

Come sister
melt the city
twist a rhythm
to the streets
the long winter
has withered
if you lit a spark
we'll all dance.

TAP DANCE

Tap Dance
215 West 92nd, No. 13J
New York, N.Y. 10025

TAP DANCE is the product of a small group of women who like many others at this time feel the urgent need to regroup, mobilize, and get in contact with as many sisters as possible to fight what is coming down on us.

We come from different experiences. We have been involved in a variety of women's activities, from wages for housework to self-help to housing struggles. We have come together out of the need for a feminist strategy for the 80's--a strategy able to defeat the Right wing attempt to erode the gains we have made and further our struggles.

We see the new political turn in the Government as extremely dangerous for us as well as for every sector of the working class. What Reaganomics is attempting is a major attack on our level of power, i.e., the institution of a "new social contract" which will dramatically reduce our standard of living, suffocate our political rights and impose a type of social life whose model is drawn straight from seventeenth century Puritanism.

The devastating cuts in social programs, the attack on affirmative action, abortion, homosexuality, busing, Title IX and minority

rights, the redefinition of family and school life along the lines of the most blatant patriarchalism aiming to shore up authority at every level, the renewed witch hunt against all forms of political dissension and disagreement, the elimination of many health and safety programs workers have fought for, the military build up and finally the continuous threat of war and nuclear holocaust--as these policies are enacted we will see an unprecedented repression and every moment of our lives dramatically changed. For many of us it will be impossible to survive economically and socially except at the price of endless work and of continuously hiding who we are. This is particularly true for us women. As it always happens, every time capital has tried to restore work discipline and implement a reorganization of work, we are the ones destined to bear the major cost. What is heralded as building a "strong family life" actually involves disciplining us to compensate with our work in the home for the falling wages, the cuts in social programs and to patch up as well the casualties the new policies will bring (e.g., the spread of cancer due to nuclear radiation).

In the face of this, it is clear that the present politics of the Women's Movement

are sorely inadequate at least as long as all energy continues to be focused on salvaging the ERA. This is like facing the rising flood water with a tea cup. It's also time to realize the bankruptcy of a strategy limited to traditional political channels--lobbying, petitioning, letter writing-- all tactics successful perhaps when thousands of women are already in the streets, but inadequate when our power to mobilize is still to be built. There are many signs today that we women are on the move. What is needed, however, is a feminist strategy addressing the needs of all women--poor, black and white, working at home or with a second job, with or without children, lesbian and straight, single, divorced, married or widowed, native or immigrant, legal or illegal.

Our aim in producing this bulletin is to contribute to the development of this strategy. In this issue we will focus on the Right's agenda for women. In our next, we will focus on our agenda. We welcome information from any women's groups around the country. We hope that you will respond to our ideas, contact us, send us materials, share with us experiences, suggestions and struggles.

Abortion, The Right to Life and the Women's Movement

Though abortion is becoming a rallying point for many feminists, much confusion still exists in the Women's Movement concerning the full impact of the anti-abortion crusade. One also has the impression that the campaign of psychological intimidation carried on by the pro-life forces is having its effect. For months we have been bombarded with warnings that abortion is the most "emotional", most "divisive" issue this country faces-- meaning: we better be careful before taking a pro-choice stand, for the Right is ready to do anything to win this battle. More insidious is the charge that defending abortion is a sign of callousness, irresponsibility, and "narcissism". Pro-choice women, presumably, care only for themselves, have no sense of "social responsibility", no thought for the consequences of their actions and worse yet, no thought for their children. The problem, however, is not Right wing rhetoric (even when paraded in "progressive" clothes), but the fact that many feminists seem to take these charges at face value, thus accepting the battleground and weapons chosen by our enemies. It is common, e.g., to read in pro-choice literature that abortion is an ethical issue, a highly personal matter that can be decided only in the privacy of our consciousness. There is also a tendency to show our "moral credentials": reassuring ourselves that feminism is not "a call for selfishness/individualism" and that feminists are equally concerned with "building strong bonds", "solid commitments" among people, if not a strong family life.

For some sisters this tendency comes from their need to dialogue with their left-wing brothers, many of whom are either "confused" on the matter or have taken an anti-abortion position, thus aligning themselves with the Right and the State. For others it is part of a general breast-beating on the "failure of the Women's Movement to address questions of motherhood, family and sex". However, this is rarely accompanied by an alternative strategy. The result is that we are often cornered in a *defensive position* that can only work to the advantage of the pro-life forces. To accept that abortion is a moral issue, a question of "values" can only contribute to the *depoliticization* of our struggle.

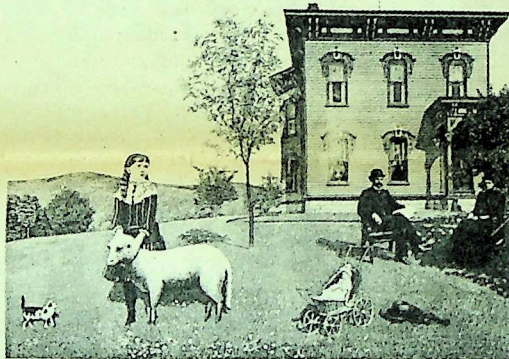
It, furthermore, gives legitimacy to the idea that the Right-wing is motivated by "humanitarian concerns"--the "defense of life in its most vulnerable form", its "weakest link", as Senator John East has put it. In reality, abortion is no less political than any other question concerning the conditions of our life and work and can only be fought in a political context, on the same footing with affirmative action, welfare rights, safety conditions in the workplace, wages for housework, gay rights and so forth. To take seriously the Moral Majority's claim that *they* are the true paladins of life is to close our eyes to the fact that the same people who tremble over the life of the fertilised egg, wholeheartedly support Reagan's genocidal policies in El Salvador and other areas of the world; defend capital punishment and nuclear build-up and have, for years, campaigned for the present cuts in social spending--cuts that will make it impossible for millions of children to survive. Just on this ground it is clear that "life" is the least concern of the pro-life forces and that far more than "moral consciousness" is at stake.

Despite the appearance that abortion is fought as a single issue by the Right, its elimination is part of a far-reaching pol-

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itical program that will have devastating consequences for workers in this country. As many feminists have pointed out: the anti-abortion crusade cannot be separated from the Family program of the Reagan Administration, as expressed by the Family Protection Act (FPA). In the name of "strengthening the family" and restoring America to its traditional values" FPA wants to legislate a set of provisions that would be applauded by the Ayatollah Khomeini, but would destroy many gains women have made in the 60's and 70's. FPA proposes:

- to deny *all* federal funds (Social Security, student loans, welfare, veteran benefits) to any individual or organization presenting homosexuality as an acceptable life style;
 - affirms the right of localities to "prohibit or limit the intermingling of the sexes in any sport or school-related activity";
 - changes the definition of child abuse to allow for corporal punishment;
 - denies federal funding to agencies or programs providing contraceptive, venereal disease treatment or abortion counseling to minors without notifying their parents;
 - prohibits withholding federal funding as a means to enforce Title IX that forbids sex discrimination.
- In return, it would give \$1000 baby bonus in the year that the couple has or adopts a child and a tax break for childcare expenses incurred while the tax payer is doing volunteer work.



FPA speaks for itself. Yet, even the Family Protection Act does not tell the whole story and the motives that inspire the repeal of abortion. Behind this "moral issue" lies a deep worry on the side of business with many labor problems--beginning with the *quality and quantity of the labor force*--which the pro-life forces are determined to solve. First and foremost, *the shortage of future young workers*. The steady decline of the birth rate in the 70's is a central concern for business and the Government. Less children means fewer future workers, i.e., less competition for jobs and thereby higher wages. Less children means an older work-force, i.e., a population of workers that is more skilled, more demanding, less flexible (less ready to move from place to place and from job to job), all in all a more *expensive* work-force. Add the concern with increased Social Security spending and the need for cannon fodder for a possible war and one can see why the present administration's so eager to force women to reproduce on a larger scale.

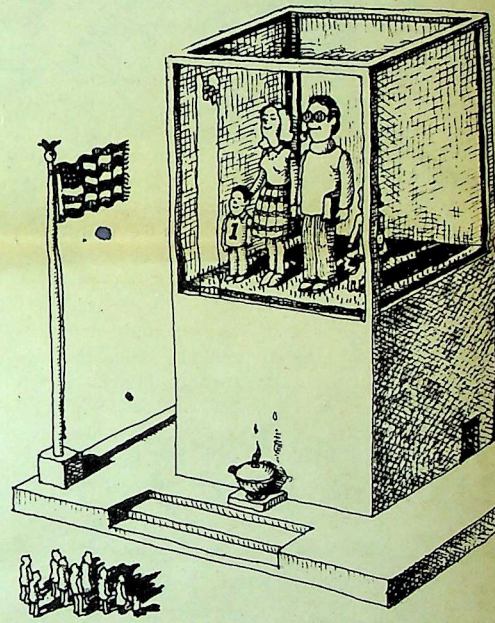
To be sure, the "need" for more workers is nowhere matched by any plan to produce more jobs. On the contrary, present investments point to the development of capital intensive industry where the need for labor is dramatically reduced. What will increase, instead, is the competition for jobs--a situation of endemic unemployment and underemployment (the "old time medicine" as business journals like to call it) that will teach people to lower their demands. At the

same time, increasing the number of future young workers is also supposed to solve the thorny problem of "Who will do the dirty work tomorrow?" (the title of an article in *Fortune*, January 1974).

For a long time the "business community" has been worried that not enough people today are willing to do menial work. This is what most of the children they want us to produce are destined to: swelling the ranks (and casualties) of a future army and the ranks of all those who, in the words of *Fortune*:

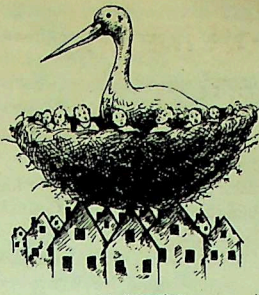
"In the computer age many will still earn wages by pushing brooms, shoveling dirt, and performing thousands of other menial tasks in ways that have not changed much in centuries."
Of these, of course, the more the better.

Business, however, is not just concerned with the "quantity" but equally important to them is the "quality" of "their" workers. The question is not only how many children should be produced, but *who should be allowed to reproduce*. It is feared that if the present trend continues the work-force will be increasingly made up of hispanic immigrants, women and blacks. True, immigrant workers, particularly when undocumented, can be blackmailed into the lowest wages by the fear of deportation. But what about the future generations who presumably will have more power than their parents? Out of this preoccupation, as early as 1974, economists have been claiming that the U.S. should "move towards a state of self-sufficiency in



dirty work." The *Fortune* article continues: "To rely on increasing numbers of immigrant to perform menial jobs...is to put off true long-range solutions to the problem. Sooner or later every mature nation intent upon keeping its cultural identity will have to figure out a way to get its work done with its own native born." As for blacks the experience of the 60's and 70's has shown that they are not very eager to do the dirty work for white society and that their confinement to the lowest paid, most hard and unsafe jobs is bought only at the price of continuous social explosions. Women, in turn, by massively entering the paid labor force have increasingly refused to work as unwaged workers in the home. What concerns the Right, in fact, is not so much that women "go to work", but rather that by working for a wage they undermine their traditional function in this society as unpaid slaves in the home, providing with their free labor the support system of the production process: the meals, the clean clothes, the sex and good words that keep the men going back to work.

From this point of view the anti-abortion campaign kills many birds with one stone: (a) it forces *some* women to increase their reproduction of future workers; (b) it forces *others*--those for whom having a child will be an economic impossibility--to resort to sterilization; (c) it sends many women back to "their place" in the home, where they will fulfill their "natural destiny" as wives and mothers (with perhaps a little "home work" on the side that will save the corporations the cost of a full wage).



Pro-life is Pro-white, Anti-woman Life.

Contrary to the claim of pro-life forces that *they* are defending the right of the poor to reproduce, every step the Right is taking is a proof to the contrary. Recently, some pro-life groups have attempted to whitewash their politics by raising their voices against sterilization (CARASA NEWS, June 1981) which is the only 90% funded Government program and in the 70's has increased by 300%. Sterilization, however, does not simply occur when a woman has her tubes tied. If you do not have the money, the time, the social relations necessary to raise a child, which is the case for millions of women, particularly (but not exclusively) black and hispanic--you are in fact sterilized. From this point of view the cuts the Right is imposing guarantee that reproduction will be indeed very "selective". In the absence of food stamps, medicaid, welfare, etc. no woman will be able to have a child unless she has behind herself a solid male paycheck.

The Pro-lifers, in fact, are concerned with life only as long as it stays in the womb. They pour crocodile tears on the fertilized egg but as soon as the unsuspecting fetus leaves the uterus his/her life strings are cut and any means to his/her survival are snatched away. No more WIC food for the baby, no more welfare, school lunches, free milk, no more daycare centers, no more child abuse programs. The Right's care for children spans from conception to birth. As a CARASA woman put it, as soon as the child is born he/she will be on their own. Women, then, will be forced to choose either not to have children or depend on a man to support them. *For those who cannot or do not want to depend on a man, the "choice" will be simply sterilization.*

The dream of a lily white society is at the center of the anti-abortion campaign, though the path the pro-lifers advocate is not the direct physical violence of the KKK but economic sanctions that will make it impossible for black and minority women to reproduce.

At the same time, eliminating abortion is a way of guaranteeing that women will be home-bound, more controlled and disciplined by husbands and fathers and thus be inclined to produce more disciplined children. Denying us abortion is not just a question of denying women's right to a free sexuality or denying our right to use "sex for pleasure". Behind the coat of Puritanism, as always in the history of this country, lies a *particular work discipline aimed at intensifying our work in the home* and thereby imposing the same ability to sacrifice on the children we raise. This is what is involved in the charge that we are "selfish" and put our interest first. Our crime is that in attempting to make a better life for ourselves we have also raised the expectations of our children, with the result that the present generations are not willing to be all obedient workers ready to give their life to the company but want to have real choices in their life and, first of all, the choice of a life dictated by their needs rather than the needs of profit and production.

The mistake of the Women's Movement, however, is not that it has demanded too much, but rather that it has not *demanded enough*. Its main mistake has been to assume that independence from man and control over our body could be won only through a "right to work" strategy, focusing on "getting a job" as the ultimate road to women's liberation. Thus questions of housework, and childrearing have been largely ignored on the premise that (a) housework would somehow disappear when women would "go to work", (b) the problem of childrearing would be solved by obtaining day care centers for the "working woman".

In this context, abortion was upheld as by itself reproductive freedom: freedom from reproduction so that we could be gainfully employed in the much glorified world of production. One had almost the impression that having children was something "backward", unfit for the "modern", "emancipated" woman, if not ecologically unsound. That many women may not want to face the burden of a double shift or be forced to forfeit motherhood to hold and get a job is something the Women's Movement rarely addressed. For example, any attempt to gain wages for housework was branded as reactionary (institutionalizing women in the home) and the heavy cuts in welfare benefits passed in the 70's were never fought as a key feminist issue. The experience of the 70's, however, has shown the limits of this strategy. We have learnt that having a job is not liberation (see the dismal poverty of female-headed families) and we have often obtained a paycheck only at the price of virtual sterilization.

The case of the women in the Cyanamide factory in Virginia who had to submit to sterilization to keep their job is symbolic of what has been happening to a lot of women in this country.

It is time the Women's Movement learns from these past mistakes. If we are serious in our struggle for women's rights and self-determination, we cannot dissociate the struggle for abortion from the struggle to obtain the means whereby we can have the children we want, and under the conditions we want. This means that we cannot demand abortion without struggling at the same time for the *time and money* to raise our children--money from the Government, given not under the form of a "baby bonus" paid once and for all (or a tax break to the wage earner), but under the form of a wage or welfare benefit directly in the hands of the woman (or man) who raises the child. Women will then be able to decide whether or not they want to have a child and whether or not they want to take a paying job, rather than being forced by economic necessity either into sterilization or into a double or triple shift.

Unless we take this course the Women's Movement will fail to gain the support of many women--primarily blacks and minority--for whom feeding and clothing their children as well as the continuous threat of sterilization are life and death questions. Moreover, we will be vulnerable to the charge that in demanding abortion we assist the Government in its genocidal plans against black and poor people. This accusation has been repeatedly moved

against the Women's Movement in the 70's by certain sections of the Black Movement and is exploited today by some black leaders like Jesse Jackson who, on this basis, are taking an anti-abortion stand. It is also used by the pro-life forces who never fail to remind us that using poverty as an "excuse" for an abortion is a call to exterminate the poor. The fact, however, is that these charges will have a legitimate basis unless we make it clear that *abortion is only one side of choice.*

For reproductive choice to be a reality we must create the conditions whereby having children is not paid at the price of our lives, and this entails having money, time, space, social relations whereby bearing a child ceases to be the "jail sentence" it has been so far for many of us. Fighting for reproductive freedom on these terms may also open the eyes of many women who are presently flocking to the Right out of fear that abortion will free men from the responsibility for childcare and do not see yet any alternative to child-rearing except the poverty of female-headed families or dependence on a male wage. We must offer these women another alternative.

If choice means anything at all, women must be able to choose whether or not they want to live with a man, or by themselves or with other women and whether or not they want to have children. Any pro-choice program that demands less than that is bound to be as hypocritical as the pro-life claims of the Right and assist indirectly its eugenic policies towards more selective reproduction. We must add that to ensure our right to choose, it is not sufficient to push for a politics of coalition. What is needed instead is a new *feminist program* where *abortion is never dealt with as a single issue* but is fought instead in conjunction with other demands covering the entire spectrum of our reproductive needs. For while we must refuse to be baby machines, tools of reproduction, breeders for the State, we must also refuse to let the State choose who, among us, will be allowed to reproduce and who instead will be phased out of existence.



In the future, incredibly expensive technology could enable a few people to live for 200 years or more. Who will be chosen? And, who will choose?

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Hiroshima Mon Amour

American businessmen using Hiroshima to advertise nuclear power.

Scientists discussing how many would die in a nuclear meltdown or a nuclear bomb explosion.

Politicians reassuring us that limited nuclear war is a possibility and, indeed, a cheap one as only 20 million people would die.

For months now, in a most conspicuous way, Americans have been reminded that death on a massive scale is on the agenda. The assumption of "death for the people" is so pervasive that our ruling class is already busy with the nitty-gritty of manufacturing corpses: how many cancers per rem; how many bodies will suffer irremediable burns; will the medical system be up to the occasion; and finally, should we envy the immediate casualties as we suffer the unspeakable anguish of a prolonged agony.

The landscape we are presented daily is so gruesome that one seemingly healthy reaction is to discard the whole scenario as a hoax. "They would never do that," we reassure ourselves, chasing the uncomfortable memory of a time, not too far gone when the unthinkable occurred. Perhaps. *Surely there is no inevitability to capital's intimations of death.*

However, if we are to avert a new Auschwitz in our own backyard, it won't be by turning our eyes away from the present death scare as just one more trick to keep us in line. The death politics of the new Reagan Administration are not another case of business as usual. They express a new strategy whose success depends on the willful elimination of many "undesirable", "obsolete" elements in this society, as well as the massive devaluation of the remaining working class.

This process has already started. The cuts the Reagan Administration has implemented as well as the elimination of any obstacle to the most ruthless forms of exploitation (black lung programs dropped, curtailment of OSHA, environmental deregulation, etc.) are already condemning us to an informal death penalty--more difficult to combat because more numerous are the faces under which it is masked: more carbon monoxide in our blood, a green light for black/brown lung disease, radioactivity in our rivers, more accidents on the highways, a boost to the fat-starch content of our food, and the acceleration of our wear and tear as we are forced to work harder, worry about the continuous deterioration of our health, and keep working until we drop dead. To take the death politics of the Reagan Administration seriously then is not to close our eyes to the *real* problems or to revert to political science fiction; rather it is to recognize the nature and extent of capital's plans and measure accordingly the nature and extent of our response.

The devaluation of the American working class

The reality of genocide has a long tradition in the history of capitalism (including its Russian variety). From slavery to the Nazi concentration camps, from the Stalinist pogroms to the millions killed in World Wars I and II, the large scale destruction of "human capital" has been a constant corollary

of capitalist development. Bourgeois history has worked hard to cover up these massive exterminations of human life as "acts of insanity", sudden "collapses into barbarism", or "historical tragedies" for which nobody is to blame except our perverted psyche that, from time to time, forgets its noble goals and unleashes its destructive tendencies into virtual dreams of total annihilation.

These convenient fairy tales hide a much less palatable truth: the extermination of millions of lives has been, and continues to be, a viable (though last resort) option in capital's quest for economic efficiency. It is an extension of the cost-benefit calculations whereby, on a day to day basis, business decides that it is more economical to allow a few cancers to grow than to install safety measures in a plant and our health and life span are continuously balanced against the returns in dollars and cents. In the same way that capital is willing to shut down, and even destroy, its own factories to restore certain profit rates or launch a new development cycle, it is also willing to destroy its human capital when this has become economically obsolete or when labor's demands can no longer be contained.

Genocide represents in the history of capital a massive devaluation of labor obtained at the price of a large scale destruction of the working class. World War II is a good case in point. The discipline of labor that capital failed to achieve during the Great Depression was accomplished through the millions of deaths on the battlefields and in the concentration camps and the discipline of many years of war imposed on the population on a global scale. The results can be read in the European and American economic booms of the post-war period. The war produced a well-trained, well-disciplined army of laborers ready to work for a cheap wage after the constant fear of death, life in the trenches, air raids, and rationings had dramatically lowered their expectations. In this context the concentration camps were a reminder of what our fate could be (or could have been) if we did not keep in line--the most visible manifestation of the low value capital places on our lives. Hiroshima and Nagasaki further insured that the message would not be lost.

World War II bought international capital twenty years of labor peace and prosperity. In the U.S., where the war was more removed and never a day to day confrontation with death as in Europe, the cold war atmosphere of the 40's and 50's--the threat of the atomic bomb, the shelters, the drills--continued the climate.

The trouble began when a generation appeared for whom the war was a pale memory, something told and retold by parents at Sunday movies, filtered through the glorious image of heroic pilots. The history of the 60's and 70's is too well-known to be repeated. Suffice it to say that, at least since the Nixon administration, the devaluation of the working class has been on the agenda as, in response to the growing demands of blacks, women, and youth, capital has thrown us into a permanent state of crisis.

History never repeats itself. Yet, the phase we live in has many similarities with the 30's and 40's. The period that opened up in 1974--the oil price hikes, high unemployment, dramatic cuts in our standard of living--attempted a rerun of the Depression. In fact, the analogy was continuously made, as the U.S. plunged into the most severe recession since the 30's--only to discover that a Depression was no longer possible because nobody would peacefully accept to be on a soup line. If the 70's have been our 30's, then the 80's promise to be a rerun of the 40's. The spectre of the Depression--Recession has given way to the spectre of

war; and perhaps it is no accident that Hiroshima is being reappropriated, not without some pride, by our well-meaning business community (see the *Wall Street Journal*, November 13, 1980).

Why the threat of a war?

A point that is usually ignored in discussions of Reagan's economic program is the sinister implications hidden within it. The plan appears quite simple: cut federal spending for social welfare, boost private investment, jobs will then be created and all will be well again. In the name of future prosperity, thousands are being laid off, benefits of all kinds are being curtailed or abolished, everybody is hurt--but, we are told, prosperity is just around the

Nuclear Pitch Employs Data On Hiroshima

By DAVID J. BLUM

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

CHICAGO--If you're afraid of radiation from nuclear power plants, Commonwealth Edison Co. says not to worry. Radiation didn't hurt most of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the utility argues, and it's not going to hurt you.

A new advertising campaign by the giant utility talks of the connection between radiation coming from the atomic bombs in 1945 and the accident last year at Three Mile Island. Without mentioning that about 20,000 people died as a result of radiation from the Hiroshima blast, the ad discusses later studies of the survivors--those who got a lesser dose of radiation--and concludes:

"Radiation, like so many other things we live with, can be harmful. But treated with caution and common sense, it doesn't have to be frightening."

The advertisement appeared in several Illinois newspapers recently, raising some scientists' eyebrows. "I think it's unfortunate a company would raise the specter of a mushroom cloud when talking about a nuclear power plant," says Frank Congel, a section leader in the radiological assessment unit of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. "Except in terms of numbers, it's an irrelevant comparison."

The use of Hiroshima data to study radiation effects isn't new. Scientists accepting that data argue that less than one cancer death would result from the Three Mile Island exposures. Studies of the Hiroshima survivors figure that about 400 cancers resulted directly from the blast's effects.

But the ad highlights a fundamental question facing scientists who study radiation--whether the effects of the Hiroshima blast can be used as the statistical basis for judging future exposures to radiation.

Good Experiment

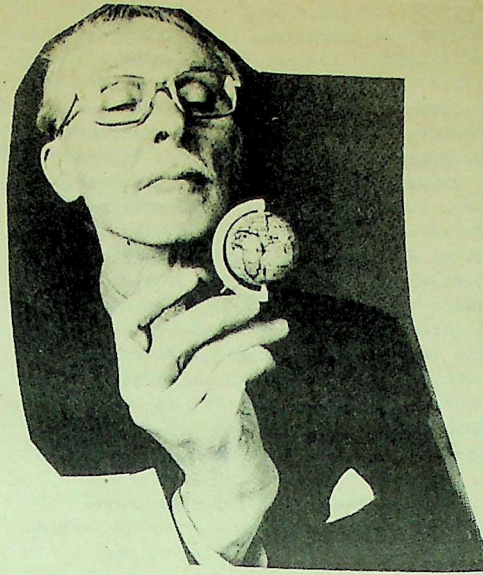
"I think it's a statistically valid comparison," says Bernard Cohen, who studies radiation effects at the University of Pittsburgh. "Hiroshima was the greatest scientific experiment you could have ever had, as much as I hate saying it."

corner. Some economists even flirt with the ideas of a new Keynesianism accomplished, however, not by federal social spending, but through the renowned "investment producing tax cut". There is a problem, however, that is rarely addressed: the investments for which so much capital has been gathered is being channelled into capital-intensive industry, which means that currently laid-off workers are, in most cases, destined to permanent unemployment or underemployment.

To put it simply: where are the famous jobs the Reagan administration is promising us going to be created? If we make exception for a considerable increase in the arms industry, we come to the conclusion: *nowhere*. The promised job expansion is a hoax meant to

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cushion the immediate impact of the cuts. No massive re-industrialization is on the agenda. If we add the massive cuts in social programs and the general fall in our standard of living, we see a shrinking industrial base, at least in the traditional sense of "industry". Less social programs trigger less demand/money for consumption, which in turn generates less food production, less entertainment, travel, social services, less socialized reproduction. Where, then, is the excessive labor force, where are the laid-off CETA, auto, cafeteria workers going to be absorbed?



No understanding of the gravity of the present situation is possible without starting from this basic reality: only a relatively small section of workers are going to be recycled into the new high-tech industries. For the rest of us the consequences are easy to deduce. We face a massive attack on our wage levels as ten of us will be competing for one job. This is coupled with the new family model appropriately designed by the New Moral Majority: everyone living at home chipping into the family income, laboriously gained by daddy and sonny working at a two-tier minimum wage, and preserved by mommy slaving in the home to save every penny. No more "loose life", no eighteen year olds setting up their own apartments; no more dinners out; and certainly no time off from work, except, perhaps, for Sunday sermon.

At the same time, a large section of the work force is being made expendable, so expendable that, not only is the Reagan administration clearly unconcerned with preserving its workers, but it is definitely intent on cutting our lives as short as possible. The message is, in fact, that the earlier we die the better, as the administration is obsessed with the nightmare of all the Social Security money they may have to pay us. The likely candidates for this not-so-hidden agenda are predictable: the elderly (who, after all, are not that productive any longer), blacks, minorities, rebellious youngsters, and all those workers who don't accept the "new deal".

In this context, the return of cold war rhetoric and the threat of nuclear death have an important function: they are the pillars of the massive devaluation of our lives. We are being prepared to internalize the fact that our lives are cheap and we should be grateful just to be alive. We are reminded of the power they have in their hands and their willingness to use it. Under the cold war rhetoric, we are told that American interests--the interests of the U.S. business "community"--justify any means, even wiping out a good part of the globe. This message is certainly for us more than for the Russians. The chances of a nuclear war with Russia are very slim (think of all the interests they have in common, even the conservative farm belt is anxious to do business with the USSR), but the local use of cold war reasoning is already evident. It is unlikely that we will face the one-day explosion; what is in store for us is rather the *diffuse death*, the *diffuse genocide* of more Love Canals, more Three Mile Islands, and the general deterioration of our living conditions.

We know from past experience that the Government is not above using us as guinea pigs in its search for more powerful instruments of social control. The plight of American vets used during the atomic bomb tests of the 50's, the victims of TMI, not to mention the victims of PBC, pesticides and other chemical agents are an example of the callousness and cynicism of our Government when the interests of business are at stake. Already for the benefit of the nuclear and chemical companies they have polluted our water supplies, have strewn our cities with chemical dumps and made us afraid of drinking a glass of milk or swimming in our rivers and seas. Yet what we have seen

so far may be a drop in the bucket compared with what the Reagan Administration has in store for us. Upholding the slogan that "life is risk" the Government is planning a spectrum measures that not only can kill the population of the globe, but will certainly take a toll in lives and diseases in our country. Trident submarines, MX systems, green light to nerve gas build up (abolished after a leak killed 5000 sheep in Utah), shortening of the licensing period for the construction of nuclear plants, abolition of environmental protections; it is hard not to conclude that a war is being waged against us. Death, however, is not just the slow poisoning from a chemical dump next door. The economic program of the Government is by itself a true war bulletin. It is calculated that as a result of the \$26 billion cuts asked by the Reagan Administration:

--700,000 pregnant women, infants and children will lose essential food supplements and health services now provided under WIC;

--One million persons will lose food stamps and one-third of all recipients will have their food budget dramatically reduced;

--millions of children will be denied Government subsidised meals, while the Special Milk Program will be cut by 75% (40,000 schools will lose their free lunch program);

--400,000 families with more than one million children will lose AFDC, while 258,000 families with more than 600,000 children will have their welfare benefits drastically reduced;

--one million workers will lose unemployment benefits, while everybody will be disqualified from unemployment if after 13 weeks of receiving benefits they will refuse to accept any job at the minimum wage;

--Medicaid expenditures will be cut by one-third, while 26 categorical programs will be merged into two block grants; this means that crucial health programs will be abolished in many states (drug and alcoholism programs, immunization, rat control, health benefits for immigrant workers, venereal disease, etc.);

--education expenditures will be cut by 25% and 50 educational programs will be consolidated into two block grants; again many programs are in danger of disappearing altogether (programs for the disadvantaged, emergency school aid, education for the handicapped, bilingual teaching, community library development), while the recipients will be forced to compete with each other (the poor against the handicapped and so forth);

--social services programs for families (mostly under Title XX) will be cut by 27% and a wide variety of programs will be consolidated into one block grant; this will pit childcare against services for the elderly and the handicapped and likely abolish many others (child welfare, child abuse protection, etc.);

--Legal Aid for the poor will be terminated, so that thousands of families

will be denied access to legal help;

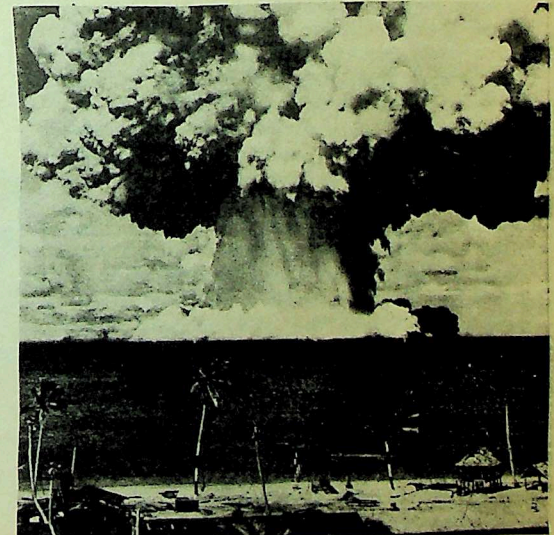
--Subsidised housing will be cut by 34%, thus boosting the rents of at least three million people, increasing evictions, overcrowding, health risks. Meanwhile, while claiming that this \$26 billion cuts in social-welfare programs is indispensable to save us from inflation, the Reagan Administration is planning to spend 1.5 trillion dollars over the next five years in military build up.

Much concern is voiced about crime these days and our political leaders have vouched that the war against crime is top on their priorities. But who is the true criminal here? Isn't even the most hardened criminal a mere dilettante when compared with the magnitude of the death plans the administration is presently concocting? Or should we assume that killing is to be condemned only when it is perpetrated on a minor scale and it becomes respectable when it involves millions of people and is not accomplished with a knife or a gun but by starvation, disease and chemical-nuclear pollution? Similarly the administration has called a holy crusade against terrorism. But aside from its warm support of terrorist regimes (South Africa, Argentina, El Salvador, to mention just a few) what about the terror spread on us on a day to day basis as we are deprived of the necessary resources to survive and the same resources are diverted into building a monstrous arsenal of lethal weapons?

What not to do?

A danger we are facing is the tendency in certain sections of the "Movement" to reassure us that nothing too dramatic is in the cards. As a recent lead article in the *Socialist Review* summed it up: we may face a few difficult years, but in the end the "reactionary forces" (the New Moral Majority, etc.) will be phased out and a "modernizing right" will prevail that will have to come to terms with the demands of the population in order to maintain its social support. Some people will suffer we are told. Moreover, everybody will face a "wage austerity", a deterioration of working conditions and tremendous threats to the environment. But ultimately room will be left for the Left to manoeuvre and advance its programs. From this point of view, the only strategy that is presented is "more of the same", even though it is vaguely recognized that this is what has opened us up to Reagan's attack.

This "rational" approach to the situation which cavalierly dismisses the casualties the Right will cause in its path to "modernization" has a long history



A deadly mushroom cloud erupts over Bikini after atomic bomb test in July 1946

Come sister
melt the city
twist a rhythm
to the streets

For years now, the Left has been unable to offer an alternative to the mounting attack on workers' demand in this country (except some breast beating about the 60's, the years of "exuberance" and "immaturity" from which we have presumably graduated to a more "common sense" approach). Worse yet, the Left has assisted in the erosion of our power by accepting a *perspective of scarcity* which has continuously been used to curtail the gains made in the wake of the Black Movement and the Women's Movement. Ad nauseum, wide sectors of the Left and the anti-nuclear movement have repeated (in terms not too different from those of the Ford and Carter administrations) that our resources are dwindling and that *we consume too much*, thus implicitly joining the Government sponsored austerity crusade.

What followed is that much energy has been devoted to devise "alternative energy sources", alternative ways of production, and little has been done to fight the cuts that in the name of austerity were forced on blacks, minorities, welfare women as well as large numbers of other workers. In this way, despite much lip service to the fight against racism and sexism the Left has succeeded in making itself irrelevant to the Black Movement and the Women's Movement, who could never identify with any self-imposed consumption-reduction for they already lived at the threshold of survival.

It is no surprise, then, that the Left has today little to offer in alternative to the Right and seems only capable of conducting a fight *at the margins of the cuts*. This is certainly one of the reasons why the Reagan Administration has been so bold and confident in its "high risk" approach to the cuts. The speed and the wide articulation of the cuts is partially due to a conviction in the Administration that the traditional strongholds of working class power (auto, docks, steel) have been decisively weakened by lay-offs, technological reorganization, and shutdowns. At the same time, they are "confronted" by a Movement that is neutralized by its own policies, unwilling to wage an adequate fight and deeply divided within itself. The anti-abortion stand of certain sections of the Left is the most obvious of these divisions, but by no means the only one. A deeper split is emerging between those sections of the Movement (mostly white and male) who feel they have a way out and others (predominately blacks and women) who cannot afford the luxury of looking five years ahead or speculating which sections of the Right will win in the long run, for they know that with the cuts their lives are immediately on the line.

In fact, while many white male leftists discuss the contradictions within the ruling class the hope for a true mobilization against the cuts and the formulation of a true alternative to the Right lays in the hands of women, blacks and youth. This is no accident. It is women, blacks and young people who are the immediate and long term target of the Reagan Administration. It is our struggle, our refusal to remain at the bottom that is blamed continuously as the source of all crises and it is to bring us "back to our place" that the present economic plans are being devised. It is from the bottom, moreover, that the truth of this society--including its present direction--is most clearly visible. From our privileged viewpoint it is clear that joining in the chorus of complaints over scarcity and overconsumption is suicide for our problem is and has been that we work too much and hardly get enough in return to survive.

We also know that this society has accumulated enormous resources of which not even an infinitesimal part is filtered down to us.

One trillion and a half in military spending: this sum is sufficient to clothe, feed, house and liberate from need the population of the U.S. for many years to come. With this in mind our demand cannot be for a little reduction in the cuts, or even simply for a continuation of the *status quo*. For us the only alternative is to refuse the entire package deal and *demand more*. A defensive position at this time is equivalent to a defeat. It is also a defeat not to assume that the needs and demands of those who are at the bottom of the social ladder are not the needs and demands of all of us. No white woman is going to make any gain as long as her black sisters bear the brunt of the cuts, and no white man can dream of reaping any benefit by selling out women and blacks as it has happened so many times in the history of this country.

The time has come for people in this country to make a choice. Can we support a Government who can only offer us more divisions, harder and longer years of work with little recompense for it, or are we going to demand the redistribution of the wealth we have produced and the control of our lives, not for some at the expense of others *but for all of us*? Are we willing to accept that billions of dollars and immense resources are taken away from us to buy us more violence and sacrifices or are we going to fight for a world in which *our needs become the rule of the land*? This is the choice for all of us.



The Women's Movement and the Draft

While all over the country women are mobilizing against U.S. intervention in El Salvador and military build-up, one would hope that "feminists" would finally give up attempting to gain equality with men in respect to the draft. This, however, has not been the case. The cult of equality *regardless of its content* has gone so far that some feminists feel discriminated against when deprived of *the right to die and kill*, on equal footing with men, in a possible war.

Thus, on June 25, as the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of barring women from the draft we had to watch the sad spectacle of alleged feminists protesting this decision as a "blow to women's rights". The most militant in this unsavory crusade have been the spokeswomen from NOW. "This is a major defeat for us--one after the other lamented--it shows women are still second-class citizens, for we are denied a fundamental right of citizenship: equality with men in all respects, including the defense of this country." Consequently, on the following day, the *New York Times* could display big headlines proclaiming "FEMINISTS DISMAYED" (*NYT*, June 26).

For many women in this country their first reaction must have been "I'm not a feminist." Only pure insanity or identification with the Government military plans can prevent us from seeing that *equality with men in the draft is equality in a defeat*. Most women know this, as the polls have continuously shown. We don't want to die nor kill for the glory and profit of U.S. corporate power (Exxon, GM, Texaco, IBM, Mobil, etc.) so that they can continue to exploit the rest of the world and compensate us for our pains with more Three Mile Islands, more Love Canals, more pesticides in our food, long lines at the welfare offices, more shit jobs that don't even pay the cost of going to work, more of our lives wasted.

Are NOW and other feminists blind to the simple truth that "defending this country" is to defend and consolidate the very power that oppresses us and the rest of the world?

Certainly, a little solidarity with the struggles women are making internationally, a little consistency with those speeches so easily uttered on International Women's Day, should have advised them of the obscenity of this proposition. But obviously, they don't see any contradiction between supporting women's and liberation struggles all over the world and joining the very army that will crush them.

In so cavalierly offering our lives to the Government they also forget that this is a fight we women have always made. For every woman who is proud that "her boy died for this country" there are always two other women who have cursed the Government or have hidden their kids in the basement when the army knocked at the door. It is we women who pay the highest price in a war--it is the woman who has raised her kids with endless years of work and sacrifices and *then* she is told that her kids belong to the Government, though the Government never claimed paternity when the children were sick or needed some money when there was none. Even when we did not make demonstrations, we women have always fought against war: *we have been the first, most massive, even if "unspoken", anti-war movement*.

Now besides seeing our children, brothers, husbands sacrificed in a cause we *cannot identify with*, we are told in the name of "equality" that we too should pick up the gun and fight for the "defense of this country". Far worse, since this time it is not Uncle Sam doing the calling but our "feminist sisters" for whom equality is all, irrespective of whether this means *MORE OR LESS POWER FOR WOMEN* and *FOR MEN AS WELL*. Let us not kid ourselves. As already happened when the Carter Administration proposed this "feminist deal", by fighting for women to join the draft we undermine not only our struggle but also the struggle of men; for we give an appearance of legitimacy to what is an attack on all of us. We cannot say we are against the draft for men but we would join it any way. If we are against the draft for men *under no condition should we accept it*--much less fight for it--*for women*. The draft is a proposition on which we cannot compromise. For a change we women have a right men have so far failed to win. For a change, with respect to the draft, *let us fight for men to be equal with us*.

Finally, we can thank NOW and other feminists who may take this position for building credibility and support for the forces of the Right by presenting feminists as real crazies. How many women hearing NOW moaning on TV about this "feminist defeat" will have concluded that if it comes to the "right to die", women's lib is not for them? "It is a matter of common sense," as Phyllis Schlafly has gleefully put it. Indeed, she has reason to rejoice. As long as some feminists espouse these positions we don't need a Right to have an anti-feminist backlash.

Come sister
melt the city
twist a rhythm

Talking Bitterness

During the 60's and 70's, women struggled in many arenas--as did other groups of the working class--to win equality, self-determination and to reduce our unwaged work. Real gains were made in the psycho-social, political and economic position of women in the U.S. Eroded over the last decade, these gains will be completely eliminated if the New Right is able to effect its national plans for retrenchment, repression and realignment of government priority in favor of the privileged few at the expense of the poor and working class. Women and minorities will be the first to suffer as evidenced by the initial attacks on welfare, unemployment, child care, health care, sexual and reproductive freedom.

Feminists must assume some responsibility for the flight to the right of many women. The "program for liberation," as it was articulated by such spokesgroups as NOW, Ms., Socialist-Feminists, CLUW, did not respond to the needs of many women who saw it as neither sympathetic to their socio-economic position nor liberating. The refusal to acknowledge (until recently) women's position in the home as unwaged workers led to the inability to see social welfare spending as a feminist issue--this inspite of the disproportionate numbers of women receiving various forms of welfare funding. Welfare struggles were not supported as attempts to win some money for our hidden work, to reduce that work by "socializing" it (day care, medicare, child nutrition programs, community health clinics, etc.), and to gain some measure of independence from a man. Proposing the second job as the only strategy for women's liberation (making women into "productive" workers) while ignoring our unwaged work in the home abandoned welfare mothers to "workfare" and working class women to the discipline of a husband.

Class and race division among women were reinforced by a political analysis that spoke almost exclusively to white middle class, well-educated, heterosexual women. By proposing work (i.e., a *career* outside the home) as

The opposition to the ERA by working class women, however, has consistently been misinterpreted by feminists as a conservative response. Yet, at best the ERA offers us the right to equal exploitation under the law. At worst, it can be used to take away from us crucial safe guards that are presumably unnecessary once women become equal to men. On this basis, the rhetoric of the ERA proponents has already been used against us in the virtual elimination of alimony, the denial of our right to maternity leave, the possibility of the draft (see article), the reduction of health and safety regulation to protect the physical (especially reproductive) well-being of women, and the recurrent threat to eliminate Social Security for female spouses who presumably don't need it in this golden age of female emancipation.

Clearly, no woman can be against equality with men. But if we are serious about equality we cannot content ourselves with a formal pronouncement by the Government. Nor can we assume that equality is exhausted with "equal work" and "equal pay for comparable work" as long as our work day includes all our work in the home and *this work remains unpaid*. To make the ERA the main and almost unique goal of the Women's Movement also assumes that feminists are not interested in real social change. Are men liberated? And, is working in a mine or on an assembly line what the feminist revolution is all about? We may take a mine job because it pays \$10 an hour but is the equality of black lung all we can hope for? Shouldn't the Women's Movement open the way to different alternatives for women and men as well?

The most damaging aspect of this feminist strategy has been the demobilization of the women's movement itself. *Freeing women's time from work* has never been on the banners of the Women's Movement, despite the fact that having some time away from work was the only condition to further our struggle. On the contrary we were told that only by entering the labor market could we affect real change. But as we took on jobs primarily out of necessity, and our work load increased our ability to struggle for our liberation declined. Meanwhile the Women's Movement splintered into single issue groups--abortion, day care, child and wife abuse, etc.--which obscured an integrated analysis of women's "right to life" and "right to choose".

The Abortion of the Left

It is clear that the pro-life, pro-family movement is central to the Right's attack on not only women but the entire working class. If this is the case, why is there so much debate about abortion within the Left? Can this be passed off as a simple case of retrenchment in front of the right-wing upsurge? In reality, this Left debate is consistent with positions taken by the Left throughout the 70's. The Left's ambiguous support for feminism is only revealed more clearly now as its straightforward opportunism makes abortion taboo.

On the one hand we have the Marxist-Leninists evading pro-abortion and, in general, "women's" issues because they alienate the (male) working class. Such analyses, even when they give lip service to the importance of the women's movement, relegate questions of sexuality and the family to the category of culture, and maintain the primacy of narrowly defined economic issues. While some have lent support against the Hyde amendment (because it targets the poor and was a "legitimate economic issue"), they never went on to support abortion *per se*.

More mainstream, social democrats also curtailed their concern with women's issues to rally mass support for a program of "economic equality". Both refuse to acknowledge feminist struggles around questions of child care and sexual radicalism as important on their own terms. They are the first issues to be dismissed as part of the general move to a more "manageable" form of politics. The "lifestyle" issues of the 60's and 70's which were in fact real critiques of not only capitalism, but also of the Left, are now redescribed as ineffective and "not serious enough" for the 80's. Furthermore the Right's move to define women as childbearers/homecarers and contain our sexual freedom are not confronted as part of a general policy meant to strengthen the control of the state over every detail of our lives.

As for those openly opposing abortion, we face the humanist cries from the peace and anti-nuclear movement. They say, "How can we be opposed to the destruction of our lives by nuclear contamination or by war and simultaneously favor abortion?"

This espousal of pro-life ideology by the anti-nukes exposes the shallow basis of this movement. The anti-nukes have relied on a narrow biological definition of life, which in its universal character forsakes all class distinctions and all questions of exploitation as if life was only at stake in the case of a bomb. In so doing, bolstered by the "close to nature" of the Earth Mother, they have reinforced the definition of women solely by their biological function. In this Left mirror-image of the pro-life movement, sanctioned by such well respected figures as Daniel Berrigan and Dick Gregory, "life" seems somewhat meaningless, for its defense is completely severed from the question of who controls our lives and how we actually live them.

As it was a strong and autonomous women's movement which has pushed the Left as far as it is presently, and obviously in its absence the Left is unable to see how central these issues are, it seems equally clear that part of any feminist strategy for the 80's must be emphatically rebuilding and



liberation, the movement ignored a century of struggle by women to reduce their workload and win some freedom from the double oppression of home and factory. The "demand for work" could hardly have appealed to many women who always did double duty out of necessity and know the lie that work-as-liberation is. The feminist program was also hostile and demeaning to full-time housewives and mothers as well as "displaced homemakers". Who in face of the continuous glorification of work by the Women's Movement were made to feel guilty backward, and out of pace with the times. Worse yet, they were made to feel that there was no space in the movement for them.

We must learn from our mistakes and begin now to develop strategies for mobilizing our defense. No struggle can be limited to one group of women. When one group is hit--welfare mothers, lesbians, third world women, older women--we are all hit. We are not going to defeat the Moral Majority without a program that speaks to all of us.

Come sister
melt the city

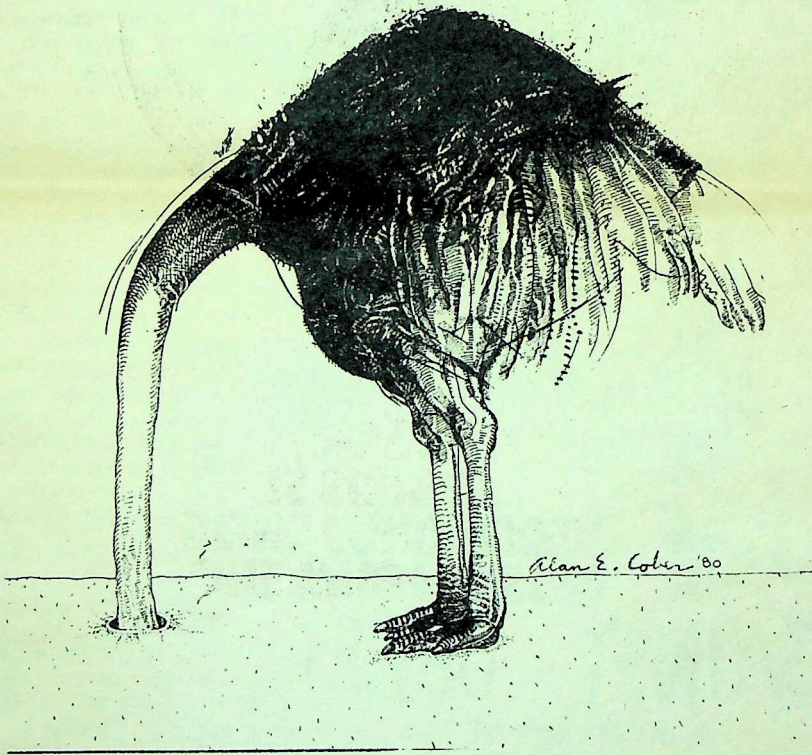
reconstituting an autonomous feminist movement. Thus, trying to work primarily within Left organizations, or in coalition with Left groups, labor organizations can only lead to a weakened feminism operating on narrow economic issues and corollary moralism surrounding the nuclear family and the fetus.

It would also be a mistake for us to devote our energies in enlightening our meandering "brothers". As our experience in the past has shown, trying to educate men is a lost cause-- unless we have the power to force them to realize that they can't afford to ignore our demands.



**SHE WHO FEARS
BEING CONQUERED
IS SURE OF
DEFEAT.**

Napoleon Bonaparte



come sister...

**Tap Dance
215 West 92nd, #13J
New York, N.Y. 10025**