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means, involving nothing pompous, grandiloquent or ceremonial, which can really emancipate women, really lessen and abolish their inequality with man as regards their role in social production and public life. These means are not new, they (like all the material prerequisites for socialism) were created by large-scale capitalism. But under capitalism they remained, first, a rarity, and secondly—which is particularly important—either profit-making enterprises, with all the worst features of speculation, profiteering, cheating and fraud, or "acrobatics of bourgeois charity," which the best workers rightly hated and despised (pp. 61-62).

You all know that even when women have full rights, they still remain downtrodden because all housework is left to them. In most cases, housework is the most unproductive, the most savage, and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the woman (p. 67).

We are setting up model institutions, dining-rooms and nurseries, that will emancipate women from housework. . . .

We say that the emancipation of the workers must be effected by the workers themselves, and in exactly the same way the emancipation of working women is a matter for the working women themselves. The working women must themselves see to it that such institutions are developed, and this activity will bring about a complete change in their position as compared with what it was under the old, capitalist society (p. 68).

From Leninism to
Liberation, Collected
by Edith Hoshino
Altbach, Schenkman
Publishing Co., Inc.
Cambridge, Mass. 1971

A Woman's Work is Never Done Peggy Morton

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There has been a great deal of debate in Women's Liberation over the past few years about the function of the family in capitalist society. Discussion has generally focused on the role of the family as the primary unit of socialization; the family is the basic unit in which authoritarian personality structures are formed, particularly the development of authoritarian relationships between parents and children and between men and women; the family is necessary to the maintenance of sexual repression in the sexuality is allowed legitimate expression only in marriage; through the family men can give vent to feelings of frustration, anger and resentment that are the products of alienated labor, and can act out the powerlessness which they experience in work by dominating the other members of the family; and within the family little girls learn what is expected of them and how they should act.

This theoretical work has provided important insights and understanding of the ways in which the family oppresses women, and the functions of the family in alleviating tensions created within the society. It has also forced the English-Canadian New Left to deal with the questions of cultural, sexual and psychological oppression. But we have neglected to deal with the family as an economic unit, and as a result the question of women and the family has been divorced from our understanding of advanced capitalism, and has failed to develop an understanding of the dialectic between the economic and psychological functions of the family.

One way the ruling class tries to control people is to mutilate their identities. But our task as organizers is not to tell women that they are oppressed but first to understand the ways in which people rebel every day against their oppression, to understand the mechanism by which this rebellion is co-opted and contained, how people are kept separate so that they see their

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oppression as individual and not sex and class oppression, and to provide revolutionary theory and practice which can give rise to new forms of struggle against that oppression. The greatest obstacle is not "false consciousness" but not knowing how to fight the family system, as for blacks 20 years ago the greatest obstacle was not knowing how to fight the racist system. Revolutionary movements are born out of the consciousness that people already have of their oppression and the transformation of individual understanding through collective action which produces a higher level of consciousness. The women's movement will grow out of this consciousness. It is our own chauvinism towards other women that keeps us from understanding how much women already understand about their own oppression.

A second problem with much of both the psychological and economic analysis of women's oppression is that it often has been developed out of the need to *justify* the importance of women's liberation rather than as a serious attempt to lay the basis for an understanding of the relationship of women to the capitalist system and a basis for strategy. Dixon mentions the "invisible participants" (movement men) in her article in *Radical America*, and she is right, but the problem goes even deeper. Even socialist women in women's liberation do not yet see analysis as a tool for the development of *strategy*, but only as a tool for increasing our individual and collective *understanding* of our oppression. This encourages a real liberalism among us about the way we look at the oppression of women, because lack of strategy means we don't have to act and so "analysis" serves instead to focus on our individual lives and the hope of changing them.

What Defines Women? or— Does Lady Astor oppress her garbageman?

Maggie Benston's paper *What Defines Women?* (published in *Monthly Review* as *The Political Economy of Women's Liberation*) is very important as one of the first arguments that we must analyze the role of women in the family from the point of view of production rather than consumption. Benston argues that because the work of women in the home is based not on commodity production, which in capitalist society is the only kind of production considered to be real work, but on the production of use-values without exchange-value,† that the work that women perform is not considered to be real and valid work, and that, therefore, women are defined as inferior to men.

† By "use-value" we mean things produced which people find a use for; by "exchange-value" we mean things that have a value in the marketplace.

She sees the family, and women's production role within the family, as the material basis for the oppression of women. This argument is significant not only because it rejects the idea that the family is primarily a unit of consumption, but because it challenges the view that the only *economic* basis to the oppression of women is the super-exploitation of women in the labor market. Those who argue that the economic oppression of women exists only within the workplace conclude that, therefore, women need not organize either separately or differently from men, and that there is no need for an autonomous women's movement. And even Marxist women's liberationists often envisage organizing working women in the same terms as if they were organizing men, using the same analysis and the same strategy.

Benston correctly situates the oppression of women in their role in the family and correctly argues that real contradictions exist for women as women, and not only on the basis of their class position. But there are very serious problems with the structure of Benston's argument. The chief problem is that it does not provide any basis on which strategy for a women's movement can be based. Does it mean to say that women have a unique relationship to the means of production and are therefore a class? We know that despite this common relationship to production in the home women are nevertheless objectively, socially, culturally and economically defined, and subjectively define themselves, through the class position of their husband or their family and/or the class position derived from work outside the home. We know that upper class women gain very real privileges from their class position which override the oppression which they experience as women.

Secondly, to define women through their work as unpaid household laborers does not help us to understand how to organize women. The logical conclusion would be that women should be organized around their relationship to production, i.e., organized around their work in the home. Yet, the isolation of housewives, which is an important aspect of their oppression, is also a great barrier to their organization. Historically, women have begun to organize not when they were tied to the home, but when they entered the labor market.

There are some areas where Benston's analysis does bear fruit. The demand to socialize the care of children through day-care centers must clearly be part of our strategy. Another possibility is the demand for housing which does not isolate people in family units but provides space for people to live in other arrangements, with facilities for day-care, areas for children to play, common areas for women who are forced to live a prison-like existence in

the "privacy" of their own homes, and communal eating facilities to relieve women of the task of preparing food daily for their families. But in a capitalist society, unless these demands are tied in with an attack on the private ownership of the means of production, the logical solution would be the capitalization, not the socialization of household labor. And probably women would be hired at low wages to perform these services. We need to integrate the demand for the socialization of household labor with the demand for the socialization of labor outside the home.

A third problem with Benston's analysis is that it does not provide the framework for understanding the changing nature of the family as an economic institution. Women do not play a peripheral role in the labor force, and the numbers of women working outside the home are growing very significantly. The sense in which women's role in the labor force is peripheral is that women's position in the family is used to facilitate the use of women as a reserve army of labor, to pay women half what men are paid, but women's work in the labor force is peripheral neither to the women's lives nor to the capitalist class.

One, Two, Three, Many Contradictions

We need an analysis of the family that will help us understand how and why these changes are taking place. I have been arguing that very little of the analysis of women's oppression that we have done in women's liberation has been strategic analysis and that the way we look at women's oppression reflects both the inner-directedness of the women's movement and our desire to provide to ourselves and to men that we are Marxists, that we have an economic analysis, and so on. We must now begin to examine the specific material and historical conditions out of which the present Women's Liberation Movement has arisen, and the contradictions which women experience that are increasing women's consciousness.

The essence of the position I want to argue in this paper is as follows: (a) as Benston argues, the primary material basis of women's oppression lies in the family system; (b) that particular structural changes are taking place in capitalism that affect and change the role of the family, are causing a crises in the family system and are raising the consciousness of women about their oppression; (c) that the key to understanding these changes is to see the family as a unit whose function is the *maintenance of and reproduction of labor power*, i.e., that the structure of the family is determined by the needs of the economic system, at any given time, for a certain *kind* of labor power; (d) that this conception of the family allows us to look at women's

public role (in the labor force) and private role (in the family) in an integrated way. The position of women in the labor force will be determined by the needs of the family system, i.e., what the family needs to do in order to carry out the functions required of it, and by the general needs of the economy for specific kinds of labor power. (e) Strategy must be based on an understanding of the contradictions within the family, contradictions which are created by the needs that the family has to fulfill, of the contradictions within the work-force (contradictions between the social nature of production and the capitalist organization of work), and the contradictions created by the dual roles of women — work in the home and work in capitalist production. This paper will try to deal with the contradictions within the family, and the contradictions between public and private roles. X

We are taught to view the family as a sacrosanct institution, as the foundation-stone of society and as constant and never-changing. But, as Juliet Mitchell says:

"Like woman herself, the family appears as a natural object, but it is actually a cultural creation. There is nothing inevitable about the form or role of the family any more than there is about the character or role of women. It is the function of ideology to present these given social types as aspects of nature herself."

Particularly in times of social upheaval, the family is extolled as the "greatest good" — whether it be the *Kinder, Kirche, Küche* of the Nazis or the togetherness preached in America. Because the family is so clearly important in maintaining social stability, many women's liberationists see the family as the "lynch-pin" of the capitalist system, and see their major task as the "destruction of the family." The problem with this view is that it tends to become totally idealist — a declaration of war on the *ideology* of the family system and not its substance. Instead, our task is to formulate strategy from an understanding of the contradictions in the family system. To do this we must understand how the family has developed in different stages of capitalism as the requirements for the maintenance and reproduction of labor power change. Through this approach we can examine the size of families encouraged, the socialization of children in the home and in educational institutions, whether women are working or at home, the role of the wife in giving psychological support and playing a "tension-management" role for her husband. In short, we can study the economic, social, ideological and psychological functions of the family in an integrated way.

By "reproduction of labor power" we mean simply that the task of the

family is to maintain the present work force and provide the next generation of workers, fitted with the skills and values necessary for them to be productive members of the work force. When we talk about the evolution of the family under capitalism, we have to understand both the changes in the family among the proletariat, and the changes that come from the increasing proletarianization of the labor force, and the urbanization of the society.

The pre-capitalist family functioned as an integrated economic unit; men, women and children took part in production — work in the fields, the cottage industry, and production for the use of the family. There was division of labor between men and women, but in essence all production took place within the family.

The Family in the First Stages of Capitalism

For those who became the urban proletariat, the function of the family in the reproduction of labor power was reduced to the most primitive level; instead of skilled artisans, the factories required only a steady flow of workers who required little or no training, learned what they needed on the job, and who were easily replaceable. Numbers were of primary importance, and the conditions under which people lived were irrelevant to the needs of capital. The labor of women and children took on new importance.

"On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, or private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.... The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed correlation of parent and child, become all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor." (*The Communist Manifesto*)

The need of capitalism in the stage of primitive accumulation of capital for a steady flow of cheap and unskilled labor primarily determined the structure of the family. In contrast, the prevailing ideology was used in turn to prepare the working class for the new drudgery. The repressive Victorian morality, brought to the working class through the Wesleyan sects, clamped down harder on the freedom of women, and perpetrated the ideology of hard work and discipline. The Victorian concept of the family was both a

reflection of the bourgeois family, based on private property, and an ideal representing a status to which the proletariat would like to rise.

In North America, conditions were initially the same as in pre-capitalist Europe. The settling of the continent required a family structure, initially even stronger in form than in Europe, given the absence of other developed institutions to meet social and psychological needs. Industrial workers did experience conditions similar to those of Europe in the early stages of capitalist development. But, as in Europe, the evolution of capitalism called for a restructuring of the family.

A similar pattern emerges for groups within advanced capitalism who serve as a reserve army of unskilled labor. During slavery, the black family was systematically broken up and destroyed, and in many ways has never been reinstated. Because black people have been used as a reserve army of unskilled labor, there has been no need for a family structure that would ensure that the children received education and skills. And direct oppression and repression (racism) eliminated the need for more subtle social control through the socialization process in the family. Often the women were the breadwinners because they were the only ones who could find jobs, and when there were no jobs the welfare system further discouraged the maintenance of the family by making it more difficult to get welfare if the man was around.

A new kind of worker was required as the production process became more complex — workers who could read instructions and blueprints, equipped with skills that required considerable training. As the need for skilled labor increases, the labor of women and children tends to be replaced by that of men; workers involve a capital investment and therefore it makes more sense to employ those who can work steadily throughout their lives.

At the same time, the growth of trade unions and the increasing revolutionary consciousness of the working class forced the ruling class to meet some of their demands or face full-scale revolt. The rise in material standards of living accommodated both the need to restrain militancy, to provide a standard of living that would allow for the education of children as skilled workers, and the need for consumers to provide new markets for the goods produced. The abolition of child labor and the introduction of compulsory education were compelled by the need for a skilled labor force.

Reproduction of Labor Power in Advanced Capitalism

The transformation in the costs of educating and training the new generation of workers is fundamental to the changes that have taken place and are

still taking place in the family structure. A fundamental law of capitalism is the need for constant expansion. Automation is required for the survival of the system. Workers are needed who are not only highly skilled but who have been trained to learn new skills. Profits depend more and more on the efficient organization of work and on the "self-discipline" of the workers rather than simply on speed-ups and other direct forms of increasing the exploitation of the workers. The family is therefore important both to shoulder the burden of the costs of education, and to carry out the repressive socialization of children. The family must raise children who have internalized hierarchical social relations, who will discipline themselves and work efficiently without constant supervision. The family also serves to repress the natural sexuality of its members — an essential process if people are to work at jobs which turn them into machines for eight or more hours a day. Women are responsible for implementing most of this socialization.

The pressure to stay in school and the growth in post-secondary education, which serves both to train skilled workers and managers and to absorb surplus manpower that cannot be employed, means that the earnings of married women begin to replace the earnings of unmarried children. In 1951, married women were only 8.9% of the labor force; by 1965, 18.5% of all workers were married women. In contrast, there has been a decline in the number of unmarried children in the labor force — from 20.7% of the labor force in 1951, to 17.2% in 1965. As young people tend more to move away from home when they start to earn money, fewer families have the income of older children to help make ends meet. And besides not having these extra wages, the family must often pay for tuition for the children's education.

The second paycheck often makes the difference between poverty and keeping your head above water. A study of data from the 1961 census found that only 43% of non-farm families had only one wage-earner. In 37% of all non-farm families, the wives had earned income, and in 20% income has been contributed by unmarried children. As the percentage of working women has risen from 23.7% in 1961 to 34.4% in 1968, the percentage of families having income from wives would now be still larger. Much of the "affluence" of working class, and even many "middle-class" families depends on the wages of women.

In this situation, women are indispensable to the maintenance of the family where the children are coerced into remaining at school, supported by their parents, or prone to unemployment if they have left school at an early age. They are, though, in another sense, superfluous, because the children whom they are supposed to mother are old enough to take care of themselves,

resentful of parental authority and rebelling against the system's control over their lives.

The pressure to finish high school and the growth of community colleges for the children of the working class make this picture increasingly real even for the working class family.

The schizophrenia of living through other people becomes even more pronounced as those who one is supposed to live through rebel and demand their autonomy. It is little wonder that the largest group of "speed freaks" are women in their 40's and 50's, or that one half of the hospital beds are taken up by victims of mental-emotional disease, many of these middle-aged women.

The changes in the kind of labor needed are also reflected in the decline in the size of families. For a rural family, children mean hands to do chores as well as mouths to feed, and since food and housing are not such a major cost on a farm as in the city, large families are not a liability but are valued for the sense of security and companionship they provide. In the early stages of capitalism, large numbers of workers were needed and so large families were not discouraged. Even though large families meant hardships for working class urban families, the old social patterns were slow to change.

Only 40% of the Canadian population was living in towns and cities in 1911; in 1961 almost 70% of the population was urban. The high cost of housing, food, clothing and education and the easier access to birth control have all produced a tendency for smaller families. And because urbanization is a quite recent phenomenon, the gap between cultural values and economic necessity means that the trend to smaller families is relatively new.

The demands that women are now making for birth control and abortion will eventually be met, because they do not threaten the basic needs of the system. But we should see this as our first victory not as proof that these demands are "reformist" and that we should not organize around them. And the general reluctance of the ruling class to grant these demands should also make us aware of their double-edged nature. On the one hand, the family itself could function better if birth control and abortion on demand were readily available to all classes. On the other hand, the existence of the family itself is threatened by the introduction of measures which will further legitimize and make possible sex outside of marriage. As women have fewer children, to define themselves primarily as mothers will make less and less sense, and a whole Pandora's box is opened. And part of the rationale for the exclusion of women from so many jobs requiring training disappears when women are capable of determining when they wish to have children.

The trend to smaller families is both a reflection of the family's need for the wages of women, and a further cause of the increases in the numbers of working women. Smaller families make it more possible for women to remain out of the labor market while the children are small and return when they are in school. This is precisely the pattern that is developing.

For young people themselves, the changes in the kind of labor power required also have an effect on the formation of families, how soon those who marry have children, and whether the young wives work. Prolonged schooling has reduced the percentage of young men in the labor force. In 1953, 51.7% of males 14-19 were in the labor force; in 1968, only 39.1%. Similarly, only 84.3% of males 20-24 were in the labor force in 1968 as compared to 92.9% in 1953.

For those who quit school, the picture is often bleak. Men 14-19 experience unemployment rates double the average unemployment for all men. And men 20-24 are also much more likely to be unemployed than older workers. For those who are working, there is an increasing gap between the wages paid to young workers and older workers. Young workers, male and female, are more concentrated in sectors in which employment is declining (especially where unskilled labor is being supplanted by increased automation), and in low-paid sectors like retail sales and clerical work.

Compare this situation with that after World War II which produced the baby boom. The baby boom was caused by a rise in the proportion of married women, not by women having larger numbers of children. One reason for the increases in the numbers of married women was that women were thrown out of the jobs that had fallen to them during the war, in sectors that were normally reserved for men. Just as important were the "opportunities" for young male workers. Low birth rates during the Depression meant that young workers were in short supply. The economy was in a period of boom and expansion due to the war, the growth of the permanent war economy, and the expansion of imperialism. Jobs were in good supply in heavy industry, and the average earnings for young workers were quite close to those of older workers. The demand for labor encouraged immigration on a large scale, and brought many rural youths to the cities. Many young people were alone in the city, uprooted from their communities and families, and in the absence of the kind of youth culture that now provides some alternatives to marriage, there were natural reasons why young people married and started their own families.

The 70's, in contrast, see a period of rising unemployment, wage freezes, coercion of youth to stay in school, and increasing distance between the

wages of younger and older workers. In 1961 constant dollars, the average wages of a male wage-earner 25-44 rose \$1481 between 1951 and 1961; while those of men 20-24 rose only \$520 and those 14-19 only \$20. So not only the cultural but the economic situation makes the stable family of the 50's an unlikely model for the 70's. Young people who do marry find that they desperately need the wages of the wife — 58% of women 20-24 were working in 1968, a rise of 10% from 1960, (and more were in school as well). In families where the "head" was under 25 (if there is a male in the family he is considered the head whether or not he supports the family) women contributed about one quarter of the total income for these families in 1965. Given the low wages paid to women, this indicates a high number of young working wives.

The trend to early marriage has abated, and fertility rates have hit an all-time low. More sexual freedom outside marriage, the availability of birth control, and the economic situation will probably mean that the trend to low birth rates that has been going on since 1959 will continue.

Women as Producers

It is clear that the way in which the family is evolving creates new contradictions that produce a higher level of consciousness of their oppression among women. But we cannot understand the contradictions within the family system unless we understand more clearly the other half of the coin — the situation of women in the labor force. For the same structural changes in capitalism which affect the family also affect women in their role as wage-laborers, and the contradictions between these two roles are an important source of the new consciousness.

Women's Liberationists have argued correctly that women are super-exploited in two senses: women who have jobs outside the home work not eight but sixteen hours a day for the capitalist, in the family, to maintain and reproduce the working class, and as members of the labor force; and women workers are paid only about half the wages that a man would receive. But we have treated this moralistically — to prove that women are more oppressed than men, rather than to analyze the structure of women's employment.

Questions about the importance of wage demands cannot be argued in the abstract. Do we want to organize women into the present male-dominated, sell-out unions (and in Canada into American-controlled unions)? Yet we know that no organizing in the work place can neglect the real needs of the people, which means, especially for women, the fact that meagre pay-checks

cannot provide the essentials of life. And the possibility of economic independence is a pre-condition for women conceiving of their own autonomy and independence.

But we must also understand the specifics of the importance of women in the labor force if we are to be clearer about the importance of unions and wage demands. Those sectors of industry which are at the highest stage of capitalist development (a very high degree of monopolization and automation, huge investments in plant and equipment, etc.) do not have an absolute need to control wages. Their interests are not just in keeping wages down, but in keeping the unions out and, therefore, maintaining stability, avoiding strikes, and so on. In addition, in the highly monopolized industries in the goods-producing sectors, high wages are passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices and do not affect profits.

In contrast, the type of industry where women are concentrated tends to be labor-intensive rather than capital-intensive, and wages form a relatively high percentage of total costs. Women constitute 75% of all clothing workers, 65% of workers in knitting mills, and 51% in leather products. (About 70% of all women workers are in the textile, clothing and related industries, in food and beverages, or in electrical apparatus and supplies.) Average weekly wages and salaries for clothing and related industries were, for September 1969, \$78 in clothing and knitting mills, and \$81 in leather products, as compared to \$139 in chemicals, and \$133 in non-metallic metal products, where women were 22% and 11% of the total workers, respectively. These are also the industries with the lowest rate of automation. The low wages of women in these sectors (and thus the lower wages of male workers as well) are not simply a matter of the capitalist making higher profits from employing women at low wages. Equal wages in this sector would not just mean less profit for the capitalist, but a transformation of the industry. (In textiles, it might force automation, or it might mean that the industry would not survive in competition with textile industry in the Third World.)

Moreover, within industries employing many women where average wages are high (like electrical products, where women are 31% of all workers, and average wages and salaries \$132 a week), women generally work at labor-intensive jobs like assembling and packaging where low wages are important in keeping costs down and profits up.

Most women are not employed in manufacturing, but in the service sector. The employment of large numbers of women in the industrialized service sector is part of a general tendency for employment to grow fastest in this sector. In Canada, as early as 1961, the percentage of trade and service workers in the labor force (40.6%) equalled that in direct production of goods.

Of projected growth to 1980, over 40% of the net increase in the labor force is expected to be women and, in fact, the female labor force has been growing faster than projected.

Not only is the service sector growing, but the jobs within it are becoming more industrialized and thus more amenable to organization. Growth in this sector means both the creation of (a) more "professional and technical" or "new working class" jobs, which are reasonably well-paid, potentially creative, which require a considerable degree of training and education (such as teachers, technicians, nurses, engineers), some of which are proletarian in character, and (b) a whole sector of jobs that require little training, are badly paid, where the work is uncreative and unrewarding (although sometimes potentially creative) and where working conditions are very bad — store clerks, hospital workers, waitresses, clerks in government bureaucracies, etc.

A growing number of these jobs are in the state sector. Because of increasing economic demands on the state and growing pressure on government finances, there is a sizeable and continuing gap between the wages of public and private employees, and a tendency toward increasing discontent and attempts at unionization among government workers. Large numbers of women work as public employees and can be expected to be affected by these developments.

It is clear then, that when we say that women are used as a "reserve army of labor" (as, for example, black people in the United States are also used as a reserve army of labor), we are not talking about a group of workers that are peripheral to the economy, but a group which is central to the maintenance of labor-intensive manufacturing, and service and state sectors where low wages are a priority. A few simple wage comparisons will indicate clearly the importance of wage differentials on the basis of sex.

Average earnings for full-year workers, 1961, DBS — categories where few or no women have been excluded:

	male	female
managerial	\$7920	\$3351
professional & technical	7602	4226
clerical	4713	3263
sales	5287	2077
service	4120	2099
production workers	5290	2756

Even in the professional and technical sphere, where wages are highest for women, the average wages are over \$1,000 a year less than those of male production workers and only in the service sector — a field where many

women are employed — do men make less than the average for women in the highest field.

The unionization of women workers, which is already beginning to take place in previously unionized sectors, will clearly be a blow to the stability of the capitalist system. The vast majority of women workers have jobs which are, by any sensible definition, "working-class." Only about 15% of all women workers are professionals, and about 85% of these are found in those professions already beginning to unionize — nurses and teachers. Very few women have managerial jobs, and the vast majority are wage-earners.

Sisters, Let's Get It Together

Clearly, women works are strategic, but we should not conclude that we can bring down the system only by making wage demands and beginning to work for the unionization of women workers, as a strategy for a mass movement. Our revolutionary potential lies in the fact that most women are both oppressed as women and exploited as workers, and our strategy must reflect this duality. The demands of women strike both at an institution which is central to the system — the family — and at sectors of the economy which are ill-provided to meet even traditional demands of the labor movement. Because organizers in the past have refused to organize women as women, women have been viewed as "unorganizable" because they have little time, work in sectors that are hard to recognize, and they move in and out of the labor force. For example, all the structural reasons that make the textile industry the most exploitative, also make it harder to organize there — the workers can easily be replaced, the low investment in plant and equipment mean that management can hold out longer against strikes, the plants are small, and so on. Similarly, many women in the service sector are hard to organize in the traditional way because they work in such small establishments — waitresses, store clerks, etc. A strategy of work-place organizing alone cannot overcome these problems, but as we develop an analysis of the oppression of women, we can turn these same factors into a basis for organizing and an integral part of our strategy.

I have argued that the importance of the family as an economic unit, the importance of the cheap labor supply that women provide mean that the system must act to retain the family system. The breakdown of the family, besides meaning that women will demand jobs that don't exist, will make the struggle for equal access to jobs, equal pay, day care, maternity leave, job security, etc. even more militant. At the present time, one family in ten has a woman as its sole supporter. Neither the state nor the sectors where women

work will easily be able to meet the needs of women who must support themselves and often their children.

Yet most people, especially the working class, will continue to hold onto the family as the only place where basic emotional needs for love, support and companionship can be met at all; because there are no alternatives, as things stand now, most women can't, and don't want to go it alone. If our cry is "destroy the family," the woman's movement will be contained within a small sector of professionals and younger women without families. The masses of women will not relate to Women's Liberation because it is not relating to their needs. What we must do, instead, is to begin to organize around demands which provide the pre-condition for autonomy for women — economic independence. This struggle will, in fact, heighten the contradictions within the family system.

This means that our task is not to focus on initiating struggles around basic needs of women that are essentially reformist. There is a fundamental difference between waging a battle to get day-care for all women, and a strategic perspective that looks to day-care organizing in terms of cadre-building. For example, welfare mothers, who have none of the security of the family, who in many ways have nothing to lose, and whose desperation and anger will increase as the state becomes more and more hard-pressed to provide welfare benefits that are even vaguely related to the amount needed to sustain life, *cannot* act politically as long as they are unable to get out of the house even for a few hours. Day-care organizing with welfare mothers is not only a matter of relating to the needs of these women, but makes it possible to build revolutionary cadre. In addition, many of the forms of communal living which young women in the movement are developing to meet their need for political and emotional support also speak to the needs of women who now live alone with small children. Many of the gaps that we see between our needs and those of other women exist only between our ears.

We must not fall prey to the chauvinism and arrogance that assumes that "working class" women are capable of being organized only around "economist issues" and that they have no consciousness of their oppression as women and no yearnings for freedom and independence. We must raise the level of every issue — providing birth control information for young women means we can talk about repressive sexuality and its functions in capitalist society. Day-care can be an exemplary form of communal care of children and other communal forms. The clear male domination of the present unions makes it easier to talk about rank and file caucuses (women's caucuses) or new unions to replace those controlled by male sell-out leadership. Abortion laws and the oppressive treatment of women in hospitals can be put in the

perspective of struggle for community control of the hospitals. Many women work not only for money but to escape the isolation of their homes, and because they want to have an identity based on what they *do*. Thus the lack of creative work is a real and bitter disappointment when they do take a job. We can talk about work under socialism, about the difference between work for the Cubans and the Vietnamese, who are working to build socialism, and work for the man in capitalist society.

But even with this perspective we can easily become reformist if we lose sight of our political goals. All too often we forget why we are organizing women; the purpose of building a mass movement is not to build a mass movement, but to make revolution. The Panthers feed hungry children and so do the Salvation Army; the difference is that the Panther "serve the people" programs exist to gain the trust of the people in order that they can wage armed struggle, because they know that there will always be hungry children until imperialism is smashed. When we run abortion counselling services or start day-care centers, there is no difference between us and liberal reformers unless the basis of these programs is to win the confidence of women that we *can* win, that we can destroy the monster that is sucking our blood. To often we see the question of winning people's trust as a process where they come to like and trust us not for what we are, not because we are socialists, but because we pretend to be something else.

Our task is to consciously build a revolutionary cadre among women. To do this we have to figure out which sectors of women are going to move fastest. In all revolutions most of the cadre have come from the youth. "Hip" women who are learning to live off the streets and already have some of the toughness and desire to fight that is so often lacking in the women's movement, young women in the high schools and community colleges, young typists and file clerks and waitresses, welfare mothers, women who are raising children alone will move fastest. The job of the revolutionary women's movement is to build a cadre within these groups.

It is wrong to think that our task is to get a job in an office, which leaves us tired and unable to do political work outside the office, and spend two or three years hiding our politics and trying to organize a union. To the extent that we will be able to talk to women in offices and factories, this will happen if we are doing things we can rap about. What might make sense is to work at temporary jobs where in two or three weeks in an office we can find the women who have the most consciousness, build relationships with these women, rap a lot of politics, introduce them to other women's liberationists and so on. These women might well want to organize in their office, and our task will be to try to raise the level of this organizing. And unions of the

traditional kind may not be the highest form of struggle possible: "working to rule" could almost shut down a bank, for example. Women who work in offices know hundreds of ways of gumming up the works. All power to the imagination!

The percentage of women aged 20-24 who are in the labor force is almost twice as high as in any other age group. And the post-war baby boom means that the percentage of young people in the society is very high. So the emphasis on young women when we are talking about work-place organizing is not an emphasis on a small minority of workers, but a significant and large sector.

It is not necessarily the most oppressed women who have the most potential for becoming revolutionaries. Young women are in many ways the least oppressed — they are not tied down for life to a family and husband and children, they have still some choices about how they are going to live. At the same time, the general proletarianization of youth means that we cannot be static about our understanding of oppression — increasingly there will be fewer and fewer choices available to us; conditions have forced us to go beyond the "existentialist" attitudes of the early sixties when we thought that making a commitment to be a revolutionary was an abstract moral decision. To become a revolutionary is to choose life over death, and our strength lies in this, that only by learning to fight this system can we become truly human.

Because objective conditions will force women to demand unions, day-care, equal pay, the right to control their own bodies, etc., we should not see our task as initiating and directing these struggles. We can give expression to the needs that women have and at the same time raise the level of these struggles through militant actions around some of these issues. But we cannot limit ourselves to responding to and organizing around only the spontaneous manifestations of women's consciousness of their oppression. We must become an exemplary force — a force that shows other women that we can fight, and that we intend to win. This means that we must take leadership not only in "women's organizing" but in anti-imperialist struggles as well.

The cutting edge which destroyed the possibility that the suffrage movement in the United States could become revolutionary was the aligning of the movement with racist Southern white women in order to win the vote. If we fail to see ourselves, in practice as well as theory, as part of a movement of all oppressed peoples, our movement will take the same road.