed by male supremacy--the systematic discrimination against women on the job, in school, in public life, etc.--and male chauvinism--the attitudes which stem from this discrimination. But all women are not oppressed equally or in the same way. The situation of a white ruling class woman, for instance, is much different from that of a working class woman.

Jackie Kennedy-Onassis today orders the butler around just as much as the maid. Nelson Rockefeller and his wife Happy own half of Venezuela and enjoy the profits from it while Venezuelans

starve. And Happy isn't weeping for the females who starve there any more than she weeps for the males.

This oppression takes many forms. Marilyn Monroe, who came from a working class background and made it big in Hollywood, killed herself because she couldn't live up to what she was supposed to be. She was sold as a sex symbol, but no one can be an ageless, wrinkle-free, dumb blond for very long without going crazy.

THE RULING CLASS IMAGE

Now the popular magazines--Life, Look, Time--and the daily newspapers have begun to pick up on "women's liberation" just as they have picked up on "revolution" and are packaging it for mass production--i. e., private profits. Now women can buy the clothes worn by the "liberated women" in the fashion ads; actually the fashion model is one of the most repressed of all women--chained to the fashion image.

The masters of profit who are also masters of deceit can turn anything into private profit--UNLESS IT REALLY HELPS FREE THE WORKING PEOPLE FROM THE CONTROL OF THESE BOSSES. Charlotte Ford Niarchos, Henry Ford's jet-set daughter, can throw away her bras, buy the latest in "liberated" fashions, and go to the most "liberated" cocktail parties ("I dreamed I went to a cocktail in my see-through blouse"), using the money made off the backs of every worker in the Ford plants. On International Women's Day, March

8, 1970, two rallies were held in the Bay Area. The following day the San Francisco Chronicle reported to its readers how a folk-singer at the Berkeley rally "launched into a ditty with the oft-repeated refrain, 'We don't need the men... except now and then.'" The Chronicle did not report to its readers that across the bay in the Mission District of San Francisco Black Panther women, Los Siete women, United Asian Women, high school women, working class white women, hospital working women were saying that we're all in it together and that women's liberation is part of the struggle to liberate all working people.

If the newspapers and magazine stories and advertisements can make the women's movement seem silly and opposed to the interests of the masses of working men and women, these men and women won't want to find out what women's liberation really can mean.

To many people the term "women's liberation" means a movement of women against men. Many women, when they hear "women's liberation," bring up examples of women they know who mistreat their husbands and they say they don't think women should treat men bad-

ly, either. Some people fear that if women are "liberated" women and men will be just alike. Other women seem to like the mistaken idea of women's liberation right away because it gives these women more ammunition to use in their constant battle with their husbands.

If we cannot prove through practice that women's liberation is vital to the interests of working people, then men and women will continue to be oppressed by the effects of male chauvinism and male supremacy: men and women fighting each other, women workers scabbing on men workers, men scabbing on women, husbands and wives cheating on each other. The battle of the sexes will continue to hold back the battle of the working people against the bosses.

THE FACTS OF LIFE

While the Ford heiresses are jetsetting, where does the wife of a Ford autoworker, for instance, fit into the picture? Her work, as well as her husband's, directly benefits Ford and all the other corporation owners. It is the housewife's job--whether or not she also works outside the home--to bear and raise the future generations of Ford

In early primitive societies, women were bound by the demands of child-raising. Being the ones who could bear and nurse the children, their place was at the home fire. For some time in man's development that place by the home fire was central; life revolved around the home. The men went out to hunt and forage and brought home the food to be eaten there. All women and men worked for the whole group, and everyone's work was necessary if the group was to survive. There was no private property, and children were cared for by everyone in the community.

These societies had little wealth. It was hard just to find enough food to get by. But over the centuries, methods of getting food changed. Instead of just hunting and gathering food, men began to plant and grow crops and to domesticate and herd livestock. Men also began to make tools. So men came into possession of the first form of private property. With the increase of production made possible by cattle-raising, agriculture, and handicrafts, some people were able to pro-

duce more than was immediately necessary to live. Herds of livestock and harvests of crops produced surpluses for some people while others could still barely scratch out a living, and many died of hunger or sickness. There was fighting among the people to get control of what was available. These were the first wars. The winners took prisoners and used them as guards of their private property and as slaves. Two classes developed: masters and slaves, the exploiters and the exploited. The man who owned the means of production had all the more opportunity to become a bigger producer and owner.

And he now had the means to dominate the woman. Although the woman's activity had not changed, the means of getting the necessities of life had changed. The center of production had moved outside the house while the woman was still bound by that original division of labor--child-bearing. When the man's relationship to the means of production became more important than the woman's, he became dominant.

workers and help maintain the present work force through cooking, laundering, and housecleaning. Without her doing these things, the capitalists would have a difficult time keeping a stable work

force and could not be assured of having workers in the years to come.

If she doesn't have to work to meet expenses, the housewife probably stays at home most of the day looking after 3 or 4 small children and cleaning a small apartment, a small rented house, or perhaps a small house that they're renting from the bank. (The deed says they own the house; for 20 years or more the bank really owns it, until it's all paid off. If they don't keep up those monthly payments, who gets the house--

Class divisions among women--as among men--began with the beginnings of private property and slavery. The male slave's children, by a female slave, were the slavemaster's property just as much as the slavemaster's children by the female slave. On the southern plantations, the slavemaster's wife, kept "ladylike" and "pure," benefitted financially like her husband from the exploitation of both the male and the female slave.

bank or family?) For the rich or well-off, marriage offers financial security to the wife. She is assured of property. For the woman married to an average worker in this country, marriage offers no such financial security because her husband hasn't got any.

The worker is supposedly paid enough to support a family, but increasingly his wage fails to make it. Many men work 50 and 60 hours a week just to break even. And if their wives work, the family may be putting in 80-100 hours of work each week for a bare existence.

The working man is likely to have work shifts that are "inconvenient" to say the least. The wife has to plan her life around these. When her husband is trying to sleep in the daytime and the children are playing, she's tense--getting hell from him, giving hell to them. When he's not sleeping, he's likely to be uptight because he's up against the wall of heavy responsibility and lousy work--lousy not because it's dull and tiring (though it's that, too), but because making products in America is not satisfying. He knows damn well that the product he's

making--a car, for instance--is engineered to fall apart in a short time.

CUT OFF FROM SOCIETY

The woman's work within the home is centered entirely on the family. Unless she has an outside job she is almost totally isolated from other adults, doing the same tasks over and over. If her husband works long hours she hardly even sees him. Her labor in the home gives her no sense of connection to anyone outside her family. So when her husband is tired and cross and when the children are tired and crying, her whole world seems to fall apart. She has nothing outside her family to fall back on; it appears she has no reason for living outside of them. If she is unhappy it must be because she isn't living up to that ideal wife and mother she is "supposed" to be: patient with the children, sexy and loving for the husband, calm and charming for visitors.

Until the children go to school, she is tied down by their needs every hour of the day and night. Only mothers know what being a mother means. Humans are the only animals with children who need such care--who can roll off a bed and break that tender skull, who can't walk or even crawl for months, who have to be watched to make sure they don't choke. Her children's need for her gives her something to do with her life, but it also puts her nerves on end so she ends up screaming at them a lot. Sometimes she ends up beating them, even though she really does love them and doesn't mean to hurt them. Recent statistics show that child beating and child abuse cause thousands of children to die each year in this country.

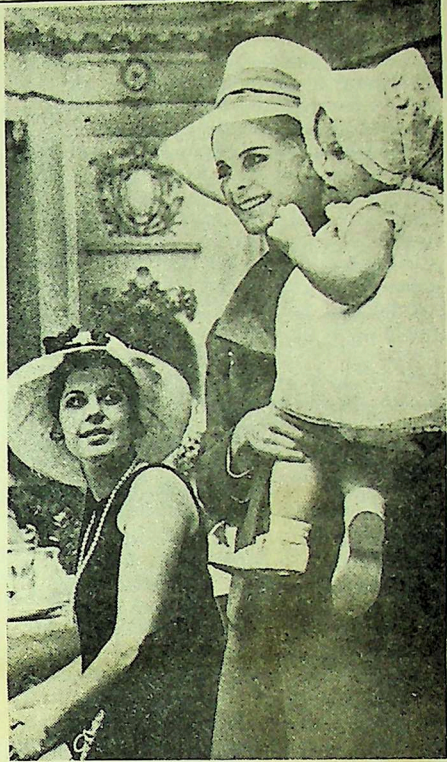
If the wife and her husband are lucky, they got married because they liked to be with each other, and after they got married they had some time to prepare for children--maybe even time to save a little money. If they got married because she was pregnant, that adds to the frustration of both. "I was pregnant when we got married and he runs around" is a common story of many marriages. They both love their children, no matter what the circumstances, and even though their life together may be less than happy, he will work hard to keep them all fed, housed and clothed, and she will go through the same old routine day after day. If she is white she may have a high school education; if she's black or brown,

she probably left high school after the ninth or tenth grade. She reads magazines but probably doesn't like to read much else because schools teach working class children that we're only smart enough to get by and get a low-paying job and/or be a housewife.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Most of us are convinced, in other words, that we shouldn't expect too much because we're not going to "get very far." Yet both men and women dream aloud or silently of a big payoff--of making "the American dream" come true. We are taught that success--making lots of money--makes the man, so he tries for that success. We are taught that clothes and good looks make the woman, so she buys all kinds of make-up and as many clothes as she can afford and colors out every gray hair that appears on her head. In addition, the housewife is urged to buy the latest floor wax, soap powder and furniture polish so her apartment or house will shine like the ads say it must.

Above all, she tries to make her home a decent place. She knows the pressures



San Francisco's ruling class at breakfast. Mrs. Lawrence Alioto, left, and Mrs. Joseph M. Alioto with daughter, Michela, at annual Sheraton-Palace Easter brunch, April 6, 1969.

As the means of production developed, with better farming methods and iron-smelting, for example, slavery was overturned by the feudal society of lord and serf, landlord and peasant. The lord's wife was not completely equal to her husband. But she was sure a hell of a lot better off than the women, or the man, in the peasant households. Some of these feudal ladies, like Elizabeth I of England, even got to be queen. They not only managed the affairs of the country, they also got to command, "Off with their heads!" whenever the poor people got out of line.

The woman serf on the feudal manor owed her first wedded night not even to her husband but to the lord who lorded it over her husband. Both male and female serfs were under the command of lord and lady.

of supporting the family are heavy on her husband. He is constantly reminded--by insurance men, for example--of his "obligations" to his wife and children. They both know that any big medical problem would be a financial disaster.

Since they're always living on the edge of their income, is it any wonder that strikes are a threat? Her job is to take care of the day-to-day needs of her family; anything that will make it harder to do that is a real threat to the family's security. If her husband doesn't take time to explain what is going on at the shop and in the union, she is likely to resist change rather than take a chance. So she goes on looking after her husband and her children, perhaps wishing for a change and hoping things don't get worse.

But things are getting worse for most working people in this country: higher costs of living, higher taxes, speed-up, lay-offs, more working people sent to fight more wars (it used to be just Vietnam, now it's Vietnam and Laos and soon will be Thailand and Cambodia). At the same time there is increasing unemployment, which hits women even harder than

it hits men and hits black and brown women hardest of all, leaving more women and men desperately poor. More people are having to go on welfare while at the same time welfare programs are being reduced by the government.

Modern industry has made it possible for masses of women to enter the work force and to do work which benefits society as a whole; but under the present system of private profit, workers are still forced to work for the benefit of the corporation owners and the bankers who run things. Instead of placing this nation's great technological advances at the service of the people, the technology is used for gadgets to keep people buying things that fall apart and to keep paying taxes for new "defense" weapons that are designed to keep the big corporations in business.

To free ourselves and the technology we have developed from this criminal system we will have to build the unity of everyone who is beaten down by it, beginning with the working people who make this society run and must change it to make it run for our benefit. But we cannot build this unity, without building solidarity between women and men now.

Women must be encouraged to do things outside the home, to fight side by side with other women and with men. If men at first feel threatened by the idea of their wives being able to join the struggle on an equal basis, we must make sure that the men understand what we mean by women's liberation. In our work we will make mistakes, but if we learn from our mistakes, then even failures can be a step toward doing things right. Women's liberation is one of the most difficult things to deal with on a concrete level, but it is one of the most important and essential in every area of struggle.

Sometimes men have welcomed women on their picket lines--so long as the women are other men's wives or students. They discourage or prevent their own wives from going down to the line. They know that their relationships with their wives will change if the wives start becoming interested in doing something about the way things are. Change in the marriage relationship is threatening because we never know exactly how it will be after the change. But it is clear that no relationship ever stays exactly the same--it either goes forward or backward. And an equal relationship is firm ground for going forward rather than backward.

We have found that showing the film "Salt of the Earth," which deals with women's role in supporting their husbands' strike, helped break down many men's resistance to their wives' joining the struggle. Despite friendly arguments about what the liberation of women means, working class men can be won and are being won as fighters for the equality of women. One worker who liked to rib RU people on the subject himself went to a strike line and lectured the men there because all the women were in the cafeteria waiting on the men. We should not make the mistake of thinking that working men want their wives to be super-dependent. We have heard many men say they want their wives to get out of the house and get involved. And it seems clear that many of the working class marriages that are shaky would be strengthened, not shattered, if the woman can be free to develop in struggle.

The main point here is that those of us who feel we have a good understanding of what women's liberation means can't jump with both feet into a situation which we haven't investigated. Women's liberation may at first seem like a threat to both women and men until they've dealt with it. But at least one marriage we know of was saved by the husband's new understanding of his own male chauvinism.

Marriages in this society are generally shaky. Monogamy--one man, one woman --is under fire from some people as "exclusive" and some so-called revolutionaries go so far as to say, "don't get married and don't have children." But it is clear that right now the objective situation is that millions of working men and women are married and have children, and that the marriages and the children are inseparable from our daily lives. Many people have developed a way of living together that seems the best of all possible ways given the present uncertainties of relationships in a capitalist, competitive society. We do not know what form the family will take in future societies. Perhaps someday people in a better society will be so free and easy with one another--so unafraid of being hurt by each other--that it will be possible to develop deep relationships on other bases than monogamy. But we are dealing with right now. And we've got a lot of monogamous relationships that mean a lot to a lot of people. It's one thing to have sexual "freedom" when you're childless and well-off, quite another when you have children and little money.

We must be careful to respect other people's personal relationships. For example, women who come from the student movement and are "independent" and not "tied down" by a husband and family must be careful not to threaten other women's personal relationships. This means not flirting with other women's husbands, and it means talking with women at parties, on strike lines, etc. as much as with men. Women's liberation has a reputation of meaning sexual looseness. We must combat this idea through our actions as well as our words. Communist men have a special responsibility to discourage other men from viewing women as sex objects and making comments that put women down.

The rulers of this country need the working class family to play a conservative role, to help keep the work force subdued and "grateful" for the crumbs the bosses hand out. If the working class family is united, if women and men are working together, the family can be a major weapon in the defeat of the imper-

ialist system. Comrades are already developing ways of working with each other's children to make the children feel at home with the parents' friends. Younger comrades are working with the older children in families. This way the politics of the parents become reality to our children and lead to increasingly comradely relationships between parent and child.

Women meeting by themselves as women helps break down the competitiveness we have been taught to have for each other. In order to do anything concrete to help the women involved, these meetings have to be more than gripe sessions and must lead to actually doing something together. For example, women from one such group decided to spend the day together, then cleaned up the apartments one by one before the husbands came home from work. This was a living example of the advantages of socialized housework that will be fully developed in socialist society.

We must help women develop confi-

Black Mother

**i must confess that i still breathe
though you are not yet free
what could justify my crying start
forgive my cowards heart
— but blame me not the sheepish me
for i have just awakened from a deep, deep, sleep
and i be hazed, and dazed, and scared
and vipers fester in my hair
BLACK MOTHER i curse your drudging years
the rapes, and heart-breaks, sweat and tears
— but this cannot redeem the fact —
you cried in pain, i turned my back
and ran into the myers fog
and watched while you were dogged
and died a thousand deaths
but i swear on seige night dark and gloom
a rose i'll wear to honor you, and when i fall
the rose in hand
you'll be free and i a man
for a slave of natural death who dies
can't balance out to two dead flies
i'd rather be without the shame
a bullet lodged within my brain
if i were not to reach our goal
let bleeding cancer torment my soul.**

By Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter,
Deputy Minister of Defense,
Black Panther Party, Los Angeles,
murdered by the reactionary "us"
organization, Jan. 17, 1969.



dence in themselves and a belief that they are capable of doing more than raising children and doing housework. For this it is not enough to get together and talk. Women must actively plan and work together on projects, and through this develop our skills and leadership capabilities. In planning activities, we must pay attention to issues which affect women in particular as well as those which affect all working class people.

Bringing husbands and wives together on issues which affect them both gets people working together and develops the liberation of women in concrete ways. One woman remarked that most married couples have no activities in common and it would help the relationship if both were working on the same thing. In one area, working people and people on welfare are organizing a tenants' union. The women are very enthusiastic and are among the best organizers. But they have small children, so to free these women a child care center will have to be set up. Many people are organizing breakfast-for-children programs in which men and women share equally in the kitchen work. Free food and clothing programs and free medical clinics are being set up in low-income areas.

The problem of health care is one that affects every poor and working person, especially women. In socialist society when workers are in control, hospitals and health care will be at the service of the people. Right now we must move the hospitals in that direction because there are people sick and dying who have a basic right to live a healthy life. We need good care for all mothers, before and after giving birth, and for their babies. As it is now, only the wealthy can afford good maternity care. Usually only someone with enough money can get either a legal or illegal abortion now. Hospitals and clinics should give out free birth control information, and abortions should be legal, free and easily available. At the same time, forced sterilization of poor women must be stopped and free medical care must be given to all women who want to have children. We must expose the use of the phony "population bomb" theory to force women to use birth control. The real reason why people starve--the unequal distribution of food and resources, the hoarding by the big corporations--must be explained.

This "population bomb" idea that starvation is caused by too many people in the world is just another of the capitalists' tricks. We all know that people are starving, but the reason is that a few rich people control food supplies and use them to make their profits. In China before the revolution, millions of people starved each year, more than starve now every year in India; food sat in railway cars and rotted; people were shot, as they are now in India, for trying to get to that food because they were starving. Now China is feeding all its people and even exporting some food.

The population scare is just another way to turn us on each other, to make us think of each other as the enemy, to justify genocide in Vietnam and finally here at home. We need to concentrate instead on how to look after each other. A healthy and well-educated people controlling the wealth and technology of society will be able to figure out how many children we should have.

Another thing we must begin to do now is to get good child care centers for our children. Mothers cannot do things outside the home unless they have a good place to leave their children. Child care centers should be places where children can be with a variety of people doing a variety of things from an early age. Unfortunately, the money to do this is now in the hands of bureaucrats--agents of the big capitalists--who spend most of our tax money on war and on the increasing police protection which they need here at home. But we must get together and demand that they pay for child care centers with the parents themselves in control. We need to raise our children as strong fighters for the rights of the people. Children are not to be feared because they will crowd us out; they are to be cherished because they are the future of us all.

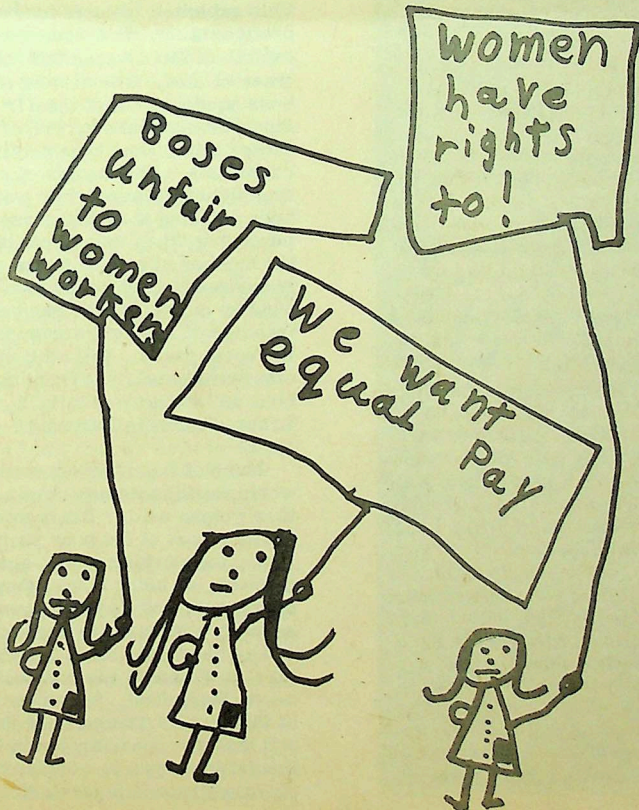
Many of us were first brought to action by the knowledge that our own system of government, our own tax money, was burning mothers and their babies in Vietnam for the seizure of private property. We became revolutionaries when we realized that their struggle is ours--that the women of Vietnam took up the gun with the men to defeat the same enemy that we must also fight. With that in mind, the difficulties we meet will not discourage us, and we will continue our fight until the day when all women and men are liberated.

Women on the job

"When I hear 'Southern womanhood' defended by racists, I just have to laugh. I am 'Southern womanhood,' and I've had to work all my life like an animal. I took in washing and ironing; I picked and chopped cotton, worked in the peanut fields, and took care of children for women who were lucky enough to get jobs in the cotton mills." This statement made by Peggy Terry, who has organized working class people in the South and in Chicago, puts everything exactly like it is: the image of the rich women who are supposed to be protected because they are weak and ladylike; and the reality for most women, working class women, who

are "lucky enough" to get a job or are left to take care of the children for even less than the cotton mills pay. There it is in all its inequality. And what are we to do about it?

The first division of labor is that between men and women in the bearing of children. In the early primitive societies, that division of labor led to the woman's taking care of domestic chores while the man took care of outside activities. Yet when some men took over property and needed people to work for them, they did not hesitate to break up such "domestic bliss" and turn women as well as men into slaves. With the





Industrial Revolution, the capitalists hired women as well as children to work side by side with men as wage slaves.

By fostering the idea that "woman's place is in the home," the capitalist bosses can have their cake and eat it, too: they can convince half the population that we should be at home, or, if we must go to work, that we should expect to get lower wages than men, a higher unemployment rate than men, less attention from the unions, and all the discriminatory hiring practices that go along with that kind of policy. This system which puts women in a position that is inferior to men is male supremacy, and the attitudes that spring from it are male chauvinism.

WOMEN ARE SUPER-EXPLOITED

Like men, women workers are exploited as workers who must sell their labor power to a capitalist. The capitalist pays the worker wages which are only about half as much as the worker produces. The rest goes into the capitalist's pocket as his "private profit." This exploited labor is the basis of the profit system. But women are super-exploited: their wages fall far below those of men. The amount of profit the boss squeezes out of them is far greater. Since women make up 40% of the labor force, this means huge profits for the capitalists. The margin of profit is getting higher because while women have been entering the labor force at a higher percentage than men (from 1947 to 1964 the number of women in the work force increased 53% while the number of men went up only 12%), the gap between the incomes of men and women has widened in recent years. (All statistics, unless otherwise noted, are from the 1965 Handbook on Women Workers, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau.)

Much of this profit is made off third world working women. As a Black Panther woman said, "Black women as generally a part of the poor people of the U.S., the working class, are more oppressed, as being black, they're super-oppressed, and as being women they are sexually oppressed by men in general and by black men also." ("Panther Sisters on Women's Liberation," *The Movement*, Sept. 1969) A greater percentage of third world women work than white, and they are concentrated in the most menial jobs open to women; their unemployment rate is highest, and their aver-

age income lowest. For example, in 1968 for every \$100 the average white working man made, the average black working man made \$68.60, the white working woman \$58.20, and the black working woman \$45.

WOMEN NEED TO WORK

Contrary to the myth sponsored by the bosses that "women don't need to work" and therefore don't need to get as much money as men, most women who work do so out of economic necessity. Women, like men, take boring, low-paying jobs because having a job is a matter of life and death. Four out of every ten of the nation's poorest families are headed by women. In 1965, out of every 100 women who worked, 42 were the sole support of themselves and their families. Out of every 100 white working women, 37 have children under 5 years old, and out of every 100 black working women, 51 have children under 5. Twenty-four women out of every 100 working women have husbands who make less than \$5000 a year. As Mickey and John Rountree point out (in their article, "More on the Political Economy of Women's Liberation," *Monthly Review*, Jan. 1970), 29% of all husband-wife families had incomes below \$7000 in 1966 when the wife and husband worked; 49% had incomes below that level when she did not work. Ten out of every 100 wives who work in this country do so in order to get the family out of the below-\$3000-a-year bracket.

We know that the costs of food, housing, clothing, education--everything--are soaring while at the same time taxes are spiraling upward. Meanwhile, there are increasing lay-offs and unemployment, the welfare rolls are filling up and sometimes filled. The workers are caught in the middle--paying for the bosses' wars while making the bosses' products. We know that we have to unite all workers to resist the attack on living standards by the monopoly capitalists. How to begin?

MALE-FEMALE UNITY NECESSARY

This unity can only come through struggle around the rights of working people. And to fail to build unity between men and women in struggle can only lead to defeat. For example, in last year's strike against Standard Oil, the workers at one Standard unit, Chevron Chemical Co., in Richmond, California, lost their union shop because the male majority in

the union ignored the basic grievances of the women, before and even during the strike. So the women did not really feel that the strike was their struggle, certainly not as much as the men's. When the going really got rough, many of the women led a back-to-work movement that broke the back of the strike and forced the workers back into the shop with no union.

Women at Chevron are forced to do the most boring, lowest paying work with no real chance to advance. The men, when they are first hired, work on the same lines for the same pay as the women. But they advance to easier, higher-paying jobs in a few months. This, plus the fact that the union and the strike was run by men, made the women feel that they had no great stake in defeating the company. The potential power of the women, united as equals with the men, was shown by several militant women workers, who played a leading role in the strike, especially in the front lines of battle, despite all the obstacles of male supremacy and male domination.

Women must make this clear to men: that if the bosses can get away with paying third world men, white women, and third world women lower wages than they pay the white men, then it keeps the white men's wages lower, too--we are all in it together. For instance, when Northern laborers got organized, the bosses moved their textile mills to the South; now that Southern laborers are winning some wage struggles, they've moved a lot of their textile mills all the way to Saigon! But the Vietnamese people, through long years of struggle with invaders from many countries, have developed a revolutionary party with working class leadership; they are fighting against being the slaves of U.S. imperialism. They work with rifles ready in case of attack. Their struggle is directly related to the struggle of wo-



From BASTA YAI!



Women workers at Levi-Strauss

men working in the textile mills of this country; they are refusing to be the bosses' wage slaves.

AT THE POINT OF PRODUCTION

Out of every 100 working women, 15 work at the point of production in factories. In the manufacturing industries, women are more likely to be employed in "soft" goods, like clothing and food, than in "hard" goods, like cars, machinery, etc. But women's employment increased more in hard goods than in soft goods from 1950 to 1965--in electronics, for example. The word is that the electronics industry needs women because of their "agile fingers." If that were the reason, why hasn't the medical profession been calling for women heart surgeons all these years? Women make up almost 3 out of 10 workers at the point of production. These women, along with industrial working men, make up the industrial proletariat--the workers who can, because of the knowledge they have gained through practical experience, take over and run our industries to serve the people rather than the bosses.

Sixteen out of every 100 working women are in the service industries. Of these, more than a third are waitresses, bartenders, and cooks. Another large group are attendants in hospitals and other institutions. The rest are in personal services--beauticians, servants, etc.

The largest group of women workers--32 out of every 100--are clerical workers. About a third of these are secre-

taries, stenographers, and typists. The others are in other office work and communications work--primarily telephone operators. Although 70% of the nation's clerical workers are women, only 30% of these women belong to unions. One reason is that many women hesitate to identify with the working class, preferring to identify with the women in the magazine ads. This is part of the brain-wash we receive which glorifies the ruling class even while they are bombing and starving millions upon millions of people to death. That is why the industrial proletariat will be the vanguard--in the forefront of the struggle. People at the point of production cannot deny their working class being; these workers are not removed from reality by skyscraping architecture, closetsful of clothes, or the papers and pens of bureaucracy.

"PROFESSIONALS" HURT, TOO

As the struggle intensifies and the contradictions become more obvious, more and more women in the professions, such as nursing, teaching, social work, will join the revolutionary ranks. Many of the women already in the Women's Liberation Movement come from these fields. Nurses especially are in a position which makes them ready allies with the true proletariat. Not only are their wages low, but they find the doctor-nurse relationship the same as it was when the doctor's kit went to the boy and the nurse's kit to the girl as children; so they have a very real understanding of their oppression as women in a "man's world." Most women who choose nursing as a career do so because of humanitarian desires to

serve the people, but they are then witness to the inhuman system of medical "care" which looks after the rich and does its best to ignore the poor. After a recent police killing of a teen-aged boy, several nurses expressed support for community control of the police; they had seen too many such cases.

The humanitarian desire to serve the people is common to other kinds of health workers, teachers, social and welfare workers, VISTA workers, even peace corps volunteers and some lawyers. But the system puts them into positions where they are forced to see the corruption of a society which makes money the goal of every enterprise. Recently we heard from a VISTA worker the story of how, as a lawyer, he was asked to file a report that blamed a 5-year-old girl instead of the company-owners for an accident in which she crawled up on a cement mixer and got her arm cut off. He simply refused to do it.

And most teachers want to teach. The young and honest find that their main job instead is to maintain discipline in a prisonlike atmosphere. They are quick to understand what third world people mean by relevant education--education that relates to real everyday life. Yet when they try to teach what their students need to learn, they put their jobs on the line. We can see evidence of growing unrest in the increasing number of welfare workers' revolts, peace corps revolts, VISTA workers getting out of line, nurses' and teachers' strikes.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

In the struggle for the equal participation of women in the liberation of all people, the fight against male supremacy must be carried to the unions. Where there are already unions, membership must be open to women. Protective legislation and minimum wage laws must be extended to all workers. There must be no jobs based on sex or race. There must be equal pay for equal work, paid maternity leaves with no loss of seniority, 24-hour-a-day child care paid for by the companies and controlled by the parents, and free, paid training for women who have been denied this training previously because of their sex. Although recognizing that the unions are mostly run by sell-out leaders, we also recognize that we must fight for the workers' interests within the unions. We must, as a worker's wife at the

Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel (PDM) strike said, "Organize the organized." Women's caucuses and rank-and-file movements within unions and the formation of solidarity committees of workers from many plants will also be important in this struggle.

In 1964 only one out of eight women workers were joining a union compared to one out of four men workers. Where unions don't exist, we must organize the unorganized: the women in domestic and farm work, in the garment sweatshops, in clerical and electronic work, and in other jobs now largely unorganized and ignored by the unions. Women textile workers, always leaders in the labor struggle, recently led a strike to get a union at a hosiery corporation in South Carolina. The company refused to sign a contract for six months, but the solidarity of the black and white workers (mostly women) held out to victory.

Wives of union men must be encouraged to come to union meetings and participate in the discussions and struggles. When this happened at the PDM strike, it was helpful in getting wives to support the strike. One very strong wife was named chairman of the Workers' Committee that grew out of the strike.

Working women and workers' wives--as well as their husbands--must be encouraged to help develop working class newspapers, which are an excellent way of communicating among workers--informing workers of other workers' struggles. We have found that distributing working class newspapers is a good way to get people involved in making other people aware; it is also a good way of getting to talk to people.

And we must reach out to those who are unable to work--unemployed women and women on welfare. Capitalism never has offered full employment and, by its nature, it cannot. Unemployment is highest among women workers: once again the scale goes white men, third world men, white women, third world women. That gap is widening as more and more women seek jobs. Nixon's plan to increase unemployment in order to slow down runaway inflation is hitting and will continue to hit factory workers hardest. From 1959 to 1964 unemployment among women factory workers went up 9 to 13%.

And many women work only part time. This use of women as fill-in help is a windfall for the capitalists, who in this

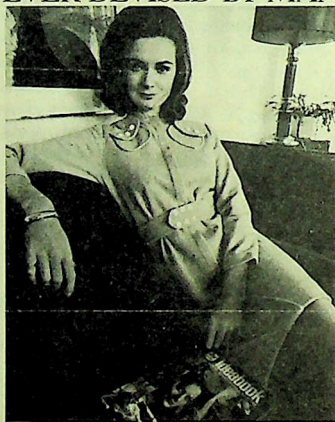
way avoid paying many of the fringe benefits which full-time workers have fought for and won. Women who work the land --the tenant farmers' wives and daughters, the black migrant laborers in the South, the brown farmworkers of the Southwest--are only seasonally employed and are among the most oppressed people in the nation.

Modern industry has made it possible for women to enter the labor force, but it has not made it possible for all women to do that any more than it can make it possible for all men to have jobs. So society offers what it calls "welfare." Right now in Santa Clara County, Calif., supposedly one of the wealthiest counties in the whole country (average per person income is around \$13,000 per year), comes this headline: "Crisis in Santa Clara over Big Welfare Jump." (San

Francisco Chronicle, 2/21/70) "Armies of new welfare recipients, including many middle class persons never before on welfare, are being driven to the welfare rolls by an economic recession and inflation," said a welfare spokesman. "Major employers, such as Lockheed, are laying off people because of loss of government contracts."

We must find ways to serve the needs of all oppressed and exploited women and unite women to lead in the proletarian revolution. This organizing takes many forms: within unions and workers' committees, newspaper work and distribution, child care organizing (for women on the job and at home), tenants' unions, women's groups where women read together, talk, watch films, etc.--any form that serves the real needs of the people. We need to exchange the experience we gain from our failures and successes.

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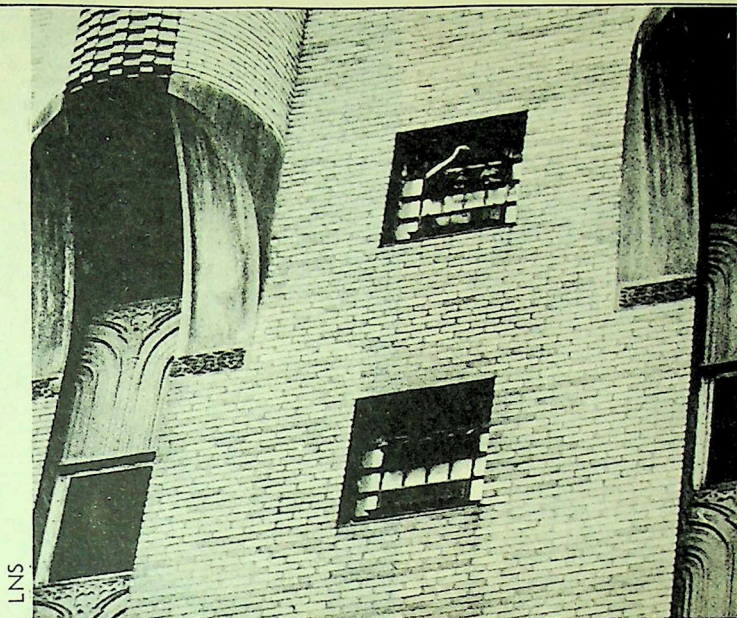
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S&H INCENTIVES--WE SELL YOUR MEN ON SELLING.



Sisters imprisoned in the Women's House of Detention, in New York City, greet demonstrators below on International Women's Day, 1970.

Free Political Prisoners !

On International Women's Day (March 8, 1970) in Montevideo, Uruguay, 13 women who were being held as political prisoners were liberated by the National Liberation Front (the Tupamaros) in a raid which is considered to be the most spectacular yet staged by the urban guerillas.

The raid took place at a church next to the Montevideo women's jail, where the 13 women had been taken for Sunday mass. The church is divided into three sections: one on the left, for children; another in the center, for adults; and another on the right, with bars, for inmates of the women's jail.

With split-second coordination, a man in the center section stood up and began clapping. The prisoners immediately took up the clapping and quickly overpowered their only guard. Outside the church were parked an ambulance, a fake police car, two taxicabs and three private cars. It is supposed that these vehicles were used by the Tupamaros to escape with the 13 women.

According to radio reports, police officers who arrived to investigate said they were "amazed and indignant" and "incredulous" at the lack of vigilance both inside and outside the jail.

--From the Cuban newspaper Granma, March 15, 1970

Welfare

The big lie

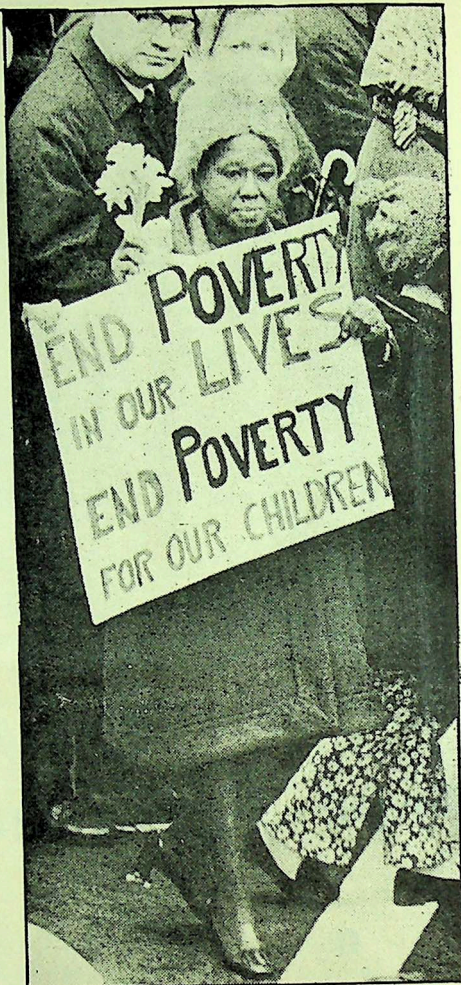
Last fall Nixon suddenly announced he was going to cut the guts out of welfare. The Aid to Dependent Children program, which keeps 4 million kids barely alive, is going to be wiped out. So are food stamps, at a time when food prices are higher than ever, and going up.

In place of the old welfare system, Nixon is planning a minimum income of--\$1600 a year, for a family of four! And to get this, those of us on welfare will have to do some kind of slave-labor, either for the government itself or for the large corporations that run the government.

After announcing this, Nixon just as suddenly dropped the whole thing--for the time being. He plans to bring it up before Congress. But first the big capitalists have to try to brainwash working people. Already they are spreading all their old lies about welfare--how only lazy people get welfare, how we live better on welfare than people who have a job, how we spend our welfare checks on booze, or fancy cars, and all the rest of the lies of the rich.

The ruling class of bankers and big factory owners is not just using its usual mouthpieces, the governors, senators, congressmen, welfare administrators, etc. Now they've even got a few "popular" songs to push their line on welfare.

One of the biggest hits in the country and western music scene is a fascist number called "The Welfare Cadillac." It's supposedly sung by a hillbilly on welfare, but it's really a lying attack on welfare recipients, especially poor Black people. The whole song is about this guy who has a rundown house and doesn't take care of his family (his kids get free lunches, anyway, and the Salvation Army gives them their clothes). He says some people call him a fool, but he thinks they're the fools, because



he uses his welfare check to buy a new Cadillac every year while other people work and pay taxes to send his kids through school. And on top of that, things are getting better because there's a new president who's putting in a new poverty program, giving poor people money in big sacks, so his wife can get her a new Cadillac.

Anybody who has ever had to struggle to keep their family alive on welfare knows what a lot of garbage this so-called "song" is. According to the government's own figures, there are about 8 million people on welfare at any one time, although, at any one time or another, ten people out of every 100 has been on welfare. Only 60,000 of this 8 million (or less than one out of every

100) is an able-bodied man who can work but isn't working. Two million people on welfare are retired people, over 65, who have slaved all their lives for the lousy capitalist pigs who run this society. Almost 1 million more are blind or handicapped in some other way. Very very few of these people, or of the parents of kids who get welfare, drive around in new Cadillacs. Sure there are free lunch programs in a few places now. But only because people fought for them, and revolutionary organizations, like the Black Panthers with their Free Breakfast for School Children program, embarrassed and exposed the government.

And there sure as hell isn't any new poverty program, with free money in big sacks, being put in by the new president. We know they're cutting out welfare and other programs that were supposed to help the poor.

As if "The Welfare Cadillac" weren't bad enough, the "soul" stations are now playing a song called "The Welfare Blues," which pushes about the same fascist lies. "Welfare Blues" is all about how women on welfare just keep on having more kids, so they can get more money from the welfare department. Then all they do with the money is run downtown to buy fancy things, leaving the children behind.

WHAT ARE THE REAL FACTS?

In California, one of the "best" states for welfare recipients, a mother with one child gets a little less than \$150 a month, plus, if she and her child are lucky, some food stamps and some medical expenses paid. With this money she's supposed to buy the food stamps, plus pay rent, keep her kid clothed and warm and fed. Forget about any extras; they're not even considered. If she has another child, she gets about another \$20 a month.

In order to get such "handouts", she's supposed to answer all sorts of insulting personal questions, like where did conception occur, who was there, etc. But Nixon and the other spokesmen for the ruling class have the nerve to say that they are eliminating welfare because it's "degrading." Yes, the degradation is real. But the way you look at it depends on whether you're the recipient who's degraded or the ruling class and its agents who do the degrading. They should be de-graded--that is, smashed from their class position-- for running things

so that unemployment is increasing, so that people don't all have the dignity of working. Already workers with several years seniority are being laid off in key places like the auto industry.

These songs and the timing of their release is no accident. It's part of a propaganda offensive by the ruling class and all their media to pave the way for crushing poor people even more. One sister on welfare, a member of Welfare Rights Organization, put it this way:

"The Taxpayers Association says we lose pride because we get free money. I think the welfare recipient and the Taxpayers Association see things far different. We don't get the taxpayers money free. We play the lowest games to get that money. You have to be harassed the whole month to get \$200 from welfare." (From Welfare Rights Organization, a case in point.)

Unfortunately, even some of us on welfare have bought the pigs' line that we are beggars, that we haven't really earned our money. That's because too many of us don't know the history of welfare, how it was fought for and won by our class, the working class. We don't even understand why the rulers give us welfare-- or why they are going to try to take it away now.

Welfare grew out of the struggles of the working people, especially the unemployed workers, during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Millions of unemployed demonstrated for relief from starvation and misery. They had to go up against the police and the army, directed by General Douglas MacArthur. Many working people were shot, beaten and jailed. But they stuck together and fought by the millions. And they won many real victories: social security, unemployment insurance and finally welfare. Then as now most of the poor and unemployed were white, although the hardest burden of poverty and unemployment fell on the Black and brown peoples, just as it does now. Today, of the 8 million people on welfare, about 6 million, or 3 out of 4, are white. The group the federal government admits is poor--living below the "poverty line" of \$3000 for a family of four-- takes in about 50 million people, or 1 poor person for every 4 men, women and children in the country. Of this 50 million

one out of every four is Black or brown, which means that 3 out of 4 are white. They live in the Appalachian mountains, the farmlands, especially in the South, and crowded into big city slums. So, even though poverty hits the Black and Brown people the hardest, it is a question for all working people. Especially when you keep in mind that by far the great majority of people who are poor are not on welfare, but are working in miserable underpaid jobs like dishwashers, cooks, waitresses, maids, gas station attendants, and assembly line workers in the textile mills of the South and the sweatshops of the North. Like the needletrades, where many women make less than a dollar an hour. And workers who are organized into unions and get better wages are always just one step away from the poor house, even in the best of times.

WHY ARE THEY HITTING US SO HARD?

These aren't the best of times. More and more families, husband and wife together, are forced to go on welfare, as jobs are wiped out and unemployment benefits are harder and harder to get. Welfare is not something that takes from the hard working people. Often, it is their last resort, when the bosses won't let them work, or when they go out on strike to try to keep up with the cost of living. Recently, in California, striking workers at Standard Oil and Dow Chemical, in the San Francisco Bay Area, had to go on welfare, while the strike lasted, so their families wouldn't starve or get thrown out of their homes and apartments.

Still, women with children and no husband make up the largest group of welfare recipients, not counting those over 65. Why did the government grant these women some kind of relief in the first place, and why is it plotting to rob them of it now? During the Great Depression of the 1930's, when one out of every four workers was out of work--17 million people in all--the working class was damned fed up with the bosses and their system of capitalism. Communists and other militant workers led the struggle for relief for the poor and unemployed. Millions of working people joined together, under the leadership of the communists. Many of them became convinced that the system of capitalism could not provide for the needs of the great major-

ity of people, the working people. Rebellion grew against the handful of big bankers and factory owners who run this system of capitalism and do benefit from it, even while millions of people are standing in bread lines, or going without food.

As bad as the Depression was, it did not yet spell the end for the big capitalists and their criminal system. The ruling class of big capitalists was able to pull itself out of the crisis for a little while, by throwing the country into World War II, and by pushing their way into almost every other country--setting up factories and paying starvation or near-starvation wages in Europe and in Asia, Africa and Latin America. They were able to make a few "concessions" to the people: social security, unemployment insurance, welfare--just enough to give most working people a small sense of security and the hope that their children would have a better life. Also, they had to keep the workers and their children alive, because they need the workers, generation after generation, to make their products, and their profits.

They were willing to pay welfare to women with children, even though the women themselves didn't work directly for the bosses, because the children could be raised as future workers and as cannon fodder for the "cold" war--Korea, Vietnam, Laos, etc. If the economy kept on growing, more and more workers would be needed. It went alright for the bosses and their capitalist system for awhile, but then things started going wrong. The people in the poor countries, like China, Korea, and then Vietnam, began fighting back against the

misery that the big U.S. companies forced on them. Under the leadership of their communist parties, the people of these countries moved to throw the big U.S. companies out. They too had to go up against the powerful U.S. army (in Korea it was MacArthur again), or local puppet governments backed up by the U.S. army. But in China, they won, they ended the domination of the big foreign companies, mainly U.S., and the armies that backed them up. They took over the factories they had built, the mines and oilfields they worked, the railways they had laid, the farmlands they tilled. They began working together and planning together to lift themselves out of the miseries of centuries. The people of Vietnam are doing that today.



With swatches of human hair, a pigtailed girl fashions a wig. Worth \$50 or more in U. S. shops, machine-sewn headpieces sell for only \$9 at this factory in Seoul. Skilled but inexpensive labor—Korea's most abundant resource—attracts increasing numbers of foreign investors.

And throughout the rest of Asia, in the Middle East, in Africa, and in South America, the people are lifting up their heads and beginning to fight back.

So time is running out on the big bosses in the U. S. They are still sitting on top of the world, but the world is turning over on them. Now they are taking it out on us, the U. S. working people once again. Their whole system is starting to fall apart. They are headed for another great crisis and Depression like the 1930's. But unlike the 1930's, there is no way out for them. They have no more small crumbs to toss to us. They are getting frantic. They are snatching back the few crumbs they have already thrown. And they are getting ready to take their profits from us directly at gun point. They are heading for fascism, the open rule by terror of the most powerful financial giants of the U. S., like Bank of America, Standard Oil, General Motors, etc.

They cannot afford to think of future workers. They have to squeeze as much out of the workers today as they can. Women who cannot find work but still have children, women without husbands, women on welfare, cannot be allowed to eat into the profits of the bosses. And

they certainly can't be allowed to keep on bringing children into society, when there is no prospect of work for them and no extra profit at all to keep them alive. That's why welfare is being cut out. That's why poor women, especially Black and Brown women are being tricked and forced into being sterilized in county hospitals. The working people, those who are lucky enough to still have a job, are being pushed to the wall—with their wages falling further behind prices and taxes climbing out of sight—just to keep the bosses and their system of private profit gasping for breath a little longer.

These workers can't be taxed even more to pay for welfare, because then they, too, would all be in the poor house, looking for relief. Fascism crushes the working people into dirt, at gun point, and those who cannot be put to work cannot be allowed to live.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

First we have to realize that this move to fascism is a sign of desperation, of the great weakness of our enemy, the class of big capitalists. We have to see that just because there is no way out for the bosses, there is only one way out

for us: to join together our strength in common struggle against them. To fight to survive today to keep them from crushing and killing us completely. But we can't stop there. We have to knock them over once and for all, and put the working people in power. We have to understand that their system of capitalism is causing chaos and suffering for working people today. And that only socialism, where the working people run the industry, control the credit, and run the government for the benefit of us all, can provide real security for ourselves and our future generations.

Immediately, we have to see that the move to cut out welfare is only one part of the bosses' plan to crush us all. It is part and parcel of their fascist scheme. We have to combine the fight for increased welfare with the fight against lay-offs and wage cuts. And with the fight to defend the political organizations like the Black Panther Party that are the first targets of the bosses' fascist attack, because they have been leading our struggle. We have to force the U. S. government out of Vietnam and other countries they are robbing, because this will weaken the U. S. bosses even further and help our sisters and brothers in their struggles around the world. We have to gather our strength, unite with all our real friends, to bring down the whole miserable private profit system.

We can start by throwing the burden of taxes off our backs and onto the capitalists themselves. We must unite behind the women on welfare to turn back the fascist offensive against them. The fascist-minded ruling class believes that it can divide us and smash us by striking at women with extra viciousness. They hope the women will lie down in defeat, while the rest of us stand around, confused by their lying propaganda. But they are in for a great disappointment. The women, the poor people, the whole class of working people, are joining together to turn back their mad drive toward fascism.

Already welfare women are fighting back. In Delaware, Boston, Michigan, Wisconsin, women are taking over welfare offices, and even state capitols to demand the right to live with dignity. In

San Francisco, women on welfare protested threatened cutbacks by mobilizing the community to take over a County Supervisors meeting. The struggle of welfare rights groups is growing stronger, and is beginning to unite with the struggles of working people. Together we will resist the attack on living and working conditions, and defend ourselves against the greed of the capitalists.

We are building a united front led by the working people and pulling together every group, every person that will fight against the big capitalists and their fascist attacks. Through our struggles, we are finding and developing the most courageous, the most self-sacrificing, the most far-seeing in our ranks, as our leaders. This is the core of what will be our new communist party--a true, fighting organization of the working people, female and male, black, brown, white, yellow, and red. This communist party will guide us through the many struggles to defend our lives and our freedoms and to build our new socialist society where the degradation of poverty will be wiped out forever.

In socialist society, we will use all our industry and farmlands together. We will decide how to use our common profits--the amount of everything we produce that's left over, after everyone gets what they need to live decently. We will build new factories, machines, transportation systems, parks, theaters, schools, hospitals, and the other things we need to provide for ourselves and future working people who will inherit together what we produce together. Automation will be used to give us more leisure in common, not to lay us off and increase the competition among us for the jobs that are left. There will no longer be any need for unemployment insurance and welfare, because there will be plenty of work for everyone--women as well as men-- in all fields of production. And there will be plenty enough for everyone to live comfortably.

This is not a dream, but a reality that already exists in countries like China. We can make it happen here--by uniting in struggle and smashing every link in the capitalists' chain of slavery--especially the oppression of the Black and brown peoples and the degradation of women.





1929 march in New York City

Battles of working-class women

In U.S. history

Women have been responsible for some of the finest hours in American labor history. Whether organizing and striking as workers or playing leading roles in their husbands' strikes, working class women have a long tradition of militancy and hatred of injustice.

The Black and white women in Rock Hill, South Carolina, who recently won a 6-month strike to unionize a textile plant, the Hosiery Corporation of America, are direct descendants of the 102 women cotton workers who walked off the job with their male co-workers in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, 146 years ago. This is the earliest known strike (1824) of women factory workers, and it marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of American women. The years following, up to and including the present, are filled with bloody strikes and courageous

organizing efforts. In addition, female factory workers provided an example for the middle-class women's suffrage movement: women workers were living proof that women were not innately weak, passive, delicate creatures—they had to be pretty strong to work at least 12 hours a day in miserable factory conditions to make about \$1.25 a week—and their militancy provided inspiration for their wealthier sisters' efforts to win women's right to vote.

FIRST FEMALE WORKERS IN U.S.

The first white women workers in this country were the pioneer women who helped settle the Atlantic coastline. Of course, native Indian women had been helping plant crops and make handicrafts long before the Europeans arrived. The

English businessmen who were backing the new settlements realized the need for more women if the largely-male settlements were to become stable communities. So, they advertised for and shipped off hundreds of women who sold themselves as settler's wives for the price of transportation to the New World.

Some did not come so freely. The new colonies needed more working hands if business was to be successful. So they began to acquire indentured servants and Black slaves. Indentured servants were bound to work for a "master" for a specific period of time, and for that time they were little better off than slaves. Some volunteered to come to escape jail terms, for instance--but others were kidnapped from their African homes. If the servants made it through their indenture period, they were "free" to take up a trade or to marry. But many became "poor whites," wandering from one miserable job to another.

The Black slaves, however, never had the opportunity to be free. Bought for life off the auction block if they survived the hellish trip from Africa to America, they were at the total mercy of the slave-masters. Black women were used for breeding more slaves and for doing the hard day-to-day work along with the men and children. Their families could be, and often were, broken up by the master when he could make more money by selling them to different slaveowners.

WOMEN GO INTO THE FACTORIES

With the beginnings of industrialization in the North, women were needed to run the power looms and other machines in the factories. Many had already been working at home, making garments, hats, cloth, and shoes, but the factories made it impossible for home-made goods to compete on the market. Many women were forced to compete for the low-paying (25¢ a day) jobs in unsafe factories.

In Paterson, New Jersey, in 1828, bosses called out the militia for the first time in U.S. labor history against a strike begun by "children" (including a large number of girls) who protested the compulsory 12-hour day and a change in their lunch break. The next day, the carpenters, mechanics and masons of the plant walked off the job in sympathy. The first all-women strike of factory workers took place during December of that year in a Dover, New Hampshire, cotton mill. Three to four hundred working women took to the streets, and the Philadelphia National Gazette was only half joking when it complained that, "The Governor may have to call out the militia to prevent a gynecocracy," (rule by women). In 1834 the women of Dover walked out again. They must have made progress towards forming a union because the bosses make them take an "iron-clad" oath against a union as a condition of settlement.

WOMEN BEGIN UNIONIZING

The right to form a trade union became a major demand of the operatives who struck the textile mills of Lowell, Mass.,

CREDIT SALE OF A CHOICE GANG OF 41 SLAVES!

COMPRISING MECHANICS, LABORERS, ETC.,
FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF A CO-PARTNERSHIP OF RAILROAD CONTRACTORS
BY I. A. BEARD & MAY, I. A. BEARD, AUCTIONEERS.

WILL BE SOLD AT AUCTION AT BATES AND SON, MAGAZINE STREET,
ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5th, 1856,
AT 12 O'CLOCK,
A VERY VALUABLE GANG OF SLAVES,

Belonging to a co-partnership, and sold to close the same. The said slaves comprise a gang of 41 choice figures. On the list will be found a good Blacksmith, one superior Bricklayer, Field Hands, Laborers, one Tanner, one Cooper, and a first rate meat Cook.

LEWIS, a black man, aged 32 good field hand and laborer.	do
SHILLY	do 26
PHILIP	do 30 fair bricklayer.
HENRY	do 24 fair cooper
JACOB BATES	do 22 good field hand and laborer
YELLOW JERRY, a grif,	do 38 a good teamster.
BIG BOLL, a black man,	do 28 a good field hand and laborer.
BILL COLLINS,	do 38 do do
JESS,	do 38 do do
JUNGK,	do 34 do do
JERRY CARTER,	do 28 do do

LOUISA, a grif, 38 years, a good Cook and seamstress, and an excellent servant.
BOBERT, 13 years old, defect in one toe.
JASPER, 24 years old, an extra No. 1 laborer, driver and coachman.

The slaves can be seen four days previous to the day of sale. They are fully guaranteed against the vices and maladies prescribed by law and are all selected slaves.

TERMS OF SALE—One year's credit for approved city acceptances of endorsed paper, with interest at 7 per cent. from date, and mortgage on the slaves if required. Terms of sale to be had of the Auctioneers, BATES AND SON, at the expiration of the Publication.

After the sale of the above list of Slaves, will be sold Another lot of Negroes, comprising Field Hands, House servants and Mechanicks. A full description of the same will be given at the sale. The slaves can be seen two days previous to the sale.

Advertisement of a slave sale, 1856. Another such advertisement, which emphasized the uses of female slaves, read: "NEGROES FOR SALE: A girl about 20 years of age (raised in Virginia) and her two female children, one four and the other two years old--remarkably strong and healthy--Never having had a day's sickness with the exception of the smallpox, in her life. The children are fine and healthy. She is very prolific in her generating qualities and affords a rare opportunity to any person who wishes to raise a family of strong and healthy servants for their own use."

against a 25% wage cut in 1834. The walk-out occurred when a woman who had been fired waved her bonnet in the air as she left the line and one of the leaders made what the Boston Transcript called:

A flaming Mary Wollstonecraft speech on the rights of women and the iniquities of the 'monied aristocracy' which produced a powerful effect on her listeners, and they determined to have their own way, if they died for it.

Over a thousand women marched out of the mills and into the streets, singing:
Oh, isn't it a pity that such a pretty girl as I

Should be sent to the factory to pine away and die?

Oh, I cannot be a slave,
For I'm so fond of liberty.

The strike was broken, but the company dormitories of Lowell became a center for organizing. Two years later the Factory Girls' Association was formed by 2500 workers at the striking Lowell plant. It was smashed, along with the strike, but the organizational base it laid helped the women successfully resist a speed-up later in the year.

The women shoeworkers of Lynn, Mass., formed a loose union in 1833 that successfully fought a wage cut. Other organizations followed in New York and Philadelphia in 1835. The next year, one month after the second Lowell strike, the all-male National Trades Union held its third convention and advocated organizing women into their own unions.

The Lowell group was later rebuilt. The Lowell Female Labor Reform Association was formed as an auxiliary of the New England Workingmen's Association. Begun and led by a long-time Lowell factory worker, Sarah Bagley, the Association successfully fought speed-ups throughout the early 1840's. Under Bagley's leadership, Female Labor Reform Associations began to appear in other towns. Many of them actively worked for the 10-hour day. When worker outrage finally forced the Massachusetts legislature to investigate the demand for shorter hours, the politicians on the committee noted that, "as

the greater part of the petitioners are females, it will be necessary for them to make the defence, or we shall be under the necessity of laying it aside."

MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER

Male workers, however, had a higher regard for female factory workers, and in 1846, the year after the parliamentary campaign in Massachusetts failed, three of Bagley's female associates joined five men on the board of directors of the New England Labor Reform League (a better proportion than currently in the leadership bodies of most labor unions today). As anti-female attitudes among male workers decreased, class consciousness--often due to the leadership of women--developed. A union paper reporting a mass meeting of New York seamstresses complained that pimps circulated in the crowd, attempting to procure women who were making shirts at four cents apiece. "This is what makes us so radical," it said. "This is what makes us want to see rich men hoeing corn and rich ladies at the wash tub."

The militant struggle for a shorter day continued during the 1840's. A few laws were passed, but they were either ignored by the bosses or met by speed-ups--the same tricks that are pulled on workers today. In Allegheny, Pennsylvania, 2000 textile workers walked off the job after 10 hours to enforce the state law which supposedly had gone into effect that day, July 4, 1848. The next day they were locked out. By the end of the month, the bosses had found about 100 scabs who agreed to work 12 hours and the mills reopened. The response of the women who remained locked out was fast and effective. A newspaper of that time reported:

A dense mass of men, women, and children were collected around the front gate of the factory...with the avowed intention of taking summary vengeance on the delinquents who had gone to work, so soon as they should get out for dinner. Tired of waiting...demonstrations toward breaking open the gate were at last made. An ax was procured, and women seizing hold of it be-

gan hewing away with true Amazonian vehemence and vigor.... As if by common consent, a rush was made to storm the factory. A platoon of women were in front... followed by a storming party of men. The girls in front acted for the time as pioneers and commenced tearing away the boards from the fence so as to make a breach, through which their storming columns could enter.

Once inside the factory gates, the workers routed the waiting Allegheny police and the company brass and beat several scabs. By the end of August, all the Allegheny factories but one were operating on a ten-hour day, though with a partial wage reduction.

BLACK WOMEN AND MEN TOGETHER

While white women workers were beginning to organize to free themselves from being factory slaves, Black women and men were fighting back against their own slavery. The slave revolt led by Nat Turner in 1831 and rumors of an "underground railroad" inspired many slaves on southern plantations to run away to the North.

Born a slave, Harriett Tubman was eleven years old when the Nat Turner rebellion took place, and a few years later she herself helped a slave escape--the first of over 300 slaves she helped free. She was a small woman, but years of hard work in the fields had made her stronger than many men by the time she escaped at the age of 29. Her people came to call her "Moses" because she led them to freedom on the underground railroad--going from one friendly farm to another, through swamps and forests, to the North. Armed with a revolver, she defended her passengers and never lost one of them. To the slavemasters, "Moses" was a crafty, dangerous man who making off with thousands of dollars worth of human "property." They offered \$40,000 for "his" capture.

Sojourner Truth was another ex-slave who spent most of her life working for an end to slavery. She traveled across the country speaking at Abolitionist meetings. She also supported the movement to get voting rights for women. At one women's rights meeting after a male minister had

preached about the superiority of men, she got up and gave an unforgettable response:

That man over there say that women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place, and aren't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted, and gathered into barns, and



SOJOURNER
TRUTH

no man could head me--and aren't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man (when I could get it) and bear the lash as well--and aren't I a woman? I have borne five children and seen them most all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard--and aren't I a woman?"

Many wealthy, white women spoke out against slavery, too, and got involved in the movement for women's rights through their work in the Abolitionist movement. Sarah and Angelina Grimke were among those who spoke and wrote on the horrors of slavery. Women weren't supposed to speak out in public about anything then, and these sisters were criticized especially by ministers as "unnatural" women. But they continued to agitate against slavery, and to demonstrate the similarity between the misery of the slaves and the suffering of women wage slaves who labored in filthy factories for less than half the wages of the men.

WOMEN CONTINUE TO ORGANIZE

Women workers struggled against the increased hardships of the financial crises of the 50's and of the Civil War, but sometimes lost ground. When they won the shorter day, the workers often got a wage decrease and speed-up. One of the few really successful groups of women organized during this time was the Collar Laundry Union of Troy, N.Y. It got wages upped from \$2 to \$8 a week by 1866, and was able to contribute \$1000 to the striking iron moulders of Troy. Kate Mullaney, president of the union, was appointed assistant secretary of the National Labor Union. But three years later the union and the cooperative laundry factory it had set up as an alternative to working for the bosses were smashed. This was partly due to the death of the president of the Troy Iron Moulders, whose leadership the women had come to depend on.

The women in the Weaver's Union of Fall River, Mass., however, trusted themselves more than the male members of the union. In 1873 the men, for whatever reasons, voted to accept a 10% wage reduction. The women held their own meeting, forbidding men to be present, and voted to strike. The men then followed their lead, and victory came after three months of bitter struggle against the factory owners.

Despite the fighting spirit displayed by women over and over in labor disputes, the national unions were often reluctant to admit women during these years. In 1873, after women had been on the front lines of labor battle for nearly 50 years, only the cigar makers' and the printers' unions, out of 32 national trade unions, had women members. (The printers had at one time debated a resolution to expel any of their members found working in the same shop as women.) The unions admitted that they were fearful that women would take over men's jobs and reduce their pay. Then, as now, union leadership didn't seem to recognize the fact that if the bosses are free to underpay one group of workers, the wages and job security of all workers are in jeopardy.

The idea "Organize the women and

insist on equal pay for equal work," was brought up more and more often within the nationals. Still, almost all the organizing among women was by women themselves. The militant shoe-workers of Lynn, Mass., formed the first national organization of working women in 1869. Called the Daughters of St. Crispin, it was made an auxiliary to the trade unions of men shoe-workers. Three years later the Lynn local beat a wage cut and adopted the stirring resolution: "We, the free women of Lynn, will submit to no rules or set of rules that tend to degrade and enslave us."

In 1886 the rising Knights of Labor--the first really powerful national labor organization to encourage the admission of women--appointed a full time woman organizer, though it took the hard push of the few female delegates who attended the early assemblies of the Knights to create the post. Leonora M. Barry, a stocking machine operator, was chosen. She traveled almost continuously for the next three and a half years. Largely through her own efforts between 11,000 and 12,000 women had joined the Knights by 1888.

Still, Barry found organizing among working women difficult, due to, in her own words, "the habit of submission and acceptance without question of any terms offered them, with the pessimistic view of life in which they see no ray of hope." Women who had better jobs would not join with those who were more exploited. Many women were "deterred from joining labor organizations by foolish pride, prudish modesty and religious scrupels; and a prevailing cause, which applies to all who are in the flush of womanhood, is the hope and expectancy that in the near future marriage will lift them out of the industrial life to the quiet and comfort of a home, foolishly imagining that with marriage their connection with and interest in labor matters end; often finding, however, that their struggle has only begun when they have to go back to the shop for two instead of one. All this is the results or effects of the environments and conditions surrounding women in the past and present, and can be removed only by constant agitation and education."

Other women organizers rose up to take on this job of "constant agitation and education," a job that is as necessary today as it was at the turn of the Century.

"MOTHER" JONES FIGHTS THE BOSSES

One of the most effective "agitators" and "educators" associated with the early A.F. of L. was Mary "Mother" Jones. Born in Ireland in 1830, her four children and husband all died in an epidemic. She then became an organizer for the Knights of Labor and for the miners and for 50 years was in the middle of the violent mine strikes of that era. She moved from strike to strike, speaking tirelessly to both working women and men. Her exploits with the miners' union were fearless and memorable--she once told the striking men to stay home and mind the children while she led a brigade of their mop-carrying wives to chase the scabs out of the mines--helped build real solidarity throughout the labor movement. She believed that winning the vote for women was secondary to winning economic justice for all working people.

After her death in 1930 (she lived to be 100), this song appeared among the coal miners, which testifies to her work as much as anything:

The world today is mourning the death
of Mother Jones;
Grief and sorrow hover around the
miners' homes
This grand old champion of labor has
gone to a better land,
But the hardworking miners, they miss
her guiding hand.

Through the hills and over the valleys in
every mining town,
Mother Jones was ready to help them;
she never let them down.
In front with the striking miners she
always could be found;
She fought for right and justice; she took
a noble stand.

Between 1895 and 1905 working women took part in over 1200 strikes. The real turning-point in their organizing did not come until 1909, however, with the "Uprising of Twenty Thousand." The shirtwaist makers of two New York shops had been on strike for a month when a mass meeting of women

from all the garment shops of the city was called. As the meeting began to degenerate into speech-making, a teen-aged striker named Clara Lemlich, who had already had several ribs broken by police attacks on the picket line, stood up and demanded the floor.

I am a working girl, and one of those who are on strike against intolerable conditions. I am tired of listening to speakers who talk in general terms. What we are here for is to decide whether or not we shall strike. I offer a resolution that a general strike be declared--now!

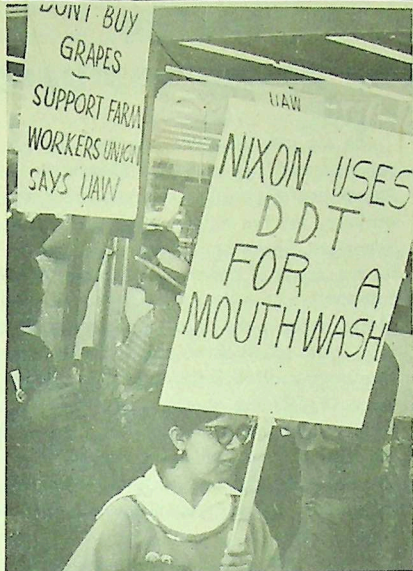
Between 20 and 30 thousand women went out the next day, the first real general strike and "a potent answer to the threadbare arguments that women could not be organized." Sometimes up to 1500 women a day enrolled in the garment workers' union during the strike. The women held out through three winter months and many arrests.

"BREAD AND ROSES"

Shortly after that, tens of thousands of women were mobilized in the textile strikes at Lawrence, Mass., where Anna LoPizzo was murdered by police, and Paterson, New Jersey. The slogan "Bread and Roses" was raised, and a poem inspired by the strike told why the women marched:

As we come marching, marching, we
bring the greater days;
The rising of the women means the
rising of us all.
No more the drudge and idler, Ten
that toil where one reposes,
But a sharing of life's glories, Bread
and Roses, Bread and Roses.

In the tradition of Mother Jones, Ella Reeve Bloor was a labor organizer who saw the necessity to change the basic economic structure of society. She campaigned for the suffragists in 1912, but, in her own words, "always tried to make clear that the object of our campaign was not alone to get the vote but to prepare women to use the power of the ballot to get decent pay and decent conditions for women and so to strengthen the position of the whole working class." Ella Bloor had seen 73 children suffocated to death in one episode during a strike.



Women (above and below) in grape boycott march against Lucky stores, San Jose, 1970.

Such episodes were always in her mind when she worked for the labor movement. Scolded by feminists for working for the "man's party" of the Socialists, Ella Bloor remained true to her beliefs and at the age of 57 joined the new Communist Party. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was another labor leader who turned from socialism to Communism at a time when the Communist Party U.S.A. was a strong fighter in the interests of the working class.

One of the biggest strikes in the 30's was the sit-down strike in Flint, Michigan, against General Motors in 1936-37. Thousands of wives of the striking auto-workers played a key role in the long and violent battle against the GM bosses and the police. Not only did the wives get food to the 1200 strikers inside the plant, they organized the Women's Emergency Brigade. Hundreds of women in bright red berets responded to emergency situations with two-by-fours, stove poker, crowbars and lead pipes and prevented the police and troops from breaking into the plant more than once.

Workers' wives and mothers--many of them Mexican-American--played a key role in the long strike of miners at the Empire Zinc Company at Bayard, New

Mexico in 1950-1952. Women took over picketing when the company got the courts to issue an injunction against any strike activity by the men. Women and children braved tear gas and violence to walk the picket line, were arrested and jailed, but the women would not give up, and in the end the miners won a decisive victory.

More recently, miners' wives shut down three mines in West Virginia last year to protest the firing of union officials. During the Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel strike in Santa Clara, California, last year, strikers' wives, female students, and housewives walked the line on numerous occasions and picketed the houses of scabs and company officials.

Brown women have been active from the beginning in the fight to unionize farm laborers in California and have taken leading roles in the nationwide boycott of California grapes.

Despite their strong and militant tradition, working women are still largely unorganized. Although women make up over one-third of the U.S. labor force, only 1 in 5 union members in 1964 was a woman. With increasing lay-offs, rising prices, and welfare cut-backs, the need to organize working women is as great today as ever before. And today working class women are rising to do battle in the tradition of their sisters in the past. Fighting the garment industry sweatshops in San Francisco, Levi-Strauss and other textile manufacturers in the Southern states and northern big cities, organizing in hospitals and the telephone industry, working class women will continue to fight for economic justice and will be in the forefront of the fight to end the system which enslaves us all.



Inside the phone company

MA BELL HAS FLEAS



**And a lot of
angry workers**



In the city where I work the phone company employs over 14,000 people. Approximately half are women--clerical workers, service representatives, and operators. These are the women who shuffle thousands of papers and soothe irate customers, day after day. As in any workplace, women are relegated to the dulllest jobs, paid substandard wages, and treated like both small children and slaves. The women telephone operators are the most exploited of all phone workers. They make the lowest wages and suffer the worst working conditions of any group of employees in the Bell System. And they shall be the first to rise.

Inside the phone company buildings, hundreds of operators sit in poorly-lit, stuffy rooms. The equipment is backed against the sides of the room, so the operators sit in two long rows, facing the wall. Behind them, down the center of the room, desks are evenly spaced. Supervisors sit at these desks, staring at the backs of operators' heads, watching to see who is working too slowly, or who is turning to speak to the woman next to them.

Rapping is forbidden between operators, even when the calls are coming in slowly and there's no work to do. Rapping is also forbidden between operators and customers, although it's more difficult to suppress. The company expects operators all over the country to repeat, word-perfect, special phrases for every situation. These phrases are carefully programed to communicate the most information in the fewest words. But even though they're designed to be efficient, they're often clumsy and hard to understand. For example, when a customer calls up and wants to know if a line is busy or out of order, an operator is expected to say, "In order to check I may have to interrupt the conversation and indicate you have an urgent reason to secure the line. Do you wish that done?" Most often the customer won't catch all that and begins shouting impatiently at the operator to get on with checking the line. It would be for simpler and less ag-

gravating if operators were allowed to tell customers in their own words what could and couldn't be done about checking the line. If operators decided how operating would be done, this phrase and all the others would be abolished. But the company decides, and the phrases remain, because greater "efficiency" means greater profits.

Operators cannot be late or sick without endangering their jobs, no matter what the personal situation might be. When operators come in to work, they must walk into the room with their headsets on, and answer a call before they sit down. From that first moment they have to answer call after call, as quickly as possible, for as long as three and a half hours without a break. And they can't make any mistakes. All the calls an operator takes are carefully checked by computers in the Central Ticket Investigation Bureau and all errors are recorded. Eventually each operator is confronted with her computer transcript. Each error is treated as a serious mistake.

Recently the company bought a new machine that will enable one operator to handle six times as many calls. Within a few years, these machines will eliminate most of the operators' jobs in the city. Today operators are being forced to automate themselves out of their jobs, while the company continues to rake in huge profits! However meager operators' wages are, the company would rather not pay them at all.

Operators' pay begins at \$2.15 an hour, unless she went to college. Then she's paid about 50¢ more a week. As in any workplace, women are barred from the higher paying jobs. By forcing women into the dullest, lowest paying jobs, the phone company makes millions of dollars in extra profits each year. And they successfully divide the men from the women in the work force. This division makes it difficult for the workers to get together to wipe out the differences between men's and women's wages, to raise them both and to fight against lousy working conditions.

If the operators weren't watched so

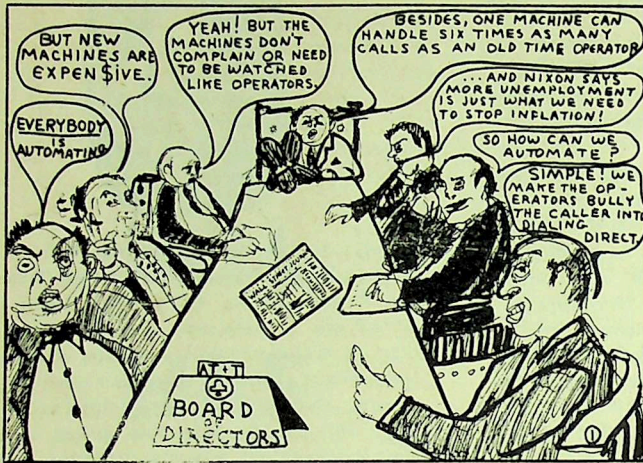


closely, they wouldn't go along with the company's schemes, like automating them out of work. Now, when people call up and ask for help, operators must tell them to dial direct and give them dialing instructions. This just irritates most customers, who insist on being helped anyway. This puts the operators uptight - even more uptight than they already were, sitting still all day, getting hoarse giving dialing instructions time after time, instead of putting the calls through like they were trained to do.

Operators suffer the worst working conditions of all phone workers. When they start work they are assigned to work continually changing hours, sometimes staying on the job until midnight and having to be back the next morning at eight. Even after several months of work an operator never knows what days or what hours she'll be working the next week until Thursday afternoon, when the schedule is posted.

While on the job, operators are constantly harrassed. They're told to work faster, to stop talking and to get into their chairs from the left and out from the right. In addition they're warned against ever sounding irritated. An operator can be fired any moment for a "bad tone of service" or for a "bad attitude." The company knows how an operator sounds because they listen in, secretly, while she handles calls. Occasionally, a supervisor will catch someone chatting with another operator or becoming angry when she's insulted by a customer. The supervisor will then walk up behind the operator and plug her headset into the equipment. Stepping back she'll talk to the girl through the equipment, and accuse her as she's sitting head down, wat-

Operators Revolt!



The cartoon on this and the following pages was written and drawn by the operators themselves.

ching the equipment. An operator is forbidden to turn her head to face her accuser, and forbidden to defend herself, for that would be "insubordination."

Most operators are fired this way, and many more simply quit. Out of 200 women in one office, 24 are replaced each month. The union will make no defense for the ones who get fired if they haven't worked six months. The company has a free hand to keep on replacing operators who've worked a few months with new people. This way the company has been able to break up the friendships and close ties that form between operators, before the women can develop an organization capable of fighting back.

RUMBLINGS OF DISCONTENT

In spite of this heavy turnover, rumblings of discontent continue and occasionally even surface. Outside the operating room where I work, someone printed "I didn't join the army" underneath a rule posted about not eating in the room. And inside the room women would write "I want out" or "Help" on the cards used to signify they were going on a break. Other operators saw the cards and added to them. For example, one card started out with a screaming face drawn on it. After a week someone had written "Ma Bell has

fleas" underneath the face. A week later someone else had added, "Ma Bell has fleas, rats, lice, supervisors and a chief. Ugh." This put the company uptight, so they made one operator scrub the writing off all the cards. This didn't stop the operators from writing on the cards but the drawings weren't solving any of the problems on the job either.

Most of the operators took a very defeatist attitude towards ever solving these problems. When I asked one elder woman about the fleas, she admitted she'd been bitten for years. But, she said, "The fleas were here before I came and they'll be here after I'm gone." The fleas breed in the old equipment and on warm days they come out and feed on the operators' blood.

One warm day a friend of mine was bitten over twenty times on each knee. She complained to management, but nothing was done. So she and I got together and put out a cartoon of operators scratching frantically, with the caption "Ma Bell has fleas." We posted it up all over the workplace, and eventually sent a copy and a short note about the fleas to a newspaper columnist. Soon afterwards he wrote in his column, "If the voice with a smile sounds a bit scratchy, it's because Ma Bell has fleas..." That very night the company paid an exterminator to come in

and knock out all the fleas. Operators all over the city were stunned. The mood changed, and some of them became optimistic about solving other problems they faced on the job. In any struggle it's important to fight for things you can win.

In this city, more and more of the women who are getting hired as operators are young former students. Many of them come here in search of a hip paradise, and end up at the phone company because they need to eat and the phone company is always hiring. When they come to work they bring with them ideas that things are profoundly wrong with this country, without knowing exactly why. After a few months they've learned that the phone company, like all corporations, is run for the profit of a handful of company executives and stockholders, not for the benefit of the people who use the phones or the workers who build and maintain them. The company's drive for greater and greater profits is the source of all the problems they face on the job - speed-up, automation, insufficient lighting, and all the others. Those of us who went to work knowing in our heads that imperialism destroyed working people soon developed deep gut hatred for the entire system.

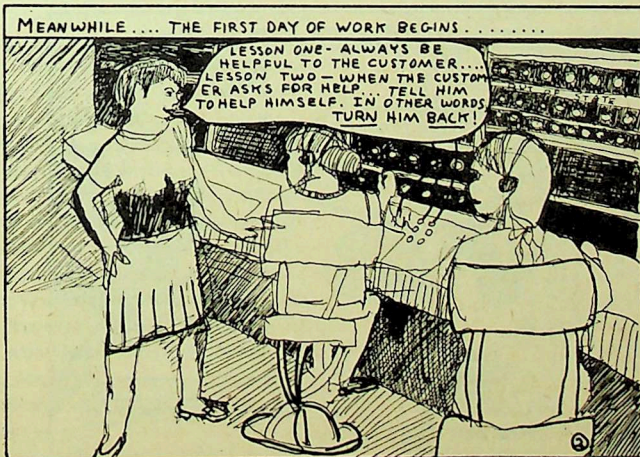
In addition to young white women, the phone company hires some black and brown women, and some older women. (The number of women who continue to work for the company year after year is

very small.) Altogether this makes up a relatively large progressive group among operators, a large middle group, and a small reactionary group. The differences come out clearly in operators' attitudes toward customers who claim they've lost money in phone booths. Progressive operators take their word for it, middle forces hesitate, while reactionaries argue about it, identifying the company's money as their own.

Mao teaches us that everywhere we should unite the progressive forces and rely on them, win over the middle forces, and isolate the backward forces. Inside the phone company this meant first rapping with the people, finding the most progressive forces, and getting them together. It also meant listening to the people, working with them, and finding out exactly what the problems on the job were.

Rapping to people, we learned that operators were most uptight about having to tell customers to dial direct. So a friend and I put together a comic strip beginning with the company's plot to increase profits at the expense of operators' jobs, showing how this affected working conditions, and ending with operators walking off their jobs. The comic was printed on the back page of a working class newspaper. We passed it out to our friends on the job. People dug it. Comic strips are a far less alienating form of agitation than long-winded, single-spaced leaflets.

The dress code was another burning

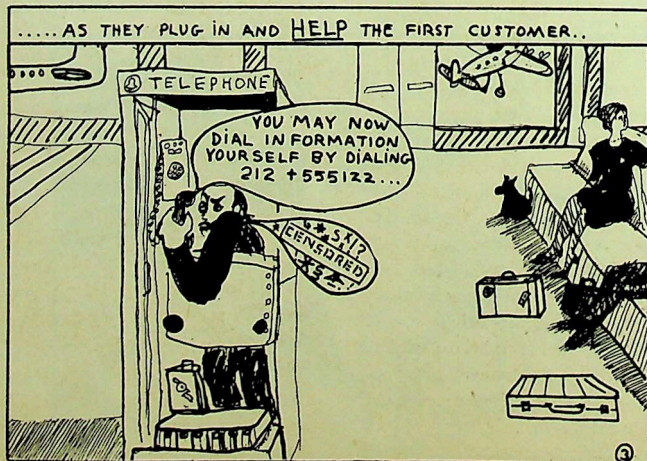


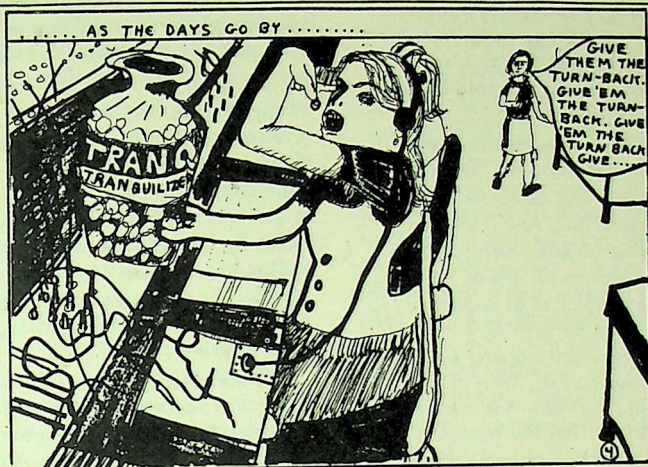
issue. The company insisted that the women wear dresses to work on weekdays, even though they were far away from any contact with the public. On cold rainy days, it was absurd not to be allowed to wear pants to work. So a couple of women simply wore them one morning. The company sent one of the girls home to change and told the other one she was "unfeminine" and no one would sit next to her. But the rebels continued to wear pants, and others joined in. After three days over 25 people were showing up in pants. The company reacted by putting up an intimidating announcement stating that after January 21 anyone who wore pants to work would be "dealt with." We countered with a People's Policy on Dress, stating that after January 21 everyone should dress as they please, for warmth or comfort. As the deadline approached the struggle tightened up. It had begun as a spontaneous rebellion against the arbitrary company rule, but as it progressed it became organized. Everyone agreed to continue wearing pants after Jan. 21. And they would have, even if the company hadn't backed down at the last moment. "Everyone must dress clean and neat" became the new rule, and although the people wearing pants continued to be hassled, no one was fired. Women wearing pants continued to say "Right on Sister" when they met in the cafeteria, and talked to each other about taking on new issues. Winning a struggle based on real needs and grievances is the only way to combat the defeatism holding back most working people.

WORKING AS A COMMUNIST: the importance of being open.

By this time I'd been working in the building ten months. Another comrade had joined me a few months after I started and the two of us worked closely together. We were both taking karate at the time, and occasionally we'd run through the exercises during our breaks. The other women dug it. Many of them didn't like feeling so afraid when they left the building after dark, and wanted to be strong and self-reliant, even though they'd been taught, ever since they were small, that they should be weak and dependent. People affectionately called us the "karate kids" and a few of them even joined our class.

Everyone was also very interested in the other things we were into - everything from street fighting to motorcycles to backpacking in the mountains. Most working women, especially the older ones, just move back and forth between their homes and work; their lives are boring. Consequently, even the women who insisted they disapproved of student radicals would listen eagerly whenever I told stories of the street actions I had been in, and explained the issues behind them. From the very beginning, I was out front about my politics and my former involvement in the student movement. This opened me up to a lot of SDS baiting. Occasionally some people would even ask me if I were a communist, and I'd answer





"yes." It was important to expose myself before the company or the union got round to it. The women reacted strongly against this at first, but after a while their reactions were tempered by the fact that I was one of them, that I worked hard at the same job, and shared the same problems.

It's always important to relate to people as friends, not just political organizers. Mao emphasizes this when he says cadre should "learn from the people," "serve the people" and "become one with the people." For me this meant a lot of personal changes. At first it meant listening to the other women, coming to understand credit problems, the complications involved in raising kids and holding together a family, and the discipline of having to go to work every-day, even when sick. As time passed I got more into some of the things they were into, like cooking, and tried to help out when problems came up. Simple things, like going to baby showers, and giving away ear cushions for the headsets do a lot to counter the image of communists as brain-washed people, sneaking around, blindly carrying out orders from Russia. One day I told an elder woman I was a communist, and she jumped. "Card-carrying?" she asked. I told her no, that I was a revolutionary communist, and she looked relieved. "That's nice," she said. Most of the women who knew I was a communist thought at first I was crazy, but they also thought I was nice.

A few women, however, took the ideas

I put forward very seriously. I constantly tried to link their hatred for the job with an understanding that the problems stemmed from the fact that the company was run for private profit, not according to the workers' needs. It made sense and they agreed. The next step was getting them to agree not to quit, but to stick around and organize everybody else. A few of us couldn't change much, but all of us, once we got it together, could change everything.

Once a friend and I sat down to talk about it, we decided there were ten things we wanted to change--things ranging from paid sick leave, to an end to secret observations, to free day care. I took the program to my next collective meeting, and a comrade suggested I read Lenin, What Is To Be Done, about the dangers of economism. After the meeting I stayed up all night studying chapters three and four. I'd tried to read these chapters before, but hadn't been able to wade through them, because I hadn't reached a point in my practice where it was necessary to use this theory to guide my practice to a higher level. When I got back together with my friend we wrote a militant, anti-imperialist preamble for the program, and added four demands--including an end to the 10% surtax on phone calls and the institution of free local calls from phone booths.

Lenin also tells us in What Is To Be Done that communists should work in the trade union movement but that they should

also build support among workers for all ongoing struggles against the state. In this country that means building support for struggles of black and brown people, and support for colonial liberation struggles, like Vietnam. It also means opposing the growing fascization of the state, and opposing the oppression and exploitation of women under imperialism. And it means unifying all working people, men and women, white and third world. Inside the phone company a handful of us began to build this united front by forming a radical caucus. We were men and women, communists and non-communists, from all the different locations. A fighter for one became a fighter for all. For the women it meant not only organizing among operators to oppose their exploitation as women, but organizing all phone workers to oppose the exploitation of all oppressed people.

BUILDING THE UNITED FRONT UNDER WORKING CLASS LEADERSHIP: applying the thought of Mao Tsetung.

Our first project was building support for the people of Vietnam. We put out a leaflet asking people to join us in the October Moratorium march and held a meeting where a Vietnam veteran showed his slides and rapped. A small group of new people came to the meeting, and we continued to have them, picking up a few contacts each week.

From the beginning we attended union meetings, and raised issues from the floor.

But, except for one meeting, where we were able to pass a resolution supporting the Indians on Alcatraz and donated union money to them we were usually outvoted or ruled out of order. The union wasn't about to let us turn it into a revolutionary organization, so more and more we turned to our own projects. We wanted to build solidarity between all working people, and we began by raising money and canned food for the GE strikers, and going to the picket line outside the local appliance store ourselves.

We are also trying to build support among the workers for third world struggles, including the right to self-determination. After the Indians moved onto Alcatraz and it was in the newspapers, we put out a leaflet titled, "Who Owns Alcatraz?" In the leaflet we tried to explain how the U.S. cavalry had slaughtered the Indians and pushed them off their land just as the modern imperialist army is attempting to slaughter the Vietnamese today. Response to the leaflet was good, but isolated leaflets, coming out irregularly, don't make much of an impact on workers. What's needed is a newsletter that comes out on a regular basis and links up issues less haphazardly.

At its peak thirty phone workers came to caucus meetings. Mostly they were people we met on the job, although some saw our leaflets and sought us out. We wanted the caucus to grow and encouraged everyone



to come to our meetings and help out with our projects. Eventually this led to serious problems. It's hard to integrate new people into an ongoing group without stopping everything, going back over the history of the group, and answering questions. It was necessary to define our unity principles and tighten up the organization of the caucus. We did this by setting up a steering committee, which met often and systematically tried to sum up the practice of the group. For example, when we were collecting food and blankets for the Indians we got permission from the company to place the boxes inside the buildings, where we set them up. Later we decided it had been a mistake to collaborate with the company, and from then on stood outside the buildings whenever we made collections.

Another more complex problem developed around a decision to disrupt a union meeting because the union had suspended stewards who were fighting back against racist discrimination in their office. Some caucus members had second thoughts about this tactic, so we discussed it again, this time stressing Mao's principle that correct ideas come from practice, and that the only way to know whether a decision is correct or not is to carry it out wholeheartedly, and then sum up the effects. If some of us disrupted the meeting, and the rest of us calmly raised issues from the floor, we'd have no way of knowing which tactic was correct. From past experience we already knew that when we raised issues from the floor, we were quickly ruled out of order. So we decided, once more, to disrupt the meeting, and did it. Later we summed up the effect of this action, and decided it had been the correct thing to do.

Then people began to ask about where they could read about where correct ideas come from. In this way some people came to appreciate Mao as a guide to action and began to read Mao.

As communists working in the caucus, another woman and I constantly put forward Mao Tsetung Thought as a guide to solving the problems we faced. We wanted to organize all the operators in the city, and we wanted all the other phone workers to support them. So keeping in mind Mao's principle that you should investigate a

problem thoroughly before attempting to solve it, we organized a fact-finding meeting of all the operators we knew in the city. At the meeting we collected numerous stories of severe harassment and injustice operators faced on the job. Later we printed up the material and distributed it widely among all phone workers. Investigating and then exposing the operator's problem was the way to solve it, because all the other phone workers could see the need to line up behind the operators, even if they weren't there already. Operators are the most oppressed sector of the phone workers, and any struggle that develops against the company will have to be based on them.

At one point, the caucus organized a one-day picket-line outside the company employment office, to protest the policy of barring women from jobs as installers, and other exclusively men's jobs. In organizing this demonstration around the real needs of working women, we were able to win the support of several women from NOW, National Organization of Women. NOW is made up of middle class women and has mainly concerned itself with the problems of middle class and upper class women. In this case, the NOW sisters followed the leadership of the caucus, and even got two male contacts they had to apply for work as operators the same day as our demonstration. The company did not change its hiring practices but this action did change the thinking of a lot of women, and men, working at the phone company, and of a number of NOW women, who began to see the importance of basing the struggle for women's liberation on the working class.

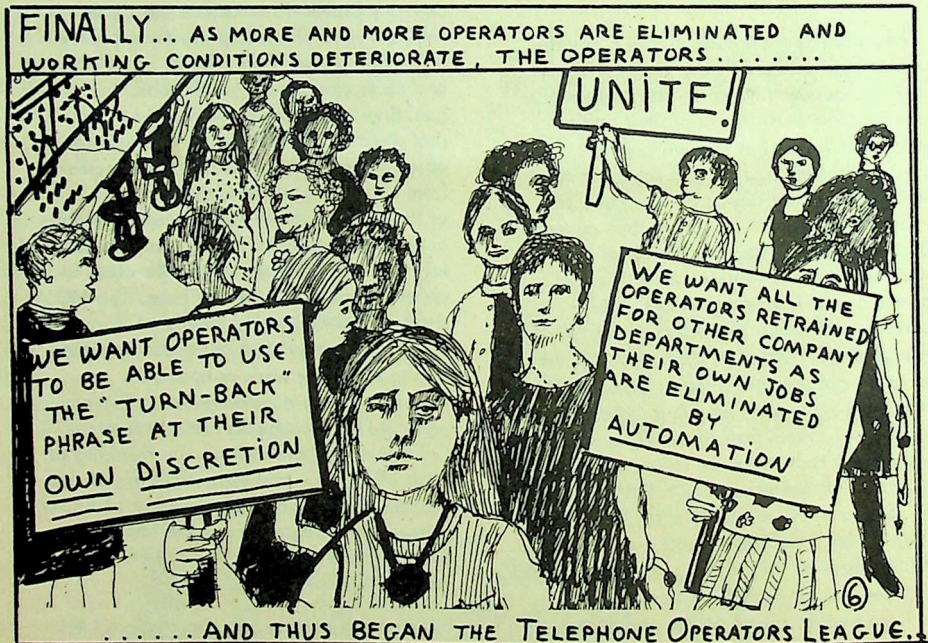
Working closely together enabled RU comrades to develop our work as rapidly as we did. We criticized each other carefully because we wanted to correct our mistakes and serve the people better. Other comrades working on other jobs helped out by summing up their experiences and telling us about it. We tried to avoid each other's mistakes and adopt each other's successful methods of work. All of us were attempting to build caucuses in our workplaces, and eventually we planned to bring them together into a city-wide Workers' Com-

mittee. Drawing on the experience of comrades in nearby cities, we tried to avoid a narrow trade union approach to our work, and planned to branch out into an organization of working people where Third World men and women would plan a leading role.

The phone company caucus was about half men, half women. The women had played a leading role from the beginning, but in forming the caucus it was important to unite men and women. The primary struggle is class struggle. Throughout this country working women are exploited for huge profits, and all women are socially oppressed. These are basic components of

U.S. imperialism.

As communists, we have continually pointed out, through all our work with women in the phone company, that the liberation of women is bound up with the freedom of the entire working class. That women will only win complete freedom when the workers overthrow the dictatorship of the imperialist bosses and establish our own state: socialism. And revolution lies in combining the struggle for women's rights with all other struggles against the imperialist enemy, under the leadership of a real Communist Party representing the true interests of working women and all working people.

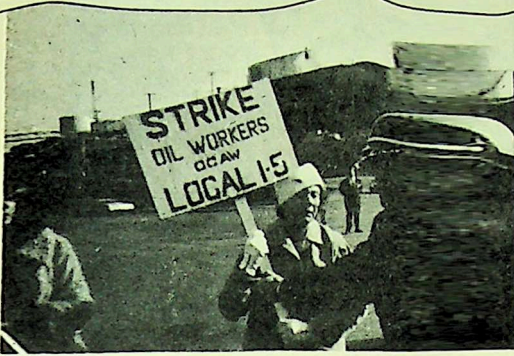


I was born in old Kentucky,
in a coal camp born and bred,
I know all about the pinto beans,
bulldog gravy and cornbread,
And I know how the coal miners work
and slave in the coal mines every day
For a dollar in the company store,
for that is all they pay.

They take our very life blood,
they take our children's lives.
Take fathers away from children,
and husbands away from wives,
Coal miners, won't you organize,
wherever you may be,
And make this a land of freedom
for workers like you and me.

I am a coal miner's wife,
I'm sure I wish you well,
Let's sink this capitalist system
in the darkest pits of hell.

Sara Gunning
Harlan County, Kentucky



Liberation Women's Union

Toward a working-class women's movement

The year 1968 brought "women's liberation" into the vocabulary of the protest movement. But since "movement women" were still for the most part not subjected to the kind of exploitation and oppression that working class women know, women's liberation was in danger of becoming a kind of "liberation" that had little if no relevance for the masses of women in this country. From Berkeley to Palo Alto in the Bay Area there were many small women's groups, and the emphasis in most of them was on the "women" part of "women's liberation." By the summer of 1969 many of the

women in these groups were taking a distinctly anti-male position and talking about a "sisterhood" of women, without taking into account the class differences between women as well as men. The enemy was seen to be "men," instead of the present system of U. S. imperialism which has carried the oppression and exploitation of women to new extremes and which must be destroyed if women (and men) are ever to achieve real liberation.

Those of us who brought up the fact that at that moment women were being murdered and raped in Vietnam--well, that kind of emphasis was called "following like sheep after the men in the movement." Many women were trying to convince other women that as women we should withdraw from the movement, form a completely separate movement, "gain perspective on ourselves and the roles we play in our private and public lives," and relate to other groups in "specifically structured struggles which they ask us to join."

These other groups were defined as black people, working people, and the peoples of the Third World, with no recognition that half those people--half the blacks, half the working people, half the peoples of the Third World--are women not able to afford the luxury of withdrawing from the struggle until they are ready to return. "We see this day of alliances as very distant," said one group of women.

To women who are free to do with their time as they please, who have not yet had to deal with extreme poverty, napalm, and/or starvation, this kind of "women's liberation" offers a retreat--"free space" was the term used.

PROLETARIAN WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Believing that real liberation does not come through a self-indulgent "retreat," and wanting to make "women's liberation" mean something to poor and low-income, working and non-working women, women from various groups, including the Bay Area Revolutionary Union, Newsreel, SDS, various other collectives and women's liberation groups, began to get together to discuss what we could do.

The interest was exciting. All of us realized that there were many women in the Bay Area ready to work toward real liberation. And we chose the name Liberation Women's Union to emphasize the point that we considered ourselves women primarily interested in the liberation struggle of all people--Liberation

Women. We wanted to make it clear that we did not separate the struggle for women's liberation from the overall liberation struggle but consider the liberation of women as part of the liberation struggle and possible only in the liberation struggle of all people.

We wanted to focus on organizing non-professional working women, wives of working men, unemployed women, and women on welfare. And we wanted to set up an alternative to the other kind of "women's liberation" so that women students would not "retreat," losing the fighting spirit they have, or be drawn into feminism and criticizing movement men in a counter-revolutionary rather than a revolutionary way.

Meeting weekly, about 25 or 30 of us drew up a program, including:

- (1) EQUAL WORK AT EQUAL PAY, with no racial or sexual discrimination in hiring, promotion, or pay scales;
- (2) FREE, 24-HOUR CHILD CARE CENTERS FOR ALL CHILDREN;
- (3) FREE, COMPLETE HEALTH CARE, including maternity care, birth control, and abortions;
- (4) SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THIRD WORLD PEOPLES;
- (5) AN END TO U. S. IMPERIALIST WARS OF AGGRESSION;



LWU women joined strikers' wives on a picket line in the Bay Area in the fall of 1969.



- (6) CONTROL OVER SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS, police, government, etc.;
- (7) FREE, EQUAL, AND RELEVANT EDUCATION, with admission open and free to all;
- (8) SHARING HOUSEHOLD WORK;
- (9) CONTROL OVER PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, including equal rights for all women and men, married or unmarried, and all children born in or out of marriage;
- (10) AN END TO THE MEDIA'S DEGRADING IMAGE OF WOMEN.

The LWU was formed before many of us had done much mass work among women. Yet the program has been helpful because its direction is basically correct--basically proletarian. The existence of such a group--even without a mass base--has continued to encourage other women to move in the same direction. Increasing numbers of women in the Bay Area are focusing attention on the real needs of working class women and men and are moving out of their sheltered small discussion groups to on-the-job-organizing and community work.

STRIKE ACTIVITY

During a strike at a plant in the Bay area, the LWU was active in arranging baby-sitting for the workers' wives so they could attend the union meetings, etc. And we worked out a communications system and code for notifying each other about mobilizations at the various strike scenes in the area.

The LWU has held workshops on workplace organizing, organizing in the schools, and organizing child care centers. At the first workshop held last fall, few of us had done enough mass work to be summarized and criticized.

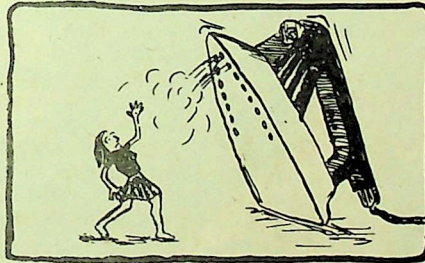
At the most recent one, women from six different areas around the Bay had been involved in organizing child care centers.

And our contacts with each other--with other women sharing common goals--made it possible for the women in the various groups represented in the LWU to get together with women from still other groups and put together the International Women's Day rally in the Mission District of San Francisco, a rally which emphasized the "liberation" part of women's liberation. At this rally women from the Black Panther Party, Los Siete de la Raza, United Asian Wo-

men, Bay Area high schools, the San Francisco hospital workers' strike, Newsreel, and the Bay Area Revolutionary Union spoke and sang about proletarian revolution.

It is this kind of direction that the LWU has been able to help develop. It seems clear that it is important to form organizations that bring together women from different groups who are working in the same direction: to organize working class women to combat male supremacy and male chauvinism through concrete action around issues which affect women in particular and through participation in the liberation struggles of all people.

"So few men--even among the proletariat--realize how much effort and trouble they could save women, even quite do away with, if they were to lend a hand in 'women's work.' They want their peace and comfort. The home life of the woman is a daily sacrifice to a thousand unimportant trivialities. The old master right of the man still lives in secret... I know the life of the worker, and not only from books. Our Communist work among the women, our political work, embraces a great deal of educational work among men. We must root out the old 'master' idea to its last and smallest root, in the party and among the masses. That is one of our political tasks, just as is the urgently necessary task of forming a staff of men and women comrades, well trained in theory and practice to carry on party activity among working women."



"The Thesis must clearly point out that freedom for women is possible only through communism. The inseparable connection between the social and human position of the woman, and private property in the means of production, must be strongly brought out. That will draw a clear and ineradicable line of distinction between our policy and feminism. Our demands are practical conclusions which we have drawn from the burning needs, the shameful humiliation of women in bourgeois society, defenseless and without rights. We demonstrate that we recognize these needs, and are aware of the humiliation of the woman, the privileges of the man. That we hate, yes, hate everything and will abolish everything which tortures and oppresses the woman worker, the housewife, the peasant woman, the wife of the petty trader, yes, and in many cases the women of the possessing classes."

--V. I. Lenin, quoted in
The Woman Question

Black Panther Sisters †alk about Women's Liberation

Reprinted from THE MOVEMENT newspaper, September 1969



LNS

Panther woman demonstrates at a New York rally to free political prisoners.

MOVEMENT: How has the position of women within the Black Panther Party changed? How have the women in the Party dealt with male chauvinism within the Party?

PANTHER WOMEN: I've only been in the Party about ten months and when I got in the Party the thing about Pantherettes was squashed, we sort of grew out of it. Then there's Ericka Huggins. The brothers had to look on Ericka with a new light because she had been thru a lot of things that some Brothers hadn't even been thru. The sisters looked up to her and we all saw what we had to do. The sisters have to pick up guns just like brothers. There are a lot of things the sisters can do to change society.

We realize that we have a role to play and we're tired of sitting home and being misused and unless we stand up, male chauvinism will still show itself and be something that's just passed over. Unless we speak against it and teach the brothers what's correct and point out what's wrong, then it'll still be here.

There used to be a difference in the roles (of men and women) in the party because sisters were relegated to certain duties. This was due to the backwardness and lack of political perspective on the part of both sisters and brothers. Like sisters would just naturally do the office-type jobs, the clerical-type jobs. They were the ones that handled the mailing list. You know all those things that go into details. They were naturally given to the sisters and because of this, because the sisters accepted it so willingly because they had been doing this before, this is the type of responsibilities they've had before, it was very easy for male chauvinism to continue on. The only examples we had of sisters taking responsibility were probably in Kathleen or one or two people who exercised responsibility in other areas of Party work.

We've recognized in the past 4 or 5 months that sisters have to take a more responsible role. They have to extend their responsibility and it shouldn't be just to detail work, to things women normally do. This, I think, has been manifested in the fact that a lot of sisters have been writing more articles, they're attending more to the political aspects of the Party, they're speaking out in public more and we've even done outreach work in the community, extensive outreach work in that we've taken the initiative to start our own schools-- both brothers and sisters now work in the liberation schools. It's been proven that positions aren't relegated to sex, it depends on your political awareness.

I can remember that when I came into the Party over a year ago at that time David Hilliard was National Headquarters Captain, and there was another sister in the Party who was the National Captain for women and even though most of the people related to David Hilliard as being National HQ Captain, most of the women related to this other sister for directives because she was the National Captain for women. Under her were sergeants and Lieutenants who were all sisters and in their ranks were other sisters. There was almost a separation between the brothers and the sisters.

When that was abolished, when there were no longer any separate positions for sisters and brothers, when we all had to relate to the brothers or sisters who were in the specific positions, there wasn't just a

reaction on the part of certain brothers cause they didn't like having to relate to certain sisters, who were in leadership positions. There was also a reaction on the part of some sisters, who because they had to relate to some brothers, because they did not have ranks above certain brothers, they wanted to quit the Party. So it wasn't just a matter of brothers being male chauvinistic in not wanting to relate to sisters as leaders over them--but it was also the sisters, because of conditioning wanted to continue to submit to other sisters, rather than to leaders of the Party per se, regardless of sex.

And I can see since the time I joined the Party that the Party has undergone radical change in the direction of women leadership and emancipation of women. Even though Ericka Huggins provides us with a very good example, it's not so much Ericka and the realization that Ericka is an example. It's the fact that the political consciousness and the political level of members of the Party have risen very much since I joined the Party and because of the fact that we're moving toward a proletarian revolution and because we have come to realize that male chauvinism and all its manifestations are bourgeois and that's one of things we're fighting against. We realize that in a proletarian revolution, the emancipation of women is primary. We realize that the success of the revolution depends upon the women. For this reason, we know that it's necessary that the women must be emancipated.

MOVEMENT: Could you explain what you mean when you say that the success of the revolution depends

on the emancipation of women.

PANTHER WOMEN: It's because of the fact that women are the other half. A revolution cannot be successful simply with the efforts of the men, because a woman plays such an integral role in society even though she is relegated to smaller, seemingly insignificant positions.

MOVEMENT: You once said that the Vietnamese women were your example. Could you explain more concretely what that means in terms of the struggle of women in the United States?

PANTHER WOMEN: We feel that the example given us by the Vietnamese women is a prime example of the role women can play in the revolution. The Vietnamese women are out there fighting with their brothers, fighting against American imperialism, with its advanced technology. They can shoot. They're out there with their babies on their backs, as the case may be, and they're participating in the revolution wholeheartedly just as the Vietnamese men are participating in the revolution, in the national liberation struggle. The success of their national liberation struggle is just as much dependent upon the women continuing struggle as it is dependent on the Vietnamese men. So there we see in Vietnam where the struggle today is the sharpest in terms of struggling against US imperialism, the women in fact, play the role of the other half--not the weaker half, not the stronger half, but the other half of the Vietnamese men. We hold them up as our example and we hope that the revolutionary women in the U.S. can follow that example and live up to the goal that they have set.

Right now the issue of male chauvinism is rather sharp and kind of out of place. We're starting to talk about it and everybody is sensitive about it--but once women find their place in terms of their roles as revolutionaries and use the example of the Vietnamese women, then I don't think it will be such a sharp issue.

I think we'll begin to function and make it very natural for a woman to behave as a revolutionary and not as a subordinate or as a submissive half.

SPECIAL ROLE OF BLACK WOMEN

MOVEMENT: Black women are considered to be the most oppressed group in the US, as blacks and as women. That special oppression gives them a special, even vanguard, role. Do you want to talk about that a little?

PANTHER WOMEN: I think, historically, even at this time, even for women in the Party, to say we want full share and full responsibility is kind of difficult and kind of touchy because of our society. Our men have been sort of castrated, you know. The responsibilities that they rightfully should have had before, were taken

In the case of female education the main stress should be laid on bodily training, and after that on development of character; and last of all, on intellect. But the one absolute aim of female education must be with a view to the future mother.

--Adolph Hitler, Mein Kampf

away from them--to take away their manhood. We've had to fight all this before. Our men are constantly thinking or saying that maybe if we assume a heavier role, a more responsible role, that this, in turn, will sort of take away their responsibility and it's such a touchy thing, that we have to be very sure that the roles are evenly divided.

This is very touchy and presents some problems in combatting a specific thing like male chauvinism, because some brothers still have this fear of women dominating the whole political scene. It may not be voiced that often, but I think it's a very real fear, and we're going to have to be sensitive enough to recognize it. We're going to have to be sensitive enough to say that we're going to take more of a share of the political arena but, at the same time, we're going to have to keep these things in mind.

I think it's important that within the context of that struggle that black men understand that their manhood is not dependent on keeping their black women subordinate to them because this is what bourgeois ideology has been trying to put into the black man and that's part of the special oppression of black women. Black women as generally a part of the poor people of the US, the working class, are more oppressed, as being black, they're super-oppressed, and as being women they are sexually oppressed by men in general and by black men also.

So, in this context we see that black women are especially oppressed in this country and it's very important that black women understand and black

men understand that black man's manhood is not dependent upon the subordination of black women, but rather his manhood is, in fact, dependent on his own strength and the strength he also gets from a revolutionary relationship. A relationship is more fruitful when, in fact, the woman is the other half and not the weaker half. They (the men) get more out of the relationship, just as the women.

MOVEMENT: What are your ideas on the strategy for women's liberation in terms of separate women's organizations, the priority of women's liberation in relation to other issues like imperialism and racism? PANTHER WOMEN: I think it's important that the separate women's liberation groups not all be lumped into one category. Their effectiveness and their value is dependent upon to what extent their work is furthering revolutionary goals in this country. I think that there are all different kinds of organizations in existence now. There are some people who talk about the contradiction among men and women as one of the major contradictions in capitalist society and therefore they take that contradiction (and even if they don't talk about it, some of them put it into practice) and develop it into an antagonistic contradiction, when actually it is a contradiction among the people. It's not a contradiction between enemies.

The contradiction between men and women is a contradiction that has to be worked out within the revolutionary forces. It is not at all comparable to the class contradictions. It's the class struggle that takes priority. To the extent that women's organizations don't address themselves to the class struggle or to national liberation struggles they are not really furthering the women's liberation movement, because in order for women to be truly emancipated in this country there's going to have to be a socialist revolution. And there's going to have to be ideological struggle for decades and probably for centuries before male chauvinism is overcome. If women don't understand this, they're not going to truly be able to overcome their special oppression.

Roberta is correct and even those women's organizations who do address themselves to the struggles that are at hand, the strategy of having autonomous women's liberation organizations is incorrect because, as Roberta says, it seems as if those organizations look upon women's liberation as a priority when in actuality the struggle towards socialist revolution is a priority. Women can only become emancipated, not through their own efforts as a particular group, but through their participation on an equal plane in the existing organizations which are comprised of men and women who are struggling for the same cause. It's not a separate struggle and women's liberation does not take priority, but in fact is part and parcel of the overall struggle.

FEMALE CHAUVINISM

Any organization that's being formed for women's liberation, like Rosemary said, has got to take into consideration that they can't operate separately and by themselves. They must also understand the definition of chauvinism. Chauvinism isn't just relegated to the male. Chauvinism is an undying or unreasoning or irrational love for one's sex and if a women's liberation organization gets uptight because a man comes around, that's unreasoning and irrational. It's not being realistic and looking at things as a whole

In terms of a man too functioning as a revolutionary and a woman functioning as a revolutionary. If they're not careful, they will go to an extreme and they will become female chauvinists. They will have an undying love for their sex and totally negate revolutionary struggle.

Unfortunately, if we don't be careful, I think that the women's liberation struggle can be coopted by opportunists. It can become just like a style or a fad and the whole revolutionary struggle will be set back because of this. This is one reason why the revolutionary practitioners, because of the repression we're suffering, can't take time out to go off by ourselves to solve some of our backwardness. This would be just another dividing tactic as far as I can see.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN PRACTICE

I think it's important to recognize the dangers that separate women's groups face immediately, just because they're women's groups and there's a good chance that they're going to get off base in terms of what the primary struggle is. However, I think we have to be very careful in terms of condemning forms that are used in the movement. I think that there is room for special organizing of women. There are positive things that these kinds of groups can do: for example, canneries, special plants where there's primarily women, electronics and this sort of thing in terms of working class organizing, in terms of organizing cooperative nurseries to liberate the energies of women.

But, they are always facing certain dangers in terms of turning in on themselves, in terms of becoming a very petit bourgeois little clique where they just talk about how they have to take care of the kids all the time or become a gripe session. So, I think, while we as Panthers, while we integrate the struggle of the brothers and sisters within the Party, we still will see how these separate women's liberation groups do thru their practice. And that's where our judgment of them will come in.

We have a phrase that says that the only culture worth keeping is a revolutionary culture. Now, our culture dictates that we become revolutionaries. Irregardless of what the brothers say, like Rosemary says, we should function in a position that furthers revolution and revolutionary culture. The women's liberation groups that are separating away from the men (I think Roberta said there is some room for them, and we can't vacillate on whether there is or not, we have to judge them on their practice) should take into consideration that we're here to liberate the people and like we said, it's a socialist liberation struggle and we can't operate as halves.

If women's liberation is going to exist, it should exist with the goal in mind to channel the energies they liberate into a united liberation of the men and women together -- not as a bourgeois cult, because this has happened many times. They've become extremist organizations of female superiority and have totally forgotten about the people's struggles and oppressed people and have, themselves become oppressors.

EMORY

WOMEN'S CAUCUSES

MOVEMENT: What do you think about all women's caucuses inside the organization? Some people say that within movement organizations there's male chauvinism and women must deal with it from a position of power, so they should organize their own



caucuses. They also say there's a parallel between women's liberation and black liberation and just like black people had to get themselves together without whites first, so women have to get themselves together without men. Movement organizations have always been dominated by men, the way civil rights organizations used to be dominated by white people.

PANTHER WOMEN: I don't know, that sounds illogical to me because you can't solve the problem apart from the problem. You can't be liberated from male chauvinism if you don't even deal with it--if you run away from it. And I think forming any separate organization with that in mind is negating or contradicting what you're setting out to do. I think any type of inside organization that deals with women's liberation should take into consideration that women's liberation is important, but what is primary is the People's liberation. If they want a women's club, those have existed for centuries--they should form that, instead of calling themselves revolutionaries.

In addition to that--simply because of the fact that we are members of the Black Panther Party and are therefore in the vanguard, does not necessarily mean that we can deem ourselves champions of women's liberation. We believe that male chauvinism must be stomped out, because we have come to realize that it is bourgeois. Bourgeois ideas are those which are perpetuated upon us by the bourgeois class and is something we're fighting against. But because we've come to realize all these things just recently, we're very new at it. So that whether or not we will become champions of women's liberation, whether or not we'll be able to provide the example to lead other organizations towards women's liberation will come through practice.

MOVEMENT: One of the arguments that's been made is that the movement has failed to attract a lot of women because of the chauvinism within the movement and because of the intimidation that's found in a lot of political organizations. We fail to attract the other half because men dominate. Women have to get together to talk about their special problems in order to involve more women in the struggle.

ROLE FOR ADVANCED WOMEN

PANTHER WOMEN:

For a person to use the argument that the struggle does not ATTRACT women to the organization, I think, is coming from a subjective point of view. Because if they understand that it's not a women's or a man's struggle, it's not an attraction for a man or a woman, but we're here for the liberation of oppressed people, irregardless of whether male chauvinism exists, the women would still come into the Party or movement because they agree or are willing to support the revolutionary principles that exist. If they find male chauvinism, they should be willing to fight it on the basis of principle and unity. And to say, "they're not attracted to it"--there's no advertisement for getting rid of oppression. It's an attraction based on principles, not based on some subjective wishes or wants. So I say that women who say that they don't want to come into the struggle because they're not ATTRACTED to the struggle aren't really interested in the first place.

MOVEMENT: No, they say the movement doesn't deal with their special oppression.

PANTHER WOMEN: Well, that may be true, but still, if you're interested in the struggle of oppressed people, you can come into an organization and bring that question in yourself, instead of staying away from it. You can fight on the basis of unity within an organization, not on the basis of, "well, they're not dealing with the women's question and they're not dealing with the

special oppression of women, so therefore I'm not going to participate". They're still being subjective.

Well, I think that's one place where women who are already advanced are going to have to take a strong stand. The fact is because of objective conditions in this society women are more backwards, because of their positions in their home, or in school, even working women who are more exposed to what's happening in the world, are still relegated at home and to the family jobs to the children, etc, etc, and their perspective in terms of the world is more limited. So it's very important that women who are more advanced, who already understand revolutionary principles, go to them and explain it to them and struggle with them. We have to recognize that women are backwards politically and we have to struggle with them. And that can be a special role that revolutionary women can play.



Ericka Huggins, leader of the Black Panther Party, a political prisoner in New Haven, Conn., since May 22, 1969.



LNS

The women of Vietnam

In order to really understand the position of women in Vietnam today it is important to know a little about the lives of women in pre-revolutionary Vietnam (before about 1945). For centuries Vietnam was ruled by foreign powers. From about 1850 the French controlled Vietnam. The people in Vietnam lived in miserable conditions under the rule of the French colonialists. Nine out of ten of the people were poor farmers, living on land owned by rich French and Vietnamese landlords. When times were hard, even the peasants who owned small rice plots had to sell their plots to the landlords and then had to pay high rents in order to grow crops on them.

The peasants were also forced to pay many taxes. To get the money for taxes parents often had to sell their children. Or husbands would hire out their wives. It was common to see "women peasants in tattered clothes pulling the plough in place of the missing buffalo." Women also made up about 15% of the work force. They were forced to work 12 hours a day doing the same work as men for half the wages. Women workers were laid off with no relief when they were pregnant. In order to keep a job, many women would try to hide their pregnancies by wearing tight belts. This often killed the baby. Women whose husbands died were barred by tra-



dition from remarrying. Relatives would take away children of any widow who married again. The Vietnamese woman was oppressed not just by French and Vietnamese rulers but by her man as well. She was the slave's slave.

However, the situation of women began to change rapidly in 1930 with the founding of the Indochinese Communist Party (later the Vietnam Workers' Party). The Party, headed by Ho Chi Minh, realized that the country couldn't win independence from French rule and get rid of the landlords and the exploitive bosses with only half the country, the men, involved in the fight. The Party worked to get rid of anything that oppressed women and kept them from being involved in the struggle--and in its first political writings the Party declared that the struggle for the equality of the sexes was one of "the 10 principal tasks of the revolution." In 1930 the Party helped form the Women's Union for Emancipation (later the Vietnam Women's Union) to mobilize the masses of women workers and peasants and intellectuals--first in the fight against the French colonialists (1945-54), then in the struggle against American imperialism, and now, in the northern half of Vietnam, in the building of socialism.

THE SWORD IS MY CHILD

The Vietnamese women rose up to smash the shackles that bound them for so long. Many times they were tortured to death for refusing to give up the fight for the freedom of their people. One woman, Minh Kai, who was arrested during the early days of the Communist Party, refused to give her tormentors any information at all. They killed her. But before she died

she wrote on the prison cell wall with her own blood:

A rosy cheeked woman, here I am
fighting side by side with you, men!
On my shoulders weighs the hatred
that is common to both of us.
The prison is my school, its mates
my friends,
The sword is my child, the gun my
husband.

This poem clearly shows the spirit of the Vietnamese woman--that her equality with men could only spring from a common struggle for the liberation of the country and the building of a new society.

At first, in the fight against the French, women took over all the work at home to allow their husbands to fight on the front. Then young wives even began to add their signatures to their husbands' applications to enlist in the people's army. By 1952 there were almost a million women guerrilla fighters in North and South Vietnam, battling to drive out the French colonialists. Women too old to go to war formed the Association of Fighters' Mothers. Its members hid and supplied fighters. These women considered all those fighting for the liberation of Vietnam their "adopted" children.

Immediately after the liberation of North Vietnam from French rule, women worked tirelessly to rebuild their country. For the construction of one dam, women provided 80% of the labor. They worked to undo the damage caused by American and French aggression. Because it had been impossible to live any other way, 30,000 women in Hanoi had been forced into prostitution under the rule of the French and their Vietnamese Women's Union placed those women in production and construction groups where they could earn a living while learning a trade. By 1961 the number of women industrial workers had increased to 70,000 (from 10,000 in 1952). In addition, 3 million peasant women were working in agricultural cooperatives. By 1965 women made up 45% of the workers in light industry and 23% in heavy industry.

Women's liberation in North Vietnam was not achieved easily, of course. There were many problems. For the first time,

women, who had never left their houses, were actively participating in social activity (going to meetings, etc.). But many women elected to positions of responsibility often quit. Either the extra work was too much of a burden or their husbands had ideas left over from the old society and resented their wives being politically active. They wanted them to just take care of the house. The Party realized that these old ideas were keeping women from taking part in the revolution. So besides creating laws which guaranteed women equality, the Party also waged a persistent struggle against the ideas that kept women down. They took the struggle to the masses of people (especially the women themselves).

In 1946, North Vietnam passed the law on marriage and the family. This law guaranteed freedom of marriages, stated that a man could have only one wife, guaranteed equality between men and women, and protected women and children's rights. This touched off a big struggle among many peasants against ideas and customs left over from the old society. Practices like child marriage, marrying many wives, etc., were still very common. Laws alone could not get

rid of these old customs - it took a lot of education and persistent struggle led by the women.

Today in South Vietnam, even in the midst of the war of liberation against U.S. imperialism, the struggle for the liberation of women is being carried out, based on the successful battles waged in the North.

The Vietnamese Women's Union has organized women into handicraft teams (knitting, basketwork, etc.) to help them lead independent lives and at the same time add to their income. In the towns, kindergartens and nurseries have been set up in every quarter.

On every level of the new Vietnamese society women are rising up and taking their rightful place as equals, comrades in the struggle to change the world. There is a struggle we can surely learn from. It is an inspiration to fight our oppression as women as part of the struggle against the oppression of all people under U.S. imperialism.

The Vietnam Worker's Party and the Vietnamese Women's Union have been and still are always concerned with the daily needs of the masses of women workers and peasants. Today 90% of the women have been taught to read and write. Basic education and training courses have been started in the factories for women workers.

TO THE WOMEN OF VIETNAM

You are the ones
 who made us realize
 what is happening to us
 now
 in the heart of the fortress
 we aim our anger straight
 at imperialism's towers and guards
 and when fear comes with shaky thoughts
 we think of you--and us--
 and know
 because your fighting has revealed
 your enemy as ours
 your lives as ours
 your brothers as our own
 your children as our own
 your future as our own
 we fight to live
 and love
 with you.

--Jane Franklin.

M.T.D.T.G.P MIEN NAM VIETNAM

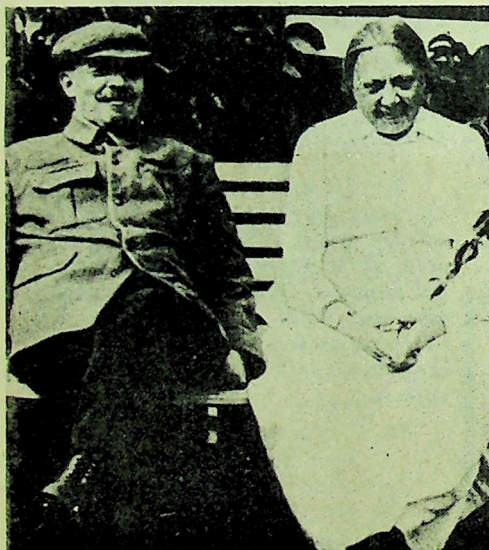


HP ĐỒNG
 TRẠNG DIỆM QUẬN THỦ

North Vietnamese postage stamps, unlike those from the U.S., honor the women who build and defend the country.

Soviet women

Their victory and temporary defeat



Lenin and his wife, Krupskaya, 1922.

Vladimir Lenin, leader of the first successful working class revolution, the October Soviet Revolution of 1917, once stated flatly that the freedom of women could not be separated from the freedom of the working class as a whole. It would have been impossible for the Russian working people to seize power from the big landlords, factory owners, and bankers, unless they waged a struggle to end the special forms of slavery that the old blood-

sucking capitalist society forced on women. There could have been no revolution without the millions of Russian women, who were kicked around and stepped on in the old capitalist society. And it would have been impossible, Lenin said, for the Soviet working class to keep control of the land, factories, banks, and the machinery of the state if it did not continue to push forward the fight to free women from their former inferior position.

The Soviet Revolution not only ended the exploitation of workers in general, it also opened up industry and other areas of work to women and ended the brutal practice of driving women like animals in the factories, for wages far below the miserable earnings of the men.

The new Soviet Constitution gave women the right to marry by their own consent and to get a divorce if they were mistreated. It also put an end to the practice of paying women inferior wages and barring them from many kinds of work, especially skilled work.

So by 1926, less than ten years after the working class took power, more than one out of four workers were women. Trade Unions directly tackled the special problems still facing women workers: they set up training programs to develop women as skilled apprentices, production leaders, and organizers, (With the workers in control of the factories there were no foremen, since the workers were producing for themselves and did not have to be whipped into line to turn out more for a super-rich boss.) Child care for factory workers' families was also expanded.

These measures were enthusiastically adopted by the Soviet workers government. The Soviet workers followed the teachings of Frederick Engels, who along with Karl Marx was the founder of communism. Engels pointed out more than forty years before the Russian revolution that "the emancipation of women will only be possible when women can take part in production on a large social scale and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time." Along with the special training programs and child care centers for working women, the Soviet workers' government set up large cafeterias, clothing centers, public laundries, and other coop-

erative institutions that enabled all the working people, men as well as women, to share the work that women were previously forced to do alone in the home. Women began to take their rightful place as true equals of men in every level and area of society.

WOMEN IN PRODUCTION

World War II made the role of Soviet women even more important. With several million young men enlisted in the Soviet Army, even more women had to be brought into new areas of work--on the assembly lines, building roads and transportation systems, and as doctors, teachers, managers, planners, and political leaders. In capitalist societies, like the United States, women were brought into factories during the war, paid the same old inferior wages, and then, when the war was over were shoved back into the home as drudgeworkers. But in the Soviet Union after World War II, tens of millions of young men had been killed. Women who had learned new skills and won new positions and a chance for a better life even while the war went on continued to advance in their long march toward total freedom. In 1945, Soviet women workers outnumbered men workers; in agriculture 6 out of 10 workers were women (and not stoop pickers, either); more than 8 out of 10 public health workers were women. Even in the large basic industries, just under half the workers were women, including skilled workers. More than 6 out of 10 of all teachers and scientists were women.

GAINS CRUMBLE

But within 10 years after the death of Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet working people for 30 years--tremendous gains made by women, and by the whole working class, began to crumble. Even though the old rulers--the landlords, the big factory owners, and the bankers--had been knocked out of power by the working people, they were still diehards who tried every trick to get back into power. The selfish ideas of their old capitalist society do not die easily. Slowly but surely, they were able to corrupt teachers, managers, and even some Communist Party members. They formed a small band of traitors who were able to take advantage of the diffi-

culties of the new Soviet workers' state (especially after World War II, when most of the railroads and the industry had been destroyed and had to be completely rebuilt) to worm their way back into power. By the early 1960's they had succeeded in overturning the first and oldest workers' government in the world. In place of the new, socialist society, based on cooperation to provide for everyone's needs, they brought back the old, capitalist society, where the many work, but only a few prosper.

His free minutes or hours Lenin spent among the workers, asking them about the most petty details of their lives.

"What about their wives? Up to the neck in housework? But do they manage to learn anything, to read anything?"

--Maxim Gorky
DAYS WITH LENIN

This was a great defeat for the Soviet working people. It was an especially bitter betrayal for Soviet women.

Today in Russia women share much the same miserable conditions as working class women in this country. Three out of four of them still have to do all the housework by themselves--in addition to working full time. Sure, many of them are teachers and even doctors. But the trick is that these "professions" have become low-grade women's jobs, while the men have moved up to jobs with higher salaries and more phony "status"--have become medical specialists and "experts" in other fields.

The lower position of women in the Soviet Union today has been brought about as part of the "reforms of the economic system"--in other words, the return of the exploitive system of capitalism, layoffs, and bonuses. The "Regulations Governing State-Run Manufacturing Enterprises" passed in the Soviet Union in 1966 say that managers of factories have the authority to own, use, and dispose of all property in the factory; to sell "surplus" equipment, raw materials, etc., to lease for private use equipment and premises that are "temporarily" not being used for public production. In addition, they can fix or change

the wages and bonuses of the workers, recruit and dismiss workers, and mete out punishment to them. For instance, in order to gain more profit, the Red October Iron and Steel Works decided to close down two of its workshops and lay off 730 workers. To ensure capitalist restoration and the development of a new ruling class, bonuses are given as production incentives, most of which go to the managers of factories. For example, the manager of the Lipetsk Industrial Engineering Trust got bonuses 7 times in one month, amounting to more than what an average worker earns in two years. The profit orientation of managers has also resulted in increased discrimination in hiring women, for fear they'll get pregnant and take long leaves. Soviet publications reflect the bourgeois thinking of the scab leadership by continually pushing "that when one has money, one has everything." But also the new Soviet ruling class is encouraging divisions among the working class (between men and women) by reinforcing the ideas that women are inferior

to men and should play a back-seat role. They do this by printing statements like these (published in "Family and School"):

"Yet motherhood and family are in their blood, without these things their lives are incomplete."

"If the great scientific discovery continues to elude him, she whispers: 'You'll succeed in the end my dear.' That's femininity in my view!"

So in the Soviet Union the entire working class, women as well as men, have been forced to return to being wage slaves. Only now because of many reforms, like creches, nurseries, and public dining halls and better schooling, the Soviet women can be as completely exploited as men are. This situation clearly shows how the woman question is in essence a class question. The liberation of Soviet women lies only with the liberation of the entire working class and the smashing of the new Czars of Russia!

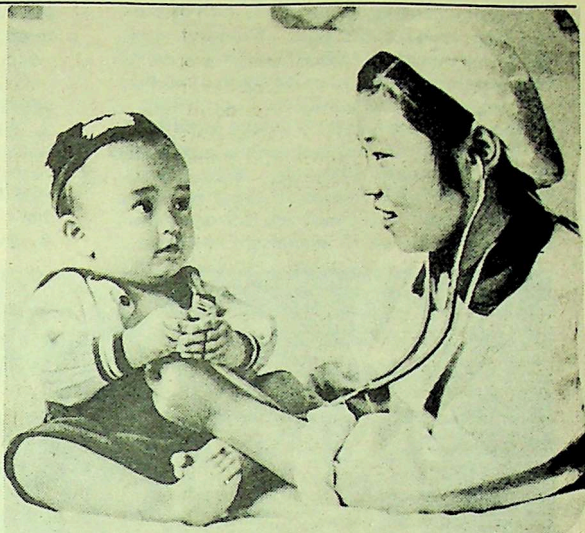


"International Women's Day is a token of invincibility and an augury of the great future which lies before the liberation movement of the working class."

Joseph Stalin

Women's Street Theater, International Women's Day, San Francisco, 1970.

The women of CHINA



A Uighur baby (one of China's national minorities) gets a health check up.

The old days

The Chinese peasant girl was nine years old when the old lady bought her as a wife for Chung-lai. "Being a child wife I was often beaten and cursed. I was beaten almost every day so it is hard to remember anything special about it. They ate noodles. I cooked for them but I was not allowed to eat even the left-over noodles.

"One day the mother-in-law broke my arm. The water in the pot was boiling so I asked her again. She said I annoyed her and was too stupid. That's the way it usually was. But that time she took an iron poker and broke my arm. Later I worked for a landlord. Sometimes they even gave me old clothes or rags to wear, and I earned about \$1 a month."

--A typical woman's story before the revolution in China.

On International Women's Day in 1924, in a park in Canton, China, students and workers gathered for a demonstration. They raised the slogans "Down with imperialism!" "Abolish child brides and polygamy!" "Same work, same pay!" and "Equal education!"

These students and workers were part of the movement to resist the Japanese imperialists, who at the time were slowly eating away at Chinese territory and forcing their rule on the Chinese people. At the same time, many of the activists were fighting against Chinese capitalists and landlords who kept millions of people in poverty and cooperated with the imperialists to sell the wealth of China. And they were also battling many old traditions that prevented the people from rising up to defeat their oppressors.

Women in particular were bound by these cruel traditions. Women who were raped were expected to commit suicide. Women whose husbands died were deprived of their children if they remarried. Parents sold their daughters as wives when they were mere children--and these young "wives" were actually unpaid slaves in the households of their husbands' parents. Prostitution was widespread, especially in the "treaty port" cities like Shanghai

run by the British, American, and Japanese imperialists. In 1919, the students of the anti-imperialist May Fourth Movement had proclaimed "Down with the human devouring ritualistic traditions!" including especially oppressive marriage traditions.

Today, of course, women's conditions in China are very different. Women have full equality with men in all legal relations including marriage; they participate and take leadership in all economic and poli-

lowing statement on the women's movement:

1. Women's party work emphasis: carrying activities to the common people;
2. Women workers are the movement's backbone but students are important in bridging party-worker gap and are important in breaking up familistic (authoritarian Chinese family) thought and habits;
3. Peasant women are important and must



A political education class in a Chinese village.

tical activity.

How was this transformation achieved?

The women of China were freed along with the other poor and working people, as they defeated the Japanese imperialists, overthrew the capitalists and landlords, and began to build socialism. The women of China played important roles in the revolutionary struggle for their own liberation and for the liberation of the Chinese people.

FOUGHT MALE SUPREMACY

And this only succeeded because of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, which from its earliest days organized and developed women fighters and leaders, and struggled against male supremacy in its own ranks and among the people.

In 1924, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party made the fol-

lowing statement on the women's movement; 4. Women's publications must be in simple and popular style, about women's intimate experience of suffering and practical needs; 5. Increase number of women Party members and leaders in women's movement."

As party members acted on this resolution, every province of China produced leading female fighters--like Shih Hsiao-mei, who was called Mother Revolution. Born in 1889, she started work at the age of twelve in a Shanghai textile mill run by foreign capitalists. By the time she was 33, she was leading her fellow workers in a successful strike against the exploiters. In 1927--the year of the Japanese invasion of Shanghai and Chiang Kai-shek's massacre of the Communist Party--Shih Hsiao-mei battled the warlords and the imperialists. She smuggled guns to comrades on the front lines, including her eldest son, who was killed by Chiang Kai-shek's terrorists. He was the first of three of her

sons to be killed in the fight for liberation.

Chiang's reactionaries hunted Mother Revolution, but they failed to capture her. She eluded them and lived to see the People's Republic of China established. As late as 1964, she was living in a small house in Shanghai, giving lectures as a veteran Shanghai worker.

WOMEN FIGHT LANDLORDS

Throughout the countryside, in the areas liberated by the Red Army from the Japanese and Chiang's reactionaries, thousands of women joined the fight against the landlords. The landlords were brought before the people to "settle accounts," and entire villages accused the landlords of beating, starving, robbing, and killing the peasants. Often the women in the villages had suffered these landlords' cruelest abuse. But at first many women were afraid to come to meetings because their husbands beat them if they left their houses.

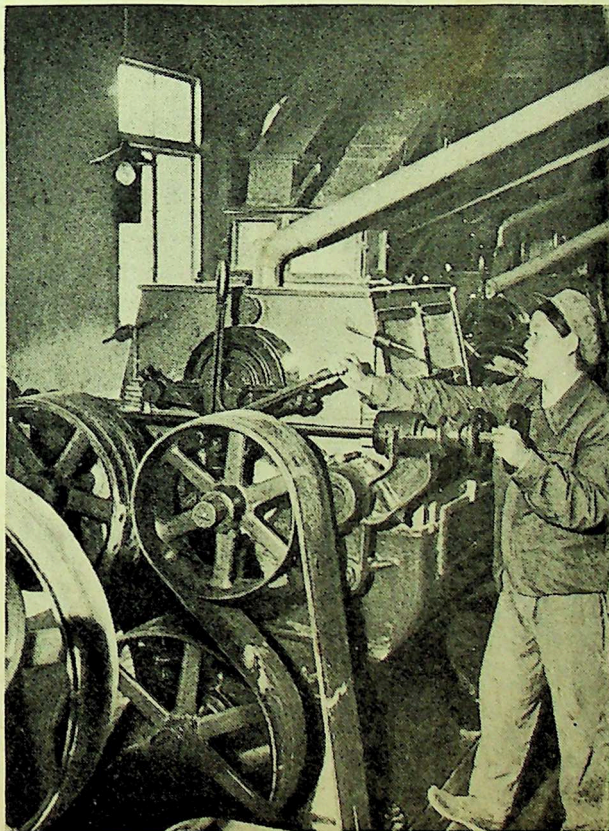
The Chinese Communist Party helped set up Women's Associations to involve the "other half of China" in the war against the landlords and the Japanese. In one of these liberated areas in 1948, for example, in Long Bow Village, a man explained to the Women's Association that he beat his wife when she went to a meeting because he believed that women left the house just to meet other men. The women exploded. They rushed at him from all sides, kicking, hitting, screaming, "Beat her, will you? Beat her, and slander us all, will you? Well... maybe this will teach you."

"Stop! I'll never beat her again," gasped the panic-stricken husband.

These Women's Associations fought for the equality of women and worked to mobilize women in the overall struggle. An observer in one of the liberated areas wrote: "Without the successful transformation of society, without the completion of the land reform, without the victorious defense of the Liberated Areas against the

"In order to build a great socialist society, it is of utmost importance to arouse the broad masses of women to join productive activity. Men and women receive equal pay for equal work in production. Genuine equality between the sexes can only be realized in the process of the socialist transformation of society as a whole."

--Mao Tsetung



A commune-run flour mill in the Tu People's Autonomous County, Chinghai Province.



Broadcasting center set up by a mountain commune, so the people could listen to the news, music, and reports on the commune's production.

probing attacks of the Nationalist Army, it was impossible to talk of the liberation of women. Many women realized this as if by intuition, and they made the Women's Association an instrument for mobilizing the power of women behind the revolution in all its aspects. . . All their activities were intimately linked up with the struggle for equality, with the demand on the part of the women that they should no longer be treated as chattels. . . If this demand alarmed the men the all-out support the women gave to the over-all revolutionary goals disarmed them and won from them a grudging admiration. In their hearts they had to admit that they could not win without the help of 'half of China.'

With the liberation of the entire Chinese mainland in 1949 the movement for the emancipation of women went into high gear. A new marriage law did away with child brides, selling daughters for marriage, and interference with remarriage. Divorces were given immediately when both husband and wife asked for them if the children "are taken care of." The Marriage Law took 17 months to draft, and was based on thorough discussion and study and on the experience of the 90,000,000 people in the Liberated Areas.

Laws were passed guaranteeing that women are hired and trained equally with men and at equal pay. And millions of illiterate women (and men) learned to read in a country-wide literacy campaign. The government, factories, neighborhoods, and communes developed hundreds of thousands of child care centers, freeing many women for productive labor. Women began to play active and leading roles in every branch of industry, government, and culture. By 1955, 14.5% of the army officers were women.

Examples of outstanding and heroic women were publicized--as were examples of the struggles of women against male supremacy in the homes, villages and factories--to encourage women to assert their rights and to encourage men to change their ways. Prostitution and other sexual exploitation of women was quickly ended by political work among the masses, coupled with education and vocational training for the former prostitutes.

Anna Louise Strong, one of the few Westerners who lives in China, writes of "women whose husbands had grown away from them because they were tied to household chores, but who now have gained a new companionship in studying and going to meetings together. . . One feels the yearning of many women who in the past were unable to keep up with their husbands in knowledge and development, and so lost contact, but who are now free to study as well as to work."

In 1953 a nationwide socialist education drive was launched to combat the old feudal ideas which were still keeping women back and hindering the development of the new socialist society. The government realized that it would take a long, concentrated effort to get rid of the old ideas about women's place in society and about the relationships between men and women.

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Of course, even in China today, there are still battles to be won. The old landlords and capitalists have tried to push their way back into power. But led by Mao Tse-tung, the hundreds of millions of Chinese working people in the mines and factories, on the docks and farms, got together to put down the old rulers and their front men, to defend their workers' state, and to strengthen their new socialist society. This struggle against the old bosses was called the Great Proletarian

Cultural Revolution. The period of intense struggle lasted for three years, from 1966 to 1969, and the transformation of the superstructure of Chinese society, the schools, army, factories, newspapers, cultural centers, and collective farms, is still continuing.

In every major battle women were in the forefront of the struggle against the old slave masters. The Cultural Revolution's first "big character poster" (a big wall poster criticizing some aspect of Chinese society) was written by a woman. And women shared leadership in all the organizations formed to carry out the Cultural Revolution, from the Red Guards to the Revolutionary Committees that were elected to lead factories, communes, schools, ministries, and other social institutions. And when the new Communist Party Congress was called in 1969 to sum up and consolidate the struggle, not

only more workers and more poor peasants, but more women were there as leaders of the Chinese people.

The struggle for the emancipation of Chinese women, like the emancipation of the Chinese working people as a whole, is surging forward, smashing down barrier after barrier, under the political rule of the Chinese working class and the leadership of its vanguard, the Chinese Communist Party.

In China today, International Women's Day is a holiday for all women. It is usually celebrated with parties, programs, and discussions of the achievements of women in China and of the struggles yet to be waged.

And, especially on International Women's Day, they express their solidarity and support for all the oppressed women of the world, inspiring us to courage and confidence in our victory.



Two residents of the "Home of Respect for the Aged" in the Chilying Commune, Honan Province.

What to read:

Recommended Reading:

The Woman Question, selections from the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. This includes key sections from Lenin's On the Emancipation of Women, and Engels' Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, among other works.

Mao Tse-tung, Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan, Section 7, Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. 1; section of "Women" in Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung (The Little Red Book).

William Hinton, Fanshen, particularly Chapter 16, "Half of China."

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Worthy Daughters and Sons of the Lao People, 50¢

Ta Thi Kieu: An Heroic Girl of Bentre (S. Vietnam), 25¢

The Woman Question, selections from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, \$1.

ENGELS: Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, \$1.85

WILLIAM HINTON: Fanshen, A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village, \$2.95; China's Continuing Revolution, 35¢

MAO TSE-TUNG: Quotations, 60¢; Selected Military Writings, \$1.25; On People's War, 40¢; Five Articles, 35¢; Selected Works, Vol. I-IV, \$2.75 ea.

LIN PIAO: Report to the Ninth Party Congress, 35¢

The Red Sun Lights the Road Forward for Tachai (Commune)--album, \$1.25

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Rising Up

(A song composed by West Coast high school students)

We're sitting in the classroom hearing
lectures all day,
"Act like a lady," "speak politely,"
all the teachers will say.
They teach us to be dumb so they can
push us around;
If we think we're second class then
they can keep us down.

But we're standing proud
We're rising up
We're shouting loud
And we won't shut up
We're sisters strong together
We're rising up
Gonna break those chains
We're rising up.

Stuck in the schools being
tracked through life,
We either get a shit job,
or be a slaving housewife.
The schools aren't for us,
and we know this is true,
They serve the big fat bosses,
not me and you.

Schools should serve the people
We're rising up
The tracking's gotta end
We're rising up
We're sisters strong together
We're rising up
Gonna break those chains
Cause we're rising up.

They teach us that our place
is staying in the home,
Cooking, cleanin', and a working
our fingers to the bone.
When we want to get a job
they give us such low pay
And the conditions are bad,
but there's no other way.

We want equal pay
We're rising up
We want better conditions
We're rising up
We're sisters strong together
We're rising up
Gonna break those chains
Cause we're rising up.

Around here it's the bosses
who run the show
They exploit everyone just to
make more dough.
They try to keep us divided
so we can't fight back,
But we're getting together
and we'll jump the track.

No more exploitation
We're rising up
They can't stop us now
We're rising up
Gonna break those chains
We're rising up.

In this country the power's
in the hands of a few,
But we'll take it and make it
do what we want it to.
We're rising up angry,
and we're rising up today,
All power to the people
is what we say.

We want a revolution
We're rising up
Gonna get our guns
We're rising up
Standing strong together
We're rising up
Gonna break those chains
Cause we're rising up.



Proud to be a Revolutionary

A revolutionary version of "Okie from Muskogee"---written and sung by people from Newsreel at the International Women's Day Celebration in San Francisco, March 8, 1970.

1

We never have much money in our pockets,
Not like the rich who ride in fancy cars,
Who sail on yachts and live in high-priced mansions,
And play around in uptown fancy bars.

2

A man must work his life away for wages.
A woman has to work for half that pay.
Then she must go on home and tend the family.
That's something that she must do every day.

Chorus

I'm proud to be a revolutionary,
Proud to fight for people to be free.
I'm proud to live and work among the people,
Not like the fat cats, they're the enemy.
(Change "fat cats" to: 2. bosses
4. generals

3

Young people go to schools, they're just like prison,
Where every day they're told a pack of lies--
How the Rockefeller rich have all made history
When we all know that it was you and I.

4

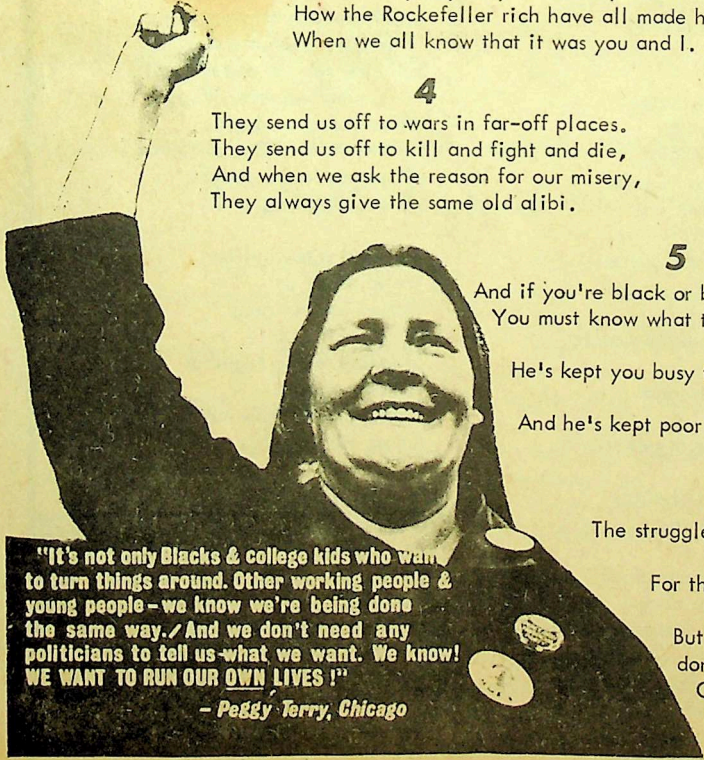
They send us off to wars in far-off places.
They send us off to kill and fight and die,
And when we ask the reason for our misery,
They always give the same old alibi.

5

And if you're black or brown or red or yellow
You must know what the man has done to
you--
He's kept you busy fighting with each
other
And he's kept poor whites fighting
all of you.

6

The struggle will be hard and it
might take long
For the people to defeat
our enemy,
But if things get hard,
don't you be discouraged
Cause we'll all be
fighting on
until we're free.



"It's not only Blacks & college kids who want
to turn things around. Other working people &
young people - we know we're being done
the same way. And we don't need any
politicians to tell us what we want. We know!
WE WANT TO RUN OUR OWN LIVES!"

- Peggy Terry, Chicago