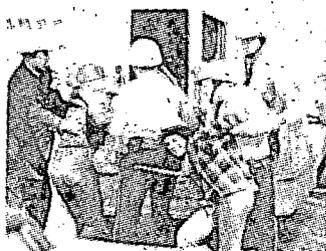


Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League  x-523

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The Logic of Petty-Bourgeois Moralism

Weather Underground Splits

Since at least last November rumors of bitter internal argument among the leadership collective of the Weather Underground Organization (WUO) have been in circulation, and on February 3 the bitterness exploded into public print in the Madison New Left paper *Take Over*:

"This is Bernardine Dohrn. I am making this tape to acknowledge, repudiate and denounce the counter-revolutionary politics and direction of the Weather Underground Organization.... We led the entire organization to abandon the principles of anti-imperialism, liquidated the Black nation and the leading role of national liberation struggles, and heightened our attacks on the women's movement. I repudiate and denounce the Central Committee of the WUO, myself included, who bear particular responsibility for the criminal consequences of having led the WUO into full-blown opportunism.

"...this organization refused to seek out or recruit revolutionary women fugitives. We characterized these women as anti-men, anti-communist, anti-Marxist-Leninist. Actually, the central committee feared their effect on women in the organization and was threatened by their criticisms of central committee leadership for male supremacy. We attacked and defeated a tentative proposal for a woman's underground, to carry out anti-imperialist and revolutionary feminist armed struggle. This is another example of using the solidarity relationships to keep control of the weapons—keeping them out of the hands of revolutionary women as well as national liberation movements.

"While denying support to Third World Liberation, to revolutionary armed struggle forces and to revolutionary women fugitives, we used resources and cadre's efforts to support opportunist and bourgeois men fugitives. The most glaring example of this is our support in the form of

time, money, cadres, of Abbie Hoffman, a relationship which produced media attention for us, through the articles in *New Times* and his TV program.

"...For seven years, I have upheld a politics which is male supremacist and opposed the struggle of women for liberation.

"...Why did we do this? I don't really know. We followed the classic path of white so-called revolutionaries who sell out the revolution."

Dohrn and other former Weather Undergrounders, now organized as the "Revolutionary Committee," analyze the WUO's "betrayals" as due to "white and male supremacist policies," demonstrated through two main issues: their economist and opportunist turn to the "white working class" and their tentative plans for resurfacing.

The importance of the split lies not in the size and strength of the WUO, which has always been vastly exaggerated and mythologized in the bourgeois press, but in the fact that it reveals, in a remarkably pure form, the fatal dilemma of American petty-bourgeois radicalism.

"Urban Guerrillas" Without a Following

The Weathermen uniquely attempted to carry to its logical conclusion the ideology of petty-bourgeois radicalism. They did not become orthodox Maoists, Stalinists or Trotskyists, or, in fact, Marxists of any variety, as did many other New Leftists, but rejected *all* the "bearded prophets" of the old left, refusing as a matter of principle to study the classics of socialist thought. Nor did they sink back into simple liberalism, as did Tom Hayden and many of the older SDSers, or become religious mystics, organic gardeners or "save the whales" fanatics, as did so many demoralized New Leftists (who undoubtedly feel more at home with their various gods, fruits and animals, which at least have the virtue of not being prone to turn on their supporters with ungrateful accusations of being white, middle-class or male chauvinist).

The Weathermen, like the rest of the petty-bourgeois New Left, accepted unquestioningly the rhetoric of militant nationalism, whether of the "third world" or the American black variety, including the dangerously complacent viewpoint that it is "racist" or at best "sectarian" to attempt to directly intervene in or criticize nationalist movements. But rather than becoming simply sideline cheerleaders for "other peoples' struggles," the Weathermen viewed themselves as a legitimate, independent force for revolution in their own right. Rejecting Marxism and deeply committed to the legitimacy of separatism, they turned to the white youth of America—to white "lumpen rage"—as their base.

At the same time they turned inward, moving into communes in poor, run-down neighborhoods,

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The Fire Next Time

The "Motor City Nine"—in 1969 they carried Weatherman tactics into the classroom of Macomb Community College, preaching feminism to the women students and attacking the men with the men with karate.

"smashing monogamy" through enforced sexual promiscuity and exhaustive "criticism/self-criticism" sessions seeking to root out "bourgeois individuality" and produce the ideal Weatherperson: a tough street fighter ready to "kick ass." Confident that the American empire was on its last legs and needed only a slight push to topple, they boasted of their "overwhelming strength" and really believed that a few bombings, slogans painted on campus walls and militant "trashings" would spark a mass upheaval of the oppressed.

But these self-styled "urban guerrillas" lacked the mass base in the peasantry which the "third world" guerrillas they idolized had. Their attempts to impress white street gangs got them only bloody noses. A mere handful of middle-class white ex-students, they tried to substitute sheer emotional energy and the rhetoric of "pure rage" for social weight. The Spartacist League alone on the left defended them against the bourgeois state, as we recognized their subjective commitment to overthrow the American imperialist state despite their mistaken political program and pathetically incompetent tactics.

Since 1970, student radicalism has dissipated as the Vietnam War ended, the draft was abolished and the Black Panthers split and disintegrated. Today a sullen torpor hangs over American society, despite the continuing intense privation and exploitation of the masses. In this context, it is not surprising that the Weather Underground has finally shattered. The various attempts by the WUO to break out of its self-imposed isolation, culminating in the debacle of the Chicago Hard Times Conference in the winter of 1975, illustrate the fatal limitations of its petty-bourgeois

worldview. The shopworn rhetoric of Dohrn's accusations of "white and male supremacy" are part and parcel of the guilt-tripping and self-contempt of white petty-bourgeois radicalism, driven to a frenzy by a reality that it cannot comprehend or seemingly affect.

While Dohrn sees her new-found feminist consciousness as a fundamental break from the Weather Underground, in fact she is simply perpetuating the same ideology which led to the formation of the Weather Underground in the first place. The pervasive belief that "only the oppressed can understand and act upon their own oppression" led to the splintering and diffusion of the New Left into separatist groups. The Weatherpeople chose white lumpen youth to identify with, and it didn't work. So now Dohrn has decided to take the splintering process a logical step further and identify with white radical women and thus rehabilitate herself by locating herself within her "proper place" in the schismatic, individualistic panoply of "the oppressed."

Smashing Monogamy

Although Dohrn today insists that the Weathermen were always "male supremacist," the truth is much more complex. The Weathermen felt a real compulsion to struggle against women's oppression in a purely personalist and subjective way and many of them ripped apart their psyches and personal lives trying to carry it out. The intense "criticism/self-criticism" sessions mandatory for all Weatherpeople focused on wiping out all traces of the members' former "bourgeois" life styles. They focused, in particular, on

continued on next page

Weather Underground...

"smashing monogamy," which was believed to be inherently sexually repressive, mainly for women, but for men as well, encouraging selfishness, protectiveness and the placing of another individual's needs above those of the collective.

Much of the expressed motivation for "smashing monogamy" was that women in couples were being held back by their male partners. And, in fact, in the early days of the collectives, many women separated from their partners did experience a sense of "liberation" and became much more vocal and aggressive. Coming out of the New-Left SDS, where male chauvinism was rampant and many women did, indeed,

do all the "shit work," the Weatherman life style had a temporarily exhilarating effect. But the price paid for this "liberation" was heavy. Many women and men became quivering nervous wrecks, forced into feeling themselves worthless for being unable to beat out of themselves their personal needs and desires and become pure "tools of the revolution."

In retrospect, it is pathetically easy to condemn the dangerous naiveté and idealism of the "smash monogamy" campaign. Sad tales of bitter disillusionment and personal tragedy have become all too common these days, as aging ex-Weatherpeople and other ex-radicals

International Women's Day Forums

CHICAGO

Women's Liberation Through Proletarian Revolution

Speaker: *TWEET CARTER*
Spartacist League-Central Committee

Saturday, March 5 at 7:30 p.m.
5615 S. Woodlawn
Phone: (312) 427-0003

CLEVELAND

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution

Speaker: *RENA DREISER*
Spartacist League

Tuesday, March 8 at 7:30 p.m.
KSU Student Center
Kent State U.
Phone: (216) 281-4781

DETROIT AND ANN ARBOR

Women and Revolution, 1917-1977

Speaker: *KAY BLANCHARD*
Women & Revolution Editorial Board
Spartacist League

Wednesday, March 2 at 12:30 p.m.
Wayne State University
Hilberry C; SCB

Wednesday, March 2 at 7:30 p.m.
U. of Michigan at Ann Arbor
Assembly Hall, Michigan Union
Phone: (313) 869-1551

NEW YORK

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Speaker: *ELIZABETH KENDALL*
Spartacus Youth League
National Committee

Thursday, March 10 at 7:45 p.m.
Hamilton Hall, Rm. 703
Columbia U.
Phone: (212) 925-5665



David Felton

Weatherwoman Susan Stern arrested for "Women's Action" during the "Days of Rage," 9 October 1969

recount the errors of their youthful ways while settling into comfortable middle-class academic and liberal milieus. Pointing out that the Weathermen's "New Nation" of revolutionary human beings was doomed to evaporate like the idealistic daydream it was seems almost to be beating a dead horse. But, as Dohrn's statements and the 1975 Hard Times Conference so graphically demonstrate, yesteryear's radicals have been unable, on their own, to draw the lessons of their failures.

One of the most embarrassing New-Left spectacles occurred at the Hard Times Conference, perfectly illustrating the self-hatred and guilt that finally drove many white radicals out of politics entirely. After several hours of vicious race-baiting of the entire assembly by the subreformist Republic of New Africa (whose demand was that Cosh County, Mississippi be immediately handed over to blacks), "Queen Mother" Moore, a black demagogue swathed in purple acetate took the floor for a rambling, religious, race-baiting monologue (including an off-key rendition of "America the Beautiful" with new words)—following which a young white male clad only in a pair of overalls leaped the stage to fervently embrace her, screaming "I love you Queen Mother Moore!"

Such self-abasement was a strong tendency in the Weatherman ideology, as well. Weathermen could

Free Susan Saxe Now!

In a Boston court appearance on January 17, Susan Saxe pled guilty to two counts of armed robbery and one count of manslaughter in connection with a Boston bank robbery. Her first trial had ended in a hung jury. Saxe and her lawyers were convinced that a second trial, scheduled for January 24, would have brought her a longer sentence or a string of costly trials.

Saxe had courageously refused upon her capture to collaborate with the government in disclosing information about radicals hunted by the bourgeois state from 1970 to the present. Upon pleading guilty on January 17, she again emphatically repeated:

"I remain absolutely firm in my stand of non-collaboration. I will never testify against anyone for any reason or give any information about the events of 1970 or about anyone I may have known during the time I was underground. Furthermore, I will never abandon my political commitments in return for favors from the state."

Susan Saxe will be imprisoned by the state for up to 12 years while others who gave information were given reduced sentences or allowed to go free.

Women and Revolution demands her immediate release. The labor movement and all socialists should demand the release of Susan Saxe from jail immediately for her resolute opposition to the brutal oppression of the bourgeois state and her determination not to cooperate by handing over the names of radicals.

FREE SUSAN SAXE NOW!



Susan Saxe

Stephen Sherman

accept themselves—as opposed to the rest of “racist honky dog” white America—only by literally trying to jump out of their own skins. The sick self-hatred encouraged at the Hard Times Conference was only the logical culmination of those attempts. Dohrn’s latest “self-criticism” is a continuation of the same individualistic policies which assert that sheer will power is sufficient to overthrow the state. If it didn’t work, it must have been because that will power wasn’t strong enough. But why not? Obviously, because the individuals were flawed—“racist,” “sexist” or whatever.

But will power alone cannot make a revolution. This ideology of petty-bourgeois terrorism has been proved futile over and over again. The Weathermen failed because of their individualistic petty-bourgeois approach to revolution, not because of lack of revolutionary will.

Radical feminist groupings are likely to be a haven for aging Weatherwomen, since they, too, cling to radical life-stylism, cloistered and rigid separatism and utopian daydreaming about the “power and beauty” of “pure women’s rage” which characterized the Weather Underground, as well as assuaging any guilty pangs about “leeching” off other peoples’ oppression, since for feminists their own oppression is the only legitimate area of concern.

White Guilt and Separatism

Unfortunately, the problems wracking American society are far deeper than the simple solutions which the New Leftists preached. The poisonous hatreds

generated by oppression cannot be dissolved by moralistic exhortations to “love one another,” by self-abasement or by feeding the (already hotly burning) fires of separatism. This oppression and the divisions which it creates within the working class are part and parcel of capitalist society and must be overcome not merely in the mind but in the real world. While racism and sexism, which retard the working class’s ability to wage a struggle against the bourgeoisie, must be opposed now, they will be rooted out only with the destruction of capitalism through proletarian revolution.

But the working class, the only force in society with the social power to smash capitalism, is by itself unable to transcend trade-union economism. Revolutionary consciousness must be brought to the workers by a party of professional revolutionists embodying a program of relentless class struggle. Infused with revolutionary class consciousness, the working class becomes the decisive force in history.

There are no short cuts. No amount of subjective revolutionary will or personal heroism can substitute for the class-conscious proletariat. Until and unless the radicals of the 1960’s can assimilate this fundamental premise of Leninism, they are doomed to wander futilely from one dead-end to another, ending like the Weather Underground, in either a pathetic display of impotence and cringing before the bourgeois state or locked into self-isolated and shrinking separatist circles, helpless before the increasing barbarism of decaying imperialist society. ■

International Women's Day, 1916:

A Greeting of the Paris Action Committee of Socialist Women for Peace and Against Chauvinism

We reprint below a statement of greetings from the Paris Action Committee of Socialist Women, an internationalist oppositional grouping within the French social democracy, on International Women's Day 1916. It is translated from the version published by the Gruppe Internationale, led by Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Leo Jogiches, in the illegal *Spartacusbriefe* (No. 17, 30 March 1916).

Following the definitive betrayal by the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) at the outbreak of World War I, when its entire Reichstag fraction (initially including even such revolutionists as Karl Liebknecht, who misguidedly yielded to considerations of party "discipline" and "unity") voted the war credits demanded by the government, the minority of revolutionary internationalists within the party were reduced to tiny, isolated propaganda groups without a party press or a party apparatus.

"Without an organization," said Lenin, "the masses are deprived of the sole expression of their will." The task, then, which the left radicals in the German social democracy faced was the creation of an organization that might begin to overcome the atomization of the working class. This task had to be accomplished under conditions of illegality and *against* the old party leadership which, in its fear of such attempts to reach the masses of disfranchised party members, had imposed a moratorium on all discussion and criticism of the "official" line and refused to hold the yearly party congresses required by SPD statutes.

Coinciding with the increasing class collaboration of the party executive from 1910 onward had been a cessation in the growth of party membership (indeed, membership would have dropped, for the first time ever, had it not been for disproportionate recruitment of women). The large masses of non-organized workers were unwilling to take risks for a party whose timidity had emboldened employers to ever harsher attacks on their living standards.

The SPD section for work among women led by Clara Zetkin constituted a laudable exception to the party's general drift to the right (see "Foundations of Communist Work Among Women: The German Social Democracy," *Women and Revolution* Nos. 8 and 9, Spring and Summer, 1975). While subscriptions to the central party press were falling off, Zetkin's *Die Gleichheit* ("Equality") was able to chalk up a large increase in subscribers; similarly, it was undoubtedly Zetkin's activating radicalism which in large measure

accounted for the growth in women members—an indication that the SPD's capitulation to national chauvinism was not an expression of the "will of the masses" but rather of the revisionist leadership's default of socialist principle.

But Zetkin was able to carry on her fight for socialist international working-class solidarity in the forum of *Die Gleichheit* only for a short time longer; with the collaboration of the Prussian authorities the party leadership was able to gain control, install a compliant editor and proceed to run the journal into the ground. Circulation fell off sharply, and soon *Die Gleichheit* was suspended.

The statement of the Paris Action Committee is of interest not merely for its uncompromising international proletarian solidarity in the midst of the chauvinist hysteria of the imperialist holocaust but also for the solutions it advances to the crisis of proletarian leadership.

Revolted by the quiescence and then by the outright betrayal of the party leadership and correctly viewing the masses as far more revolutionary than this petty-bourgeoisified leadership, many revolutionists overreacted by adopting a theory of mass revolutionary initiative exemplified by the "spontaneism" of Rosa Luxemburg. According to this view, the party was to be primarily an educational organization, providing leadership when the masses did decide on their own to initiate the final collapse of capitalism.

Such glorification of the masses' undirected revolutionary will led the social-democratic lefts to downplay the role of proletarian leadership. Thus, Luxemburg could write in 1910, when the SPD party executive was throttling mass demonstrations in favor of electoral reform: "If the mass of party comrades comprehends and truly feels this [the need for militant struggle], then our leaders will also be found at their posts. 'It's the masses that are decisive'."

Similarly, in the Paris Action Committee's statement, there is the belief that the old social democracy will somehow be revived and reconstituted "from below." A complementary error was the divided left social-democrats' neglect of the crucial need for organizational unity achieved on a firm programmatic basis.

But the theoretical/organizational failings of the social-democratic left opposition display a deeper inadequacy: a failure to come to grips with the changed conditions generated by the dominance of imperialism by the turn of the century. In foreign affairs imperialism

had meant an unprecedented aggressiveness of the major capitalist powers, posing an imminent threat of world imperialist conflict. Internally, the dominance of monopoly cartels interpenetrated with bank capital found reflection within the German Second Reich in a



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SPD leader Clara Zetkin

closing of ranks by the capitalist exploiters and an unparalleled intransigence toward the labor movement. Now, for example, lockouts were financed by a joint fund set up by all significant German industry. This hard-nosed stance of the German bourgeoisie vis-à-vis the social-democratic threat found expression politically in a strengthening of the reactionary bloc between industry and the East Elbian *junkers* with the aim of excluding the SPD from parliament. Within the labor movement itself, imperialism was accompanied by increasing divisions within the working class—not only industrialist-fostered “yellow unionism” but also what Lenin termed a “labor aristocracy” of relatively well-paid workers.

In the face of this challenge, the German social democracy remained tied to its old policy of verbal militancy and practical impotence. In particular, the entire left still clung to the Kautskyan theory of the “party of the entire class,” i.e., including both those backward, reactionary layers which had not even achieved trade-union consciousness and a labor aristocracy whose relatively elevated status made it prone to accept the status quo. Proponents of proletarian “unity” overlooked the fact that backward and non-revolutionary layers in the party would certainly generate spokesmen for their views within the party leadership.

While the Gruppe Internationale, which published this greeting, consisted of uncompromising revolutionists who were to found the German Communist Party, in failing to lend an organizational form to their views, they could offer no real solution to the social-democratic betrayal of the SPD leadership. It was only in the codification of Bolshevik practice in the early Comintern (particularly in the “Theses on Tactics” and “Guidelines on Organization”) that the division between maximum and minimum program, enunciated in the Erfurt Program of 1891, was to be transcended in the creation of a party of a new type, the Leninist vanguard party of the proletariat, in which a conscious

leadership of professional revolutionaries would be able to intervene decisively at crucial world-historical junctures precisely because it rested on an alert, class-conscious rank and file. Not Kautskyan “unity”-mongering, but such tactics as the united front simultaneously unmasked the old social-democratic misleaders and achieved working-class unity around the achievement of particular shared, strictly limited goals.

The statement of the Paris Action Committee of Socialist Women reprinted below is thus essentially a backward-looking document, harking back to the great traditions of the Second International and attempting to preserve a synthesis—“the great socialist family”—that had been first eroded and then dissolved by a triumphant imperialism. But the Second International had died in an act of definitive class-collaborationist betrayal. It was the Third International which was to continue the fight for international proletarian revolution through the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war directed against the international bourgeoisie under the leadership of an effective and disciplined international party of the working-class.

To socialist and proletarian women of all countries the Committee sends an expression of its warmest sympathy on International Women's Day. From the bottom of its heart it hopes and desires that a great many socialist women's organizations will succeed—more freely and openly than it has itself been able to—in calling upon women everywhere to express their dearest wish, the wish for an immediate end to the frightful struggle that for 19 months now has been inundating the world in blood, and in uttering in numerous mass meetings with a clear voice the word “peace” tabooed in our country.

We feel ourselves in solidarity with the socialist proletarians of the so-called enemy nations, with the proletarians whom we no more confuse with their exploiters than we would be confused with our own hangmen. We feel this solidarity the more strongly the more zealously our own, our true enemies, the capitalists, strive to incite us against foreign proletarians. Thus under the present conditions it is particularly to the socialist and proletarian women of countries at war with us and especially to the proletarian women of Germany that we offer the assurance of our most heartfelt, warmest sympathy, and above all to Clara Zetkin and all the women comrades who, heroically and inspired with glowing conviction, are struggling for socialism and for peace without counting the costs to themselves.

The Committee renews the vow of proletarian solidarity made by its members at the time of their entry into the great socialist family. To each and every one it sends fraternal greetings, sad, painful greetings, but greetings supported by the unshakable belief in the future of the proletariat.

For the Committee:
Louise Saumoneau, Paris

Scores of Protesters Slaughtered by Police

Murderous Sterilization Campaign in India

It has been almost a year since the government of India announced the start of a crash program to lower the annual birth rate from 35 per thousand population to 30 by 1979 and 25 by 1984. It rapidly became clear that the campaign would be carried out by the same police-state methods which have characterized the 18-month-long "state of emergency," i.e., suspension of civil liberties, declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (who is—take note, feminists—not a dominant, aggressive, power-hungry male but a "sister"). "No community or group can be allowed to stand in the way," warned the prime minister.

In May, just one month after the campaign was launched, police and para-military units opened fire on Muslims in the old city of Delhi who were protesting forced sterilization, killing up to 75 and wounding hundreds of others. (Many Muslims view the sterilization campaign as a genocidal attack directed at them by the Hindus.) In September police again opened fire on thousands of protesting villagers in predominantly Muslim Muzaffarnagar and Kairana, 75 miles from Delhi, killing up to 150 and throwing their bodies into a river. The villagers had been protesting the rounding up of married men for sterilization for the third time in a month.

There have been numerous rumors of more police killing and brutality as well (along with unconfirmed reports that some terrified villagers have murdered "family planning workers"). It is said that in Bombay and Delhi police have clubbed down men in the streets and inside the prisons to boost vasectomy quotas and that crowds of people, including teenagers, had been rounded up and driven into sterilization clinics. Muslim spokesmen in Muzaffarnagar said that rural workers had been taken off to vasectomy camps by the truckload. "The men were crying and women in the market were screaming in protest."

Only one Indian state—Maharashtra, the capital of which is Bombay—has actually enacted compulsory sterilization into law so far. The measure requires the sterilization of fathers up to age 55 within six months of the birth of their third living child and provides a two-year prison term for violators. If vasectomy would endanger the man's life, then his wife must be sterilized.

But Maharashtra has only formalized the general direction of the national campaign toward gunpoint sterilization of the poor. Other states and the federal government enforce sterilization through severe economic compulsion and police terror. Access to public services, such as government-financed housing and health care, requires the presentation of a sterilization certificate. In September the government ordered that "Every government servant shall insure that the number of his children does not exceed three." Implicit in the order is dismissal for any of the three million federal employees who disobey.

Moreover, government workers are issued quotas of "volunteers" that they must "motivate" for sterilization. Failure means demotion or suspension of pay. Many harried civil servants commission agents to fill their quotas for them. A research team from Nehru University discovered that these agents routinely dragooned unmarried youths, old men, beggars and celibates to meet the government target figures.

Indira Gandhi publicly expresses doubt on the advisability of enforced sterilization (while her gunmen shoot down protesters in the streets); but her 30-year-old son Sanjay Gandhi, who was nominated on February 15 by the ruling Congress Party to run for Parliament in the March elections, has no such reservations. As powerful head of the Youth Congress, the Congress Party's youth wing, Sanjay has made "family planning" the first and central point of his five-point program for reform. It is largely under his leadership that the sterilization campaign, utilizing "incentives and disincentives" and a ruthless insistence on statistical results, was able to report seven million sterilizations during the last year.



A.F.P.
Sanjay Gandhi—prime mover of the sterilization campaign

At one level, such massive social coercion is simply an index of how far the Gandhi regime has moved toward outright police-state rule. More fundamentally, however, it represents an admission by the Indian bourgeoisie that in nearly three decades of independence it has failed abysmally in its goal of emulating the pattern of economic development of its imperialist mentors.

Prior to 1947, the bourgeois nationalists of the Congress movement frequently disputed the notion that the country was poor as the result of "overpopulation." They pointed to the five-fold population increase in Great Britain during the 19th century which, far from overburdening productive resources, was a necessary condition for the giant strides of industrial development and burgeoning international trade during that period. Moreover, they argued, the neo-Malthusian theorists of overpopulation were attempting to alibi the culpability of British imperialism in pillaging the national wealth of India and retarding native capitalist development. In 1925 Mohandas Gandhi wrote in *Young India*:

"If it is contended that birth control is necessary for the nation because of over-population, I dispute the proposition. It has never been proved. In my opinion, by a proper land system, better agriculture and supplementary industry, this country is capable of supporting twice as many people as there are in it today."

—quoted in Gyan Chand, *India's Teeming Millions*

Gandhi did, however, support birth control through sexual abstinence as a praiseworthy ascetic practice and also to limit population "from the standpoint of the present political condition of the country, i.e., colonial subjugation."

In the fifties and early sixties, relatively nominal allocations for birth-control programs were included in the five-year plans as a subordinate device to maximize per capita economic growth. But the importance of birth control as a tool for capitalist state planning increased qualitatively from the third plan (1961-66) to the fourth (1969-74). In between was the disastrous grain harvest of 1965-66, which resulted in mass famine in the state of Bihar.

The crushing impact of the world depression beginning in 1973 paved the way for the draconian "state of emergency" and for the crash sterilization campaign. Government leaders now echo the insipid theories of western bourgeois analysts who explain "third world" problems in terms of population. Dr. D.N. Pai, Bombay Director of Family Planning, even talks of "people pollution."

Marxists have always struggled ideologically against these dangerous theories which attempt to explain the immiseration of the masses "by the eternal laws of Nature, rather than by the laws of capitalist production" (Karl Marx, *Capital*). The reactionary Parson Malthus attempted to demonstrate the dangerous results of unchecked sexual impulses leading to population growth far exceeding the "natural" limits of the means of subsistence. This bogus theory, promulgated at the end of the 18th century and directed in part against the optimistic worldview of the French Revolution, was dramatically refuted by the technological and industrial revolution of 19th-century Europe, which

demonstrated human capacity to qualitatively expand the means of subsistence.

But in the epoch of capitalist decay, when further economic progress is blocked by the profit drive of private property, the imperialist bourgeoisie and its clients in the underdeveloped countries have dug up the moldy Malthusian postulates.

Certainly a workers state, particularly in a populous and backward country, would encourage a lowered birth rate as a short-term social goal. But a revolutionary regime would attack the problem of "overpopulation" fundamentally by expropriating the parasitic bourgeoisie and by applying the most modern and scientific methods to agriculture. This is not to say that in struggling against the pessimistic bourgeois conception of "overpopulation" Marxists overlook the socially liberating potential of technological advances in contraception. Likewise fighting for free abortion on demand is an aspect of the fight to liberate women from the enslavement of the family. The availability of such methods and the overcoming of reactionary, obscurantist obstacles to their dissemination would permit women to participate more fully in general social production and would likely lead to a decline in the birth rate.

But the problem confronting the world working class is not "overpopulation" (the Soviet Union has long had a problem of "underpopulation" and provides incentives for mothers to produce more children) but the irrational utilization of resources. In capitalist India the continuation of this problem is assured by the alliance of industrial capitalists with the rentiers and kulaks in the countryside, on which the political power of the Congress Party and similar "third world" nationalist parties is based. Agrarian revolution and the unlocking of natural resources will be consummated only when the proletariat seizes power. Leading the peasantry, the international working class will eradicate the burden of centuries of rural backwardness and poverty. ■

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Women and Revolution

Trico Workers Win Equal Pay

On 18 October 1976, 350 female and 150 male workers of London's Trico-Folberth company, which supplies windshield wipers for all major British automobiles, won a five-month strike for equal pay. This victory was more than a simple economic achievement; it demonstrated conclusively that the Equal Pay Act (EPA), ostensibly written into British law to guarantee equal pay for men and women in comparable jobs, can only be enforced by industrial action and not by legal action.

The Equal Pay Act is a mockery. Enacted by the Labour government in 1970, with the provision that it be implemented within five years, it provides that employees who feel that they are being paid a lower wage than other employees doing the same or comparable work are entitled to take their case before an industrial tribunal composed of representatives appointed by the secretary of state and drawn from senior management, the trade-union bureaucracies and public organizations.

The guardian angel of the EPA is the Equal Opportunities Commission, a body of 14 persons also appointed by the secretary of state. The chairman of the commission is Betty Lockwood, a well-known Labourite; the vice chairman is Lady Howe, wife of the Tory shadow chancellor, Sir Geoffrey Howe.

The EPA is a sham. To begin with, the wording of the act is ambiguous. In particular, the phrase "material difference," concerning the distinction between the kinds of work men and women do, is ill-defined; yet it is on that phrase that the implementation of the act rests.

Besides the vagueness of the wording, the interpretation of what constitutes a material difference is subject to the casuistry of industrial law.

Horror stories abound. For example, the *Guardian* (5 June 1976) reported that when women quality controllers at a Kraft factory filed for equal pay under the provisions of the act, the industrial tribunal found against them on the grounds that there was a material difference in the jobs. What was this material difference? It was ruled that the women could not walk across high ramps from one area in the factory to another, because the men working underneath would look up their miniskirts and be distracted from the processing of cheese. In vain was it argued that all the women in the plant wore trousers; in vain did the women's lawyers point out that no one wears miniskirts anymore! The tribunal ruled a "material difference," and the female Kraft employees went on receiving £12.45 less per week than their male counterparts doing the same job.

Another loophole in the act is the provision for material difference based on "historical reasons." These reasons come within what is called the "red circle" category. Corporations argue that it is impossible for them to lower the levels of pay of their top men to that of their women workers, while at the same time refusing to pay the women the huge increases (in



Irish Times

Pickers in Britain's longest equal-pay strike

Trico's case (£6 per week) necessary to put them on a par with the men.

The figures speak for themselves. Last August the *Observer* noted that in 104 out of 145 cases brought before them the industrial tribunals had ruled against the women plaintiffs. But above all, this token law has one basic, glaring deficiency: it makes no provision for raising the miserable wages of women in workplaces where only women are employed and where there are no men with comparable jobs.

Five Hundred Workers Strike for Equal Pay

It was against this background of unsuccessful claims that the workers of the Trico-Folberth factory went on strike. For nearly a year, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW) had been negotiating unsuccessfully with Trico for equal pay between male night-shift workers and female day-shift workers. Besides getting a higher base rate, the night-shift

workers also earned a time-and-a-third overtime premium.

In September 1975 Trico management announced that due to the economic downturn it was phasing out the 150-man night shift. One hundred and fifteen of the men were laid off, 30 went on a specially devised "twilight" shift paid at time-and-a-fifth and the remaining five men went on the day shift, where they were paid £6.50 more per week than the regular day workers—women who were doing the same job. When the women workers demanded that their wages be raised to the level of their male co-workers, the company responded that the five ex-night-shift workers were a "special case."

On 24 May 1976, 350 women and 150 men walked out on an official strike. Citing the sorry record of the EPA decisions, the strikers and the union declined the services of an industrial tribunal. The company took the case before a tribunal anyway and argued that the wage differential in favor of male employees was justified because the men were more "flexible" than the women. To no one's surprise, the tribunal ruled against the strikers.

Trico was quick to organize scabbing under police protection. Strikers reported suspicious-looking trucks with covered license plates attempting deliveries to the plant. Workers at Heathrow Airport also noted strangely unmarked boxes from the United States for delivery to the Leyland and Ford Dagenham auto plants.

While officially backing the strike and making noises of commiseration and support, the AUEW District Committee did what it could to keep a lid on it. Instead of issuing a nationwide union directive to hot-cargo (refuse to handle) Trico products, it merely appealed to shop stewards to do so—four months after the strike had begun. The strike pay was meager and grudging. In September, the AUEW District Committee abruptly canceled a strike-support demonstration that had been heavily publicized by the Working Women's Charter.

Radical rhetoric is cheap and common in a social democracy; it draws attention away from the fact that the bourgeoisie is still in power, while the Labour Party, which the working class still regards as its own, does capitalism's dirty work. In response to the strike, the International Marxist Group (IMG), which is always in the forefront of the chase after an elusive "new mass vanguard," called for women's caucuses in the trade unions, a shameless adaptation to the feminists in its minority faction. The Workers Socialist League (WSL) commented that the "struggle for equal pay must go hand in hand with the fight to build a new, revolutionary leadership in the working class in opposition to both 'left' talkers and the right wing." Fine sentiments but in contradiction to the WSL's actual practice of abject capitulation to the union bureaucrats and the Labour Party. As a leaflet distributed by London supporters of the international Spartacist tendency pointed out:

"[The WSL's] lack of a fighting strategy against the Labour Party, its absolute silence on the Labour 'lefts' and the failure to oppose import controls are... a systematic adaptation to militants who share the outlook of the Labour 'lefts'."

The centrist International-Communist League (I-CL), which is up to its ears in the building of such dead-end reformist blocs as the Working Women's Charter—a feminist grouping in the trade unions similar to the now-defunct Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW)—sighed at the AUEW's neglect of rank-and-file involvement in the running of the strike and concluded that the rank and file should push the AUEW to instigate coordinated national hot-cargoing of Trico products. The Socialist Workers Party (formerly International Socialists) had nothing to say, because it was not running a campaign for equal pay at that precise moment.

Not one of the left papers attempted to use the widely supported Trico strike as a means of mobilizing effective industrial action against the barbaric "Social Contract"—an agreement between the government and the Trades Union Congress bureaucrats which is a futile attempt to revive British capitalism by mercilessly driving down the wages and living standards of the working class.

Not "Social Contract" But Class Struggle

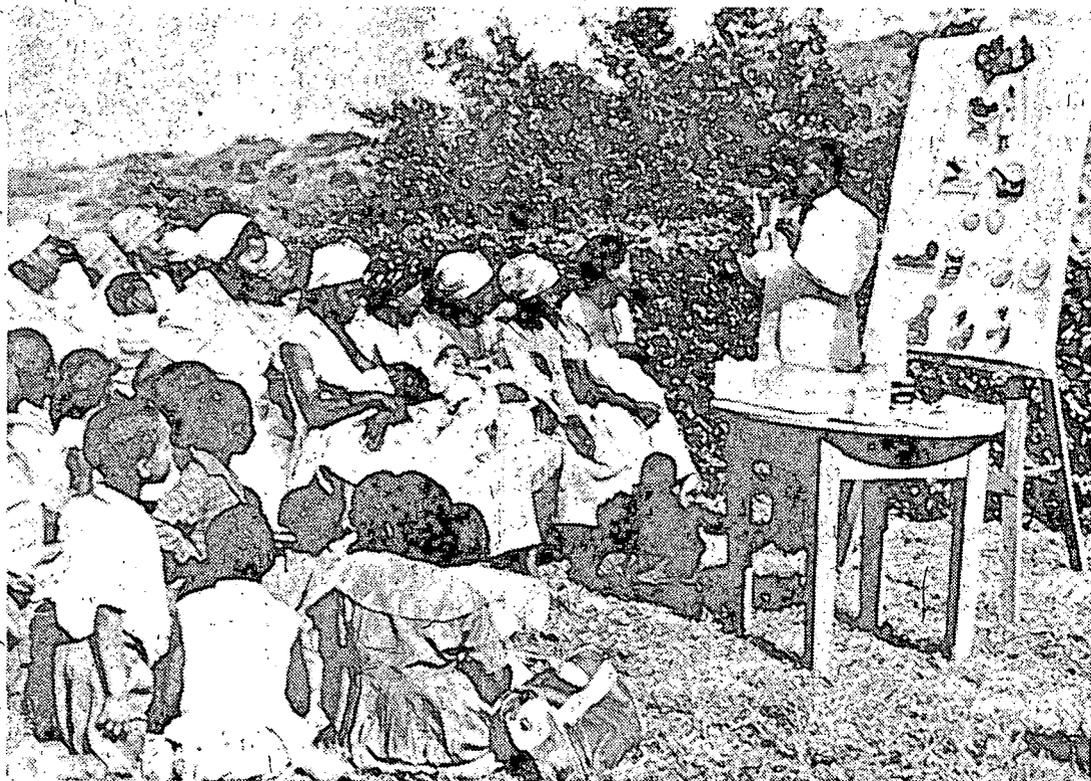
Equal pay is a democratic demand which every socialist should support. Even the feeble Equal Pay Act is a supportable reform—as is the Equal Rights Amendment in the U.S.—but let no one be under any illusion that either of them can somehow grant women equality in the workplace. An army of unskilled, low-paid women is vital to capitalism, especially in a time of economic depression as exists in Britain today. At the same time, all the pressures of the bourgeois ideology of the family are brought to bear to prevent women from becoming fully integrated into social and political life. Inequality of pay for the two sexes is important to capitalism because it keeps the working class weak and at odds with itself. At the same time, equality for a worker under capitalism can never mean more than an equal opportunity to be exploited. The goal of socialist revolution, requiring the building of a disciplined vanguard party embodying a revolutionary Marxist program, must not be submerged in the just fight for equal pay.

The AUEW bureaucrats are not stupid. A big, nationally organized fight for equal pay, ignoring the industrial tribunals and the "due process of law," could well pose the question of the legality of the "Social Contract" and of the wage system itself, which keeps the entire British working class impoverished.

The women and men of Trico have won their economic demands—a notable victory in wage-frozen Britain, but one which will quickly be eroded in Britain's current economic crisis. As conditions worsen, it becomes the increasingly evident duty of revolutionists to pose to workers in the clearest way possible the absolute necessity of breaking with the British Labour Party and the treacherous trade-union bureaucracy and of initiating massive industrial action to smash the "Social Contract." Only a workers government can ensure full social equality for women, and only a Trotskyist vanguard party based on the transitional program can lead the struggles necessary to expropriate the capitalist class and establish such a government. ■

Bottle or Breast?

Poor Children Still Die



"Nurses" and "doctors" sell Nestlé products to new mothers

Nestlé's Centenary Publication

On 24 June 1976 Nestlé Alimentana S.A., the giant multinational food corporation, won the libel action which it had brought against the Swiss Arbeitsgruppe Dritte Welt (Third World Action Group). In July 1974 the group had translated "The Baby Killer," written by the British charity agency, War on Want, into German with the title "Nestlé toetet Babys" ("Nestlé Kills Babies"). One month later, Nestlé brought suit.

The pamphlet charged that multinational infant-food companies, including Nestlé, use dishonest sales techniques—such as dressing their saleswomen in nurses' uniforms—in underdeveloped countries to promote their products, and asserted that by persuading mothers in these countries to abandon breast feeding in favor of bottle feeding the corporations were contributing to the malnutrition and death of thousands of children.

At the first hearing of the case last February, Nestlé lost its bid to have the court render an instant decision in its favor on the grounds that the entire proceedings were "against national interests." At the opening of the final hearing in June, the company dropped three of the original four libel counts "to simplify proceedings" and retained only its charge against the pamphlet's title.

Although presiding judge Juerg Sollberger said that his decision was "not an acquittal of Nestlé" and admonished the company to "reconsider its advertising policies if it wants to avoid being accused of immoral and unethical conduct," the 13 defendants—mostly students, professors and clergymen—were found guilty and fined a total of \$3,640.

In issuing his decision, Sollberger said that the evidence had shown that it was not the Nestlé products

that were the cause of injury and death but the unhygienic way in which the baby foods were used in the developing countries. This is, of course, quite true. The introduction of bottle feeding to areas where masses of people have been chronically undernourished is, in fact, highly desirable. The problem is not with bottle feeding—as the liberals and New Leftists would have it—but with the conditions of poverty, ignorance and superstition; that is to say, the problem is with the capitalist system.

Making the Most of the Market

While it may be true that jingle-jaded Americans can dismiss the health- and status-giving claims of the latest breakfast cereal as "only a commercial," less sophisticated populations are much more vulnerable to modern advertising techniques (which is one of the reasons that Nestlé sells infant foods almost everywhere except in the United States and Canada). Nutrition researcher Ted Greiner writes:

"To a mother who can barely read, the printed word may assume almost scriptural authority. To a mother who is hearing radio for one of the first times, a simple-minded jingle about a baby food may be nearly hypnotic in its power."

—T. Greiner, "The Promotion of Bottle Feeding by Multinational Corporations"

To say nothing of the personal recommendations of "nurses" (licensed or not) who sell on a commission basis in clinics and on "educational" visits to the new mother's home. Mothers are told that if they want their babies to be healthy, strong and intelligent—like American babies—they must be bottle fed. Given the

diseased and malnourished state of many nursing mothers in backward countries, this is often true.

War on Want and others cite two major problems with bottle feeding in backward areas: 1) overdilution of the formula, which leads to undernourishment and ultimately to death, and 2) contamination, which leads to gastrointestinal infection, the single largest cause of infant mortality in most poor communities.

As a table prepared by the United Nations' Protein Advisory Group shows, the cost of bottle feeding places it far beyond the means of workers earning the minimum urban wage (i.e., the majority of workers) in underdeveloped countries. By the time the infant is six months old, bottle feeding can cost up to a staggering 63.3 percent of the family's income. As a result, the family will often try to "stretch" the formula by diluting it with two or three times the proper amount of water. The result is nutritional marasmus—the wasting away of the child.

The second major problem is contamination. The Nestlé "Mother Book," which is distributed with its baby formula, begins: "Wash your hands thoroughly with soap each time you have to prepare a meal for baby." But many households, even in large cities (not to mention rural areas) have no indoor kitchen, and some have no washing facilities at all. So complying with this elementary hygienic requirement (let alone the sterilization of the bottle) is difficult if not impossible—even if the mother can read these instructions, which is highly unlikely.

Milk is a good culture medium for pathogenic organisms. Where the family water supply is a ditch or well not infrequently contaminated with human excrement, where homes are infested with filth-bearing insects, where there is no refrigerator for the storage of mixed formula, where there is no turn-on stove and perhaps no fuel of any sort for sterilization and where ignorance and illiteracy prevent even an elementary understanding of hygiene, it is hardly surprising that bottle feeding often results in sickness and death. Dr. James Farquhar of the University of Edinburgh says:

"It is clear to all but those who will not see that informed, adequate and relatively safe bottle feeding must follow, or at least accompany, but never precede, literacy, education, infection-free water supplies, sanitation and a standard of living which permits the purchase of enough baby foods, equipment and the means of sterilisation."

—Dr. J. Farquhar, quoted in "The Baby Killer"

This is no doubt true. On the other hand, it is equally clear to all but those who will not see that the same standards of literacy, hygiene and affluence are the prerequisites for relatively safe breast feeding. A family too poor to purchase powdered milk is too poor to provide adequate nourishment for the nursing mother or for the infant at weaning time. A contaminated water supply will infect people whether it is mixed with the milk or drunk separately.

Breast Feeding is Not the Solution

For War on Want and likeminded commentators on the problems of bottle feeding, the solution is simply a return to breast feeding. The literature abounds with

"cute" references to human milk "containers" (handy, unbreakable) and praise for the great convenience of breast feeding. But breast feeding is not the solution. It is no safer for children in impoverished areas than bottle feeding, it is impossible for many women who simply cannot produce an adequate supply of milk and it is anything but a convenience for women unless they are chained day and night to their infants. Working women must rely on bottle feeding. (Unlike the Soviet Union, which sought immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution to establish free nurseries at the mother's place of employment and guarantee frequent recesses during the workday for visitation, capitalist states generally deprive working women of the choice to breast feed.)

The problem of malnutrition in infants is inseparable from the problem of malnutrition in the entire population. Even breast-fed children must be weaned sooner or later; so the problem of adequate nourishment can at the very best be postponed for a few months. The UN's Protein Advisory Group, quoted approvingly in "The Baby Killers," says: "The only avenue open for the vast majority of children is to find better uses for the locally available staples for the preparation of nutritious weaning foods in the home." To which Nestlé's self-serving but quite correct response is: "We know the sort of people who are putting forward these arguments, and these people are idealists. It's very nice to say that these countries should be self-sufficient and should produce their own weaning foods and so on but it is not a fact of life at the moment."

Nor will it become a fact of life for millions of workers and peasants as long as capitalism remains in command. A quick comparison of India—where malnutrition, starvation, unemployment and illiteracy are rampant—with its neighbor China, where these plagues have been virtually wiped out within a generation, makes clear what the difference between socialized property ownership in a workers state (even a deformed workers state like China) and private property ownership in a capitalist state means in terms of human well-being.

As the entire history of mankind has demonstrated, breast feeding is no defense against widespread malnutrition. The problems of bottle-feeding will be solved not by going backward to universal breast feeding but forward to a planned economy based on human needs. In the socialist society of the future, the decision to breast feed or bottle feed will be determined in each case according to the needs of the infant and the desires of the mother and will have nothing whatever to do with corporate profits. ■

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The Development of Soviet Educational Policies

by Janis Gerrard

Along with the family and the church, the capitalist educational system serves to perpetuate bourgeois ideology. Expensive private schools and elite institutions of higher learning are for the privileged few. Public schools, on the other hand, stress the skills and discipline necessary to prepare the plebeian masses for their future exploitation.

The Bolshevik Revolution, which had as one of its goals the elimination of the distinction between mental and manual labor, took quite a different approach to education. "Every cook must rule," said Lenin. But in order to rule, one must know how to read and write and think. The illiterate person, he said, stands outside politics.

The Bolshevik Party regarded education as both a pledge to the workers and a necessity for workers democratic rule. An illiterate population, steeped in religious superstition, would be a barrier to socialist development.

At the time that the Bolsheviks seized power, the cultural level of the Russian masses was abysmal. Illiteracy, which was the norm for men, was nearly universal among women. The tsarist school system had catered to the children of the aristocracy and the upper middle classes who were preparing for the professions and government posts. There had been trade-school apprenticeships for a lucky few working-class children, but most children of poor families went to work at an early age.

After the 1905 Revolution, despite the general reaction and repression, there was a slight liberalization in the arts and education. Within the tsarist system a layer of educational reformers came to the fore, many of them Cadets (Constitutional Democrats) and other right-wing reformers, and outside it communists and anarchists set up their own schools and study circles, which taught workers and peasants the basics of literacy and hygiene along with politics. This tradition of popular education was part of the Russian radical heritage which dated back to the work of the Narodniki in the 1870's.

The academic intelligentsia enthusiastically welcomed the February revolution, which freed them from the repressive restrictions of the autocracy. However, in October most of them proved to be as anti-communist as they had been anti-autocratic.

This preponderance of anti-communism in academic circles added to the difficulties of the Soviet Commissariat of Education—*Narkompros*. The tasks it faced were monumental, and during the critical period of the civil war only those commissariats immediately necessary for the survival of the proletarian dictatorship—the army, the food commissariat, the transport authority—received much in the way of human and financial resources.

Almost immediately after the October Revolution, teachers joined the municipal workers of Petrograd and Moscow in an anti-government strike. Allegedly financed by the Ryanbushinsky banking family, the strikers were able to hold out all through the bitter winter. Threats to fire the teachers were ineffective since they could not be immediately replaced.

Many leaders and members of the All-Russian Teachers Union (VUS) joined the counterrevolutionary Committee for the Salvation of the Motherland and the Revolution, which worked openly for Bolshevik defeat and used the example of the Bolsheviks' unsuccessful negotiations with the striking teachers in its propaganda. V.M. Pozner, an ultra-leftist within *Narkompros*, led the tiny minority of pro-Bolshevik teachers out of the VUS to form the Union of Teacher Internationalists and argued that the VUS should be forcibly dissolved. One of the main opponents of this position was Nadezhda Krupskaya, who wrote in *Izvestiia* (July 1918):

"I, like comrades Pozner and Lepeshinsky, wanted to tear VUS from the influence of its present leaders, but I am an old splitter and thought it more appropriate to break up VUS from within. In my opinion it was necessary to persuade all teachers supporting Soviet power... not to leave VUS, but to attend its Congress as delegates, and there form a compact group and develop their programme to the full. Then it would have been clear what the real strength of the internationalists was..."

—N.K. Krupskaya, quoted in Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*

The pro-Bolshevik teachers who had left the VUS were not eager to return, preferring the safety of sectarianism to the rigors of struggle. But with the support of Lenin, the "splitters" won against the red unionists and a successful fight was waged inside VUS, resulting in the formation of a broad, independent Union of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture.

Inspired Beginnings...

Despite its shortcomings, *Narkompros* initially had great authority. Anatol Lunacharsky, the commissar of education, was well-known and greatly admired. During the Bolshevik struggle against the Provisional Government in 1917 his audiences at factories and in the workers' districts regularly numbered in the thousands. His deputy, Krupskaya, was a respected Bolshevik known for her educational work and writing.

From the time the Bolsheviks seized state power they struggled to make education accessible for the first time to the masses. Child labor was abolished and schooling made mandatory for all children between the ages of seven and seventeen. Literacy was made mandatory for everyone through age 50, and a two-hour reduction in the work day was given to those engaged in such study. Tuition was abolished along



Placards over school doorways said "Children are the Hope of the World," but in fact the whole nation was learning to read and write.

G.P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd.

with all academic titles, tests, degrees and homework. Teachers were subject to dismissal by their pupils. Unfortunately, however, much of this legislation existed only on paper, since the civil war left few funds for its implementation.

Nevertheless, by 1920 about 25,000 schools for literacy had been established, many of them organized by *Zhenotdel*, the Department of Working Women and Peasant Women. Though placards over the entrances said "Children are the Hope of the World," in fact the whole nation was going to school and learning to read and write. And those who learned also taught. The slogan of the campaign against illiteracy was: "Every literate person trains an illiterate one."

Despite the anti-communism of most professors the universities were kept open, and admission was free to anyone over 16 years of age who could demonstrate literacy. Special departments called *rabfaks* were also established in the universities to bring workers up to the standard of university entrance.

The early years of Soviet rule witnessed heated theoretical debate on the philosophy and methods of education. Once again V.M. Pozner crossed swords with the *Narkompros* leadership. Unlike Lunacharsky, he emphasized the replacement of the family by the school commune and a full reintegration of education with life, asserting that labor skills would be taught by "life itself" rather than artificially in a workshop.

While these concepts were not at odds with Bolshevik ideals, they were unrealistic during a period of "war communism." The imperialist war and then the civil war had left thousands of homeless children roaming the countryside. Under these conditions the

skills such children "learned from life" were likely to be lock picking and thievery. Lenin intervened in the controversy to have Lunacharsky's "Declaration on the United Labor School" declared a literary document, which meant that it was no longer subject to alteration. Lenin's implicit support gave the document the force it needed to defeat Pozner's "Statement on the United Labor School."

... Clash With Hard Realities

While struggling against the threat of ultra-leftists who sought to realize communist ideals in a backward and impoverished country, the *Narkompros* leadership had also to wage a continual fight against a hardened, right-wing, anti-communist bloc of educators who remained loyal to the defunct Provisional Government, and with short-sighted elements within the Bolshevik party, including many trade unionists, who were most susceptible to the pressure to gear education solely to fill the desperate, immediate need for skilled workers. *Narkompros* consistently defended a policy of long-term polytechnical education as opposed to early specialization in trade schools and free education as opposed to the reintroduction of tuition fees.

Drawing on the only resources available, *Narkompros* attempted to supply the Soviet educational system with the facilities of the old, tsarist technical and trade schools. During 1918 and 1919 two hundred trade schools were dismantled and destroyed under *Narkompros* direction—a rash act at a time when skilled workers were desperately needed and before new

continued on next page

Soviet Educational Policies...

facilities had actually been created. This put *Narkompros* in a defensive position against the proponents of monotekhnicheskii, who were already gathering a "technical lobby" around a proposal for a United Technical School—a system in which only primary education would have a general character. This lobby gained a powerful ally at the end of 1919 in Leon Trotsky's Commission on Labor Conscription.

Trotsky's plan to allow a limited reintroduction of private trade to regenerate the ravaged economy had been rejected. This plan was to be introduced two years later in the form of the New Economic Policy (NEP), but during the period when it was temporarily defeated, Trotsky proposed a quasi-military mobilization of labor as the only alternative. An adjunct to this mobilization to ensure the production of qualified workers was educational conscription, with specialized professional training beginning at age 14. The bloc was short-lived, however. The controversy which arose over Trotsky's proposal centered on the relationship between the state and the trade unions. Trotsky argued that labor conscription necessitated the transformation of trade unions into a disciplined arm of the state. The trade unionists, who made up the bulk of the "technical lobby," while supporting educational conscription, opposed the general plan. Lenin sided with the trade unionists on the question of the unions' right to strike and the threatened infringement of trade-union independence, and with the *Narkompros* leadership in its defense of polytechnicalism.

Narkompros emerged from this struggle victorious but weakened and with the authority of its leadership damaged. The "technical lobby," although temporarily defeated, was strengthened. The general sentiment that *Narkompros*, whatever its program, had not been able to organize much of anything was close to the truth.

This lack of confidence in *Narkompros* reached a crisis when an emergency necessitated an unexpected relationship between *Narkompros* and the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combatting Counter-revolution, Speculation and Delinquency in Office—otherwise known as the *Cheka*.

In 1920 the Soviet Union was terrorized by gangs of starving, homeless delinquent youth. *Cheka* leader Felix Dzerzhinsky proposed that since the *Cheka* had well-supplied and efficiently operating branches in many areas, it could take on the task of rehabilitating these homeless youth (*besprizornye*)—an idea which sent panic through liberal pedagogical circles.

The *Cheka* proceeded to organize rehabilitation colonies along the lines laid out by Commissar G.F. Grinko of the Ukrainian *Narkompros*, a long-time foe of the Russian *Narkompros*' child-centered theories of education. The work was headed by Grinko's protege, Anton Makarenko. Although Makarenko's methods, which included military discipline and hard labor in

addition to instruction, were highly unorthodox by Soviet standards, he was successful in rehabilitating seemingly incorrigible delinquents with police records ranging from petty theft to manslaughter.

Each of his collectives was a carefully constructed unit with a built-in stratified, hierarchical and demo-



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A young housewife, primer in hand, goes to literacy school before doing the shopping.

cratic structure calculated to create an atmosphere of intense social pressure to curb the anti-social tendencies of the *besprizornye*. Discipline was collective and often self-imposed. Transferred from *Narkompros* to the *Cheka*, Makarenko continued to run this operation throughout the 1920's.

Retreat

Under the pressure of the "technical lobby," *Narkompros* was forced in 1920 to the conclusion that the shortage of qualified workers made it necessary to temporarily reduce the labor school from nine to seven years and to begin specialized training at age fifteen. This time, even Krupskaya gave in. Since the nine-year school did not exist in any case, except on paper, the real task was to construct the seven-year school.

Narkompros emphasized that this was a regrettable and temporary expedient, and Lenin fought for a reaffirmation of the *principle* of polytechnical education which he correctly viewed as being in danger during this period of retreat.

The introduction of the New Economic Policy halted the few advances that *Narkompros* had achieved. The end of food requisitions and the introduction of the tax in kind meant a drastic reduction in state funds available for education. All departments were urged to take advantage of the limited free market and become self-sufficient. *Narkompros*, however, had nothing to market but theater tickets and literature. At the same time, costs skyrocketed, since public services such as sewage, electricity, fuel and transportation now cost money. In February and March of 1922 an acute financial crisis led to a large number of Soviet employees being taken off state supply. The number of teachers receiving or even

entitled to salaries fell drastically, leading to a wholesale closing of schools.

After reaching a peak of 82,000 in 1921, primary schools were driven down to 49,000 by October 1923. Those schools which did survive the removal of central funding initiated local self-taxation in kind, making teachers directly dependent on the kulaks (rich peasants) for their most immediate needs.

Narkompros initially forbade the reintroduction of tuition fees but was soon forced to allow it as a temporary expedient. Krupskaya called this decision, which once again made education a privilege of those who could afford it, a vulgar retreat from the party program.

Stalinist Education

Many *Narkompros* members became involved in the oppositional struggle against the rise of Stalinist bureaucratism which followed Lenin's death in 1924. Krupskaya initially fought with the joint opposition but was seduced back into the fold by the ultra-left policies of Stalin's "third period." But although she remained a figurehead in *Narkompros*, she was stripped of all real influence. Lunacharsky avoided the political struggle, apparently hoping to defend the gains of *Narkompros* in the arts and education against the general social retrenchment.

Although *Narkompros* now entered a period of demoralization and relative inactivity, it continued to wage some agitational campaigns. In 1925, the League of the Militant Godless, an organization dedicated to the replacement of superstition with scientific knowledge, was founded with *Narkompros* support. The campaign to combat illiteracy was also pursued vigorously, despite the inability of schools to accommodate students.

The defeat of the Left Opposition meant the defeat of Leninism. However, in education this void was not immediately filled by Stalinist policies. Instead, the crackpot theories of "pedology" and "spontaneous education" became popular during the middle and late twenties. The adherents of these theories predicted the "withering away of the schools," perhaps in an effort to justify the unfortunate reality—there were not enough schools! The first All-Union Congress of Pedology boasted 2,500 participants.

From 1929 on, Stalin attempted to give programmatic justification to the temporary and unavoidable retreats in the field of education. The old tsarist educators returned to the classrooms, degrees, titles and pedagogic discipline were reinstated and the schools again were devoted to instilling labor discipline and servility. A major pedagogic text of the early Stalinist period was entitled *I Want to Be Like Stalin!*

Stalin found his perfect educational theorist in Makarenko. After his successes in the twenties with the *besprizornye*, Makarenko could argue in the thirties with the authority of an enlightened and successful pedagogue for militarism, discipline and patriotism. With Makarenko at the head of Stalin's campaign against "pedological perversions," the popular theory

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The "liquidation of illiteracy" in a village schoolroom.

G.P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd.

Soviet Educational Policies...

served as a straw man to guillotine the whole concept of education for individual development. And since Makarenko's old foes in *Narkompros*, including Krupskaya and Lunacharsky, were tainted by their association with pedology, the campaign served both as a scapegoat for the failure of early Soviet educational policies and as a screen for the turn from the earlier prevailing approach to education.

In 1940 the imminent danger of a German invasion motivated a switch to quick vocational and military training ranging from six-month factory courses to two-year vocational schools. Tuition fees for education beyond the eighth grade made the factory courses the only real option of the poor. By 1942 vocational schools were introduced for children as young as ten years of age, and military training was instituted.

In 1943, separate education for boys and girls was re-introduced on the grounds that co-education had served its purpose—smashing the vestiges of the tsarist oppression of women. The liberated Soviet woman, it was argued, needed a separate education to better prepare her for her special work in life—not the least of which was marriage and motherhood.

The contradictions generally inherent in Stalinism were duplicated in the Stalinist educational system. The Stalinist bureaucrats achieved their privileged position by politically expropriating the working class, yet they maintained their rule only by defending collectivized property, which is in the historic interests of the workers. These property forms demand technological and scientific development, which is dependent on

individual human creativity possible only in the context of a generally high cultural level. Thus, the Stalinist bureaucracy was forced to return a high proportion of the national surplus to mass education. It created an educational system which supplied necessary scientists and technicians and at the same time indoctrinated the young with a misplaced loyalty to the bureaucracy and its programs.

The self-serving bureaucracy is at times its own worst enemy. Disastrous consequences often result from the attempt to bolster the reactionary program of "socialism in one country" with utopian, anti-materialist theories. Thus, Lysenko's crackpot genetic theories applied to agriculture led to the destruction of vast tracts of arable land. But Soviet education nevertheless achieved great leaps in science, industry and even sports. In a matter of decades the Soviet Union was transformed from a backward, largely feudal agrarian society to a modern industrial state and a major military power. The appearance of Sputnik, the first man-made satellite to orbit the earth, and the development of the Soviet nuclear bomb put a spotlight on Soviet education, producing in the U.S. a flood of books with such titles as: *What Ivan Knows That Johnny Doesn't*, and *The Challenge of Soviet Education*.

The achievements not only of the USSR but of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and China show what socialized property and centralized education can achieve even without enlightened policies. Only a political revolution based on the program of Lenin and Trotsky, however, will restore intellectual and artistic freedom and unleash the unknown capacities of the human mind. With the victory of the reformed Fourth International, EVERY COOK WILL RULE! ■



Supreme Court Wipes Out Gains For Women

Smithsonian

A number of important, hard-won gains for women in the fields of disability pay for pregnancy, access to abortion and social security benefits to divorced women have been rolled back in recent months, reflecting the rapid rightward shift in the political climate. These rulings, which represent a major setback in the struggle for the rights of working women, must be immediately reversed.

On December 7, in response to a suit brought against the General Electric (GE) company by three female employees, the Supreme Court ruled that employers are no longer required to pay disability benefits to pregnant employees. The suit, which was argued by attorney Ruth Weyand, legal counsel for the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), charged that the company's failure to include pregnancy pay in its disability coverage was discriminatory and therefore in violation of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. But the court incredibly ruled that GE was *not* discriminating, because women were not denied benefits which men received; i.e., men were not entitled to disability benefits for pregnancy, either! According to this reasoning, so long as women are given an equal opportunity to draw the same disability payments as men—including payments for such items as circumcisions and vasectomies, which are covered by the company—no discrimination is involved!

The court ruled that employers are not required to cover *all* disabilities but have the right to pick and choose among them. Pregnancy was singled out as an item which could *particularly* be excluded from coverage, because it is a "voluntary" condition, rather than a disease. The GE plan does, however, cover such "voluntary" conditions as attempted suicides, venereal disease and elective cosmetic surgery. GE frankly

admitted that the determining factor for the company was the high cost of maternity benefits.

The court's ruling was all the more shocking because it overturned years of precedent in favor of disability pay for pregnancy won in the courts and in union contracts based on Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In several states the Supreme Court ruling was in fact, overturned. In New York, for example, the Court of Appeals ruled that the state's Human Rights Amendment *requiring* medical coverage for pregnant women superseded all disability laws which exclude pregnancy. A similar decision was made in Pennsylvania. But the ruling will make worse what was never a very good situation. Prior to the Supreme Court decision, 60 percent of all U.S. companies had no disability programs at all, and of those that did, only 40 percent included any pregnancy coverage.

On December 13, a week after its decision on pregnancy, the court ruled that divorced women are to be excluded from the Social Security "wives' insurance benefits" program for mothers caring for young or disabled children. In the interest of saving money, the "nine old men" decided that the "sacred" family was not so important after all and completely ignored the fact that it is generally far more difficult for women on their own to meet the costs of child rearing than it is for married women.

Although the court has now somehow decided that pregnancy is a "voluntary" condition, it seems that many of the "volunteers" continue to seek abortions. And the search is often unsuccessful. Although abortion was legalized in 1973, a recent Planned Parenthood study found that in 1975, 30 to 50 percent, or approximately 900,000 women in the U.S. who

continued on next page

Supreme Court...

wanted abortions could not get them. And of those who did, almost 500,000 were forced to travel to another country or state.

Now the passage of the Hyde Amendment, which bans the use of federal Medicaid funds for abortion except in the cases of rape, incest or life-endangering pregnancy, seeks to deny abortion to *all* poor women. Because negative reaction to the amendment, passed in late 1976, has been so intense, a temporary restraining order against it was secured, but the matter is still unsettled.

While the powerful anti-abortion lobby has so far been unable to get abortions outlawed completely, a growing number of restrictions, aside from the Hyde Amendment, have been enacted, increasing state and federal "conscience clauses," which allow hospitals or individual doctors and nurses to refuse to perform them. Many states also require parental consent for women under 18 years of age, permission from husbands for married women and restrictions on abortions after the 12th week of pregnancy.

Fighting the (Same) Good Fight (Again)

Legal and legislative challenges to the pregnancy ruling are being projected by equal rights and women's groups. The Communist Party is also attempting to line up female trade-union bureaucrats behind a new bill to specify that the old Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act covers pregnancy disability in its intent.

While some of these reform attempts may be supportable in themselves, organizations whose strategies are to build movements around them serve fundamentally to bolster illusions in the capacity of the capitalist courts and the Congress to guarantee women's rights. In the face of the rightward shift in the United States—now so pronounced that in the recent presidential election a traditional Southern racist fundamentalist was the *liberals'* choice—such illusions grow increasingly dangerous. The parliamentary cretinism of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), with its endless court suits and abortion reform bills, and the CP's Bill of Rights for Women campaign must be fought with a program which places confidence *only* in the power of the working class to defend and extend the gains of oppressed sectors of society.

The lack of strikes or of any social protest at all in reaction to the Supreme Court's provocative ruling on pregnancy disability demonstrates the present passivity of the working-class movement in the face of a full-fledged attack on its hard-won gains. This makes all the more dangerous the pollyannaish optimism continually spouted in the pages of the SWP's *Militant*, e.g., Evelyn Reed's remarks to the SWP's conference on women in December:

"And against all the pessimists and downgraders of the feminist movement, and despite what seems to be a slow pace of progress we are actually witnessing the birth and growth of a mighty giantess destined to shake and eventually overturn the old oppressive order."

—"NY Conference Discusses Socialism and Feminism," *Militant*, 31 December 1976

Such lulling the masses to sleep while their "destiny" supposedly creeps irrepressibly forward is more despicable now than ever, when virtually every gain of the civil rights and women's movements—busing, open admissions, legal abortions, anti-discrimination rulings—are being rolled back.

It is urgent that the left and labor movements rise to the defense of even the smallest gains of the past period. But for communists the primary task remains the winning of the working class to the consciousness that the capitalist system, profoundly rooted in the oppression of women and blacks, *cannot* be fundamentally reformed but must be overthrown. The only way forward for the liberation of women and of all oppressed sectors of society is through a victorious socialist revolution led by the vanguard party of the working class. ■

Preterm Strike...

(continued from page 24)

Demand," as part of a revolutionary socialist program for women's liberation, opposing groups such as the reformist Socialist Workers Party, which limited its "program" for women's liberation to "Legalize Abortion Now" (for those who can afford it). In fact, free abortion on demand is only part of the larger demand for *free quality health care for all*, provided not by money-making abortion factories like Preterm but by the state. But such a demand can be fully realized only when the state is organized to serve human needs and not pecuniary profits.

The struggle to end the special oppression of women and the exploitation of the entire working class will be waged and won not by feminists but by the working class under the leadership of revolutionary Marxists. After picketing the office of Diane Richards 12 hours a day for five months during one of the worst winters of the century, the Preterm strikers surely understand this: class solidarity—not "sisterhood"—is powerful.

Victory to the Preterm Strike!

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Letters

Feminists Shirk Debate Challenge

December 8, 1976

Dear Comrade Reissner:

Your recent letter concerning the proposed debate between the Spartacist League and the Freedom Socialist Party has been received. Your proposals appear reasonable, with one slight modification in subjects and date probable.

However one difficulty of overwhelming proportions has arisen which would appear to render the debate fruitless and cynical. I refer to the snide and scurrilous article on the Radical Women Conference in the recent issue of *Women and Revolution*; an unprincipled piece of political garbage which is hardly conducive to a serious and objective debate.

The unsigned article presented a flagrantly untrue, distorted and self-serving version of the R.W. Conference. The pages of *W&R* were used for a childish tantrum arising out of pique and frustration, and your attempt to make us appear frivolous and reformist was a particularly pathetic bit of shabby journalism.

The possibility of debate in good conscience and in all honesty is dim until such time as you clarify and rectify your account of the Conference.

You state, for example, that R.W. has ambitions to be a vanguard party! May I remind you that the Freedom Socialist Party has that ambition; Radical Women is a mass organization. Where, in all the Conference discussion, did your reporter hear such a statement regarding R.W.? The secret writer of "Socialist Feminism Equals Reformism" (Jim Robertson, perhaps?) obviously fabricated it.

You further state that "R.W. advocates—as its maximum program—'affirmative action'." Really! We suggest that you read the *R.W. Manifesto*:

"The future of humanity depends on OUR commitment to taking the responsibility for leading the struggle to transform the capitalist system into a socialist democracy for all. Women ... socialism ... internationalism ... these are interconnected in theory and in life." (page 17)

This is only one quote; there are many more. The charge of dual unionism has been answered time after time and yet you never mention our rationale and explanation. Some reportage!

Remarks like "R.W.'s smug, workerist facade" and "simple-minded glorification of oppression" etc., etc. can only come across to knowledgeable readers as sour grapes, middle-class and arrogantly sexist. The attack on Clara Fraser similarly reeks of chauvinistic slander, and mirrors your hostility to the leadership of women.

Is this your idea of preparing the groundwork for a serious debate on real differences? A peculiar sense of tactics, indeed! The reckless and flip charges in your article cry out for public clarification and refutation. Until this evidence of proletarian honesty and revolutionary integrity is manifested, we cannot waste our

time in debating abstract issues. When clarification is made, we will gladly proceed with debate arrangements.

Comradely,
Gloria Martin, Organizer
Freedom Socialist Party

Women and Revolution replies:

30 January 1977

Dear Comrade Martin:

We have received your letter of 8 December. We find your charges unserious and without foundation. We must therefore conclude that your manufactured outrage can only be an attempt to evade the proposed debate, a debate which would of necessity reveal that our analysis, far from being "reckless and flip," demonstrates, rather, the enormous gap between the Freedom Socialist Party/Radical Women (FSP/RW) and revolutionary Trotskyism.

It is clear that your objections to the article in *Women and Revolution* No. 13 on your conference last October arise precisely from your anti-communist feminism. The most obvious manifestation of this is your reference to the "secret writer" of the "unsigned article," whom your fevered feminist imagination cannot imagine as other than a Svengali-like male manipulator operating behind the scenes.

The author of the article could, of course, have been James Robertson or another male comrade. The Spartacist League, like the revolutionary Communist International before it, does not consider work among women to be "women's work" but rather the work of the whole party (nor does it relegate male comrades to the role of auxiliaries, permitted to "observe" but not participate, as at your October conference). But, in fact, the reason the article bears no signature is quite simply that it is our general policy not to sign articles which represent the position of our democratic-centralist organization; the vast majority of our articles are thus unsigned. Our signed articles deal with subjects on which Trotskyist organizations do not take formal positions—on aesthetic questions, for example—or which involve interpretive historical or other research in depth which the organization has not yet been able to review.

You object to the fact that we write hard-hitting polemics in the Leninist tradition, not liberal "reportage." But far from blustering in a "snide and scurrilous" fashion, we document our charges. Strikingly absent

continued on next page

Letters...

from your letter was any rebuttal. And this is not surprising. You certainly cannot cry that we have "distorted" your unambiguous demands for police protection for "legalized" prostitutes, for "community control" of the police or for women legislators to "act responsibly in the interests of their sex." Instead, these and other quite specific *political* exposures have led to your indignant howls of pain.

And such hypocritical howling! You were quite content in the Summer 1976 issue of *Freedom Socialist* to dismiss the Spartacist League with two words: "arrogant grandiosity." Now you talk about "flip and reckless" charges. We were, of course, unruffled by this foolishness, and not simply because such a charge can only be a compliment. Your very different reaction to our serious and detailed polemic betrays your fear of clarifying debate.

Apart from your objections to our description of your "smug, workerist facade" and your unsubstantiated charge that our comments on Clara Fraser's history "reek of chauvinist slander" (presumably any attack on a woman is chauvinist); you make three charges of inaccuracy in our article. You object to our statement that "RW advocates—as its maximum program—affirmation action"; you insist that it is "fabrication" to talk about RW's ambitions to be a vanguard party, insisting ridiculously that it is a mass organization; and you object to the fact that we refer to your dual unionist perspective without mentioning your "rationale and explanation." But all of our characterizations are amply supported in your own literature.

On the question of your program we note, first of all, that you do not argue that the RW program is an elaboration of the transitional program but claim that it is of the long-discredited, social-democratic, minimum-maximum type. Your objection is that we failed to mention the "Sunday socialist" maximum part; you even cite a passage from the *R.W. Manifesto* which includes the word "socialism."

But this "manifesto" confirms the charge that your program is, in fact, sub-reformist. The document bears the subtitle, "Theory, Program and Structure," which corresponds to three distinct sections labeled "Preamble," "Platform" and "Organizational Structure and Principles." The passage you cite is from your "Theory" section, which contains a few misleading allusions to Marxism and the class struggle in the context of crank references to the "matriarchal democracy of socialist

economics," boiling down to a substitution of women (aided by minorities, perhaps) for the working class. The whole fantastic mumbo-jumbo testifies to your separation from any semblance of Trotskyist tradition. But—and this is key—even this mangled "theory" section has no connection whatever with your program, on which you propose to stand and fight.

Your program has 14 numbered parts with some unobjectionable and some horrendous demands on which we have already commented and would be pleased to comment further in the course of debate. But not one of these demands challenges capitalist property relations or poses socialist solutions! None points the way to the dictatorship of the proletariat; none shows any comprehension of the powerful approach of the Trotskyist transitional program. Only a little postscript, carefully separated from the platform, notes that there will be a need for a new society "based on the needs of people, not profit," which will arise "out of the momentum and leadership of women throughout the world." This is old Peace and Freedom Party-type rhetoric with a feminist gloss. In what way could it be said to be superior to the program of, say, the British Labour Party?

In an attempt to demonstrate to you a genuine class-struggle approach, we raised the exemplary work of militant trade-union caucuses like the Committee for a Militant UAW of Fremont, California and the Militant Action Caucus of the Communications Workers of America. Your insistence on studiously ignoring the long-standing work of these groups and your silly use of the label "middle-class" make it clear that your rhetoric about the working class is, indeed, a "smug, workerist facade," based on isolation from real class struggle and cultivated ignorance.

And what of your indignant claim that someone (Jim Robertson?) must have fabricated the view that RW seeks to be a vanguard party? Your newfound description of RW as a "mass organization" only demonstrates your confusion. But you have clearly indicated in print that you see Radical Women as a vanguard grouping. You say, for example, in your letter to us: "Radical Women's priority is providing a revolutionary, Trotskyist, socialist-feminist program to the working class and especially the most oppressed of that class—women." And in your pamphlet "Why Independent Unions?" you talk of the "Seattle Freedom Socialist Party and Radical Women who represent Trotskyist politics." We have no doubt that you are confused about the precise distinction between these groups, particularly as you would be repulsed by the Leninist concept of a women's section of a vanguard party.

Your proclamation that RW is a "mass organization" further reveals your disorientation. Clearly you have been studying your write-ups in the *Seattle Times* and *University of Washington Daily* too long. It is unwise to be taken in by the easy publicity which flows readily from your existence in a not particularly key or large city in an isolated corner of the United States. The illusions you maintain by this isolation are important to your existence, and this is one of the reasons you shrink

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from debating those who have experience in the class struggle nationally and internationally in the last decade. All you really want is pen pals and a little mutual backscratching.

Your final complaint is that we did not spend enough time on your advocacy of "independent unionism" to give your "rationale." While we address the arguments of our opponents in as clear and honest a way as possible, we do not accept the obligation to portray every figleaf of orthodoxy with which reformists and centrists try to cover themselves.

"Why Independent Unions?" speaks plainly for a dual unionist viewpoint, arguing that "our fight for representation" is taking the form of independent unions "because degenerated unions simply refuse to represent us." To be sure, your advocacy of "independent unions" is not identical to that of Third Period Stalinism. You do not write off reformists but white male workers! You characterize independent unions as a "healthy labor response" and, characteristically, you cite as one of the major advantages of isolation from the mass of the organized working class the training in "speaking and writing, and other organizational skills" which independent unions supposedly confer. In other words, you do precisely as we charge: you glorify isolation ("no National can put us into receivership to control our militancy") and you refuse to take on and fight to replace the existing trade-union misleadership. All disclaimers and "explanations" are only feeble excuses.

In short, we find no reason to correct any part of our account of Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist Party. Your refusal to debate cannot be camouflaged by these flimsy excuses. If you sincerely believe that our attacks are so wide of the mark, you ought to welcome the opportunity to expose us in such a confrontation. We have earned a solid reputation as principled and hard-hitting fighters for women's liberation through socialist revolution. If you believe this reputation is undeserved, surely you would eagerly accept a debate as a chance to unmask us.

One of the most obvious appeals of RW is the training that it gives its members in debate, writing and public speaking. But of what use is all this technique without *Bolshevik content*? We must conclude that you are deliberately shielding your membership from a confrontation because you recognize that it will be a real battle, not a simulated training session and that, unlike so many of your other opponents, we will not be an easy target.

We offer again to engage in open, political debate, which can also take up any objections you have to our published critique of Radical Women and the FSP. If you continue to insist that it is not possible to debate before you are satisfied about what we write, we can only conclude that you are engaged in cowardly evasion under transparent cover of concocted objections to bar debate. We feel sure that most of our readers will reach the same conclusion.

We hope that you will reconsider and proceed with the debate as planned. Testing and reevaluating your politics in the course of clarifying polemical struggle is far preferable to linking up with the cesspool of the

International Majority Tendency, at a distance, while consigning yourselves forever to bask in political irrelevance as one of the more unusual forms of flora and fauna of the Puget Sound region.

Comradely,
Commission for Work Among Women,
Spartacist League

□

international Spartacist tendency
London, England
[Received 29 November 1976]

Dear Judith Hunter,

I'm afraid I would not be able to debate with the member of your editorial. I will probably be away early in Dec. but am anyway not doing any more public speaking this year as it takes time away from my own involvement in the womens movement.

Thank you for sending copies of your magazine and the self-addressed envelope. I have seen copies of 'Women & Revolution' before—The idea of your politics it gives me is of such a mechanical and dogmatic marxism that I see no point whatsoever in importing it over the Atlantic. It would indicate too that real debate—which I hold to be an essential aspect of marxism—would be a religious rather than a political exercise. For your magazine gives the impression that the members of the International Spartacist Tendency already have resolved all questions of theory and practice.

Yours,
Sheila Rowbotham

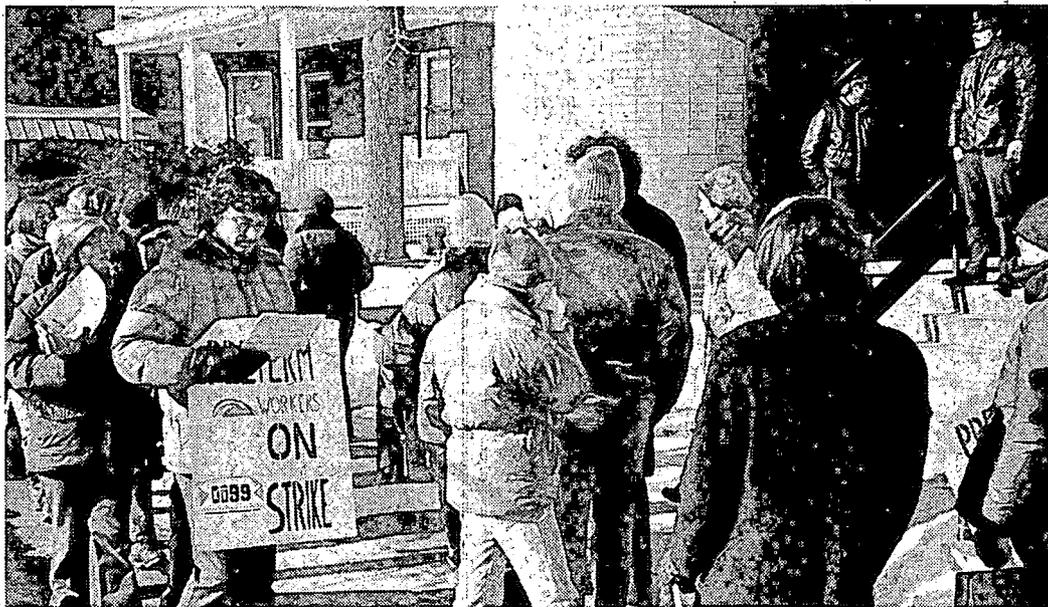
Women and Revolution replies:

It appears that today's petty-bourgeois intellectuals are suffering a crisis of confidence. Sheila Rowbotham, author of *Women, Resistance and Revolution* and *Hidden from History* (reviewed in *Women and Revolution* No. 9, Summer 1975), states that she refuses to debate the Spartacist League because we have a political program and have the temerity to believe in it. Indeed, we must plead guilty to these charges. We suspect, however, that Rowbotham's reluctance to confront our politics is based neither on her other "involvements" nor on our "dogmatic marxism," but rather on her inability to defend her feminist politics and on a deep pessimism, characteristic of today's petty-bourgeois intellectuals, which dooms them to endlessly explore the past without hope of formulating a successful solution to the crises of the present.

But the ability to draw conclusions from one's study and practical experience and to develop answers (horrible word!) to the problems of an oppressed humanity is the overwhelming responsibility of those who would call themselves revolutionists. As Karl Marx was fond of saying, "Ignorance never did anybody any good."

Boston Health Workers Fight for Union Recognition

Victory to the Preterm Strike!



W&R Photo

Preterm workers continue to fight despite scab labor, police harassment and mass firings.

Since October 19, counselors and technicians at Preterm, the Boston-area branch of an international chain of abortion and gynecological clinics, have been striking for union recognition. The workers are affiliated with the Hospital Workers Union, District 1199.

The job of abortion counselor is to help women decide if they do indeed want an abortion and to go through the procedure with them. For many women, taught in church and family that abortion is murder and that their role in life is the raising of children, an abortion can be an emotionally painful and scarring experience. For the counselor, the work is exhausting. The usual work load at other Boston clinics, such as Crittenden-Hastings, is two cases per day per counselor. At Preterm, speed-up had increased the load to three or even four for a clinic-wide total of 800 to 1000 abortions each month. Management had announced that it did not consider the counselors to be career employees, since they would be too emotionally burnt out after two years to continue the job. From the clinic's point of view, counselors are dispensable in any case. Clients pay for abortions, not counseling.

Before voting to strike, the counselors had attempted to negotiate with the company for two years with very little success. Twenty-one out of 30 union demands, including a reduction in the work load, employee control over scheduling, a cost-of-living allowance and higher base wages remain unresolved. Through negotiations the union had achieved only such demands as seniority rights and maternity benefits. In fact, the company's refusal to put forth any kind of alternative proposal provided the basis for an NLRB suit on the grounds of refusing to bargain in good faith.

The Preterm strikers are in a difficult situation. Unemployment in Boston rests at 12 percent, and the city's labor movement is weak and divided. In these conditions 1199's previous organizing drives—such as that at Massachusetts Rehabilitation Hospital in 1973—

have gone down to defeat before hospital management prepared to crush union organizing at all costs.

Preterm has responded to the strike with a vicious union-busting campaign, including the use of scab labor, police harassment (pickets have sustained some 30 arrests) and the firing of half of the regular nursing staff, who stayed out in sympathy with the strikers (the doctors have remained on the job).

But in addition to these time-worn methods which employers routinely utilize to break the back of working-class organization, the Preterm management has launched an anti-union publicity campaign based on feminist rhetoric and slogans, such as "a woman's right to choose." Preterm's director, Diane Richards, deplores the strikers' lack of "sisterly" solidarity. "As a woman," she says, "it is personally disappointing to me to contemplate the idea that labor unions, which for the most part are male-dominated organizations, are going to force us to admit we can't work out our problems together."

Such pious feminist wishes did not, however, keep Preterm from hiring a professional union-busting lawyer (male) who has refused to meet with any of the strikers, whom he refers to as the "girls," nor has Richards' distaste for "male-dominated" organizations deterred her from hiring a fleet of "male-dominated" police—as many as 10 to 20 a day at overtime wages of \$10.00 per hour—to do her dirty work.

Bourgeois feminism is thoroughly consistent with the actions of the Preterm management. Those feminists marching on the picket lines in solidarity with the strike do so in *contradiction* to their basic ideology, which has in the past led feminists to reject class-struggle politics, to support union-busting affirmative-action programs and preferential layoffs and to countenance scabbing on "sexist" strikes.

The Spartacist League has consistently fought within the women's movement for "Free Abortion on

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