

2nd floor south  
873 Broadway  
New York, N.Y. 10003

June 24, 1970

TO ALL SWP NC MEMBERS, SWP AND YSA ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

PROTECTIVE LAWS AND EQUAL RIGHTS

There are growing signs that the question of protective laws for women, and their relation to the proposed Equal Rights Amendment and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, is coming to the fore as an important issue in the union and women's liberation movements. Last month, 150 women met in the Bay Area to discuss this question. (See story in June 26 Militant.) There is also a group within the women's liberation movement in New York which is trying to organize a similar meeting. At a June conference of 800 women in Washington D.c., called to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, one of the main issues of contention was whether protective legislation for women should be maintained. At that meeting the majority of women voted to advocate that all such protective laws be abolished.

There is obviously a tremendous amount of education that needs to be done on this issue, both within the women's liberation movement and outside. There are many women, including women unionists, non-unionized women workers, and women within the women's liberation movement who are convinced that the protective laws should be voided. There are also many women -- in the unions and outside of them -- who want to maintain the protective laws, but who think that one of the ways to do so is to oppose the Equal Rights Amendment and to repeal similar laws calling for equality for women, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Bill.

In the coming weeks, we plan to carry additional articles on this question in the Militant. In the next article we will deal mainly with the question of the protective laws, explaining why they should be maintained and extended to men, and going into the question of what is the best way to fight for this.

So that the best possible job can be done on this, comrades should send to the National Office whatever concrete information they have on what is going on in their states concerning the protective laws. This should include facts on what court actions have been initiated against the protective laws, the response of the union and women's liberation movements to this, and any information on how the voiding of these laws will concretely effect the job conditions, pay, and job security of working women. This information should be sent in immediately, if possible.

NOW "NATIONAL WOMEN'S STRIKE"

In a number of areas around the country, the National Organization for Women (NOW) is moving ahead with the plans announced at their convention last March for a women's national day of protest on August 26. The action was originally announced by NOW as a "nationwide women's strike," but the actual form it is taking seems to be a series of actions and demonstrations, the character of which will be decided locally, by women in cities around the country.

We have reports from Atlanta and New York that our comrades have already been in contact with NOW, negotiating with them on the idea of building broad coalitions to sponsor demonstrations on or around August 26. Comrades in other areas of the country should be alert to similar opportunities to work with NOW and other women's liberation groups to organize demonstrations. In some areas, such actions could provide important focus for activity during the summer.

Of course, given the reformist politics of NOW, their whole tendency is to keep the demonstration from getting too militant, by keeping the sponsorship narrow and the decision-making undemocratic. In working with NOW in New York, the comrades found that NOW's original approach toward August 26 was one of excluding the militant women's liberation groups, and looking solely toward women from the reform Democrats, professional women, church women and other similar groups for support. They also wanted to project the action as a "parade" celebrating the 50th anniversary of winning the right to vote, instead of as a demonstration around concrete demands. It was only through our intervention at planning meetings that we were able to turn them around on both these points, and to get an open meeting called which would involve all groups and individuals who want to participate in planning an action around such concrete demands as child-care, abortion and equal pay for equal work.

NOW has as yet put out no literature on the "strike," although they have said that they plan to do so soon.

Comradely,

*Betsy Barnes*

Betsy Barnes  
Nat'l. Women's Liberation Steering  
Committee

*Susan LaMont*

Susan LaMont  
YSA National Secretary