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Young Socialist Discussion Bulletin

vol. XVII, no. 3

November 1973

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- Marty April 2014

By Mark Lause, Houston Local

The following was earlier submitted to the SWP pre-convention discussion, but arrived three days after the deadline. That it takes one week, seven days for an insured, certified air mail special delivery manuscript to reach New York from Houston is perhaps a fitting reminder of the capitalist organization of society, to capitalist ideology and the depths to which the latter permeate all of society.

The contribution is here being resubmitted because it deals with the question of feminism on which the YSA leadership in one with that of the Party. Fortunately, the fad is over among the more aware sections of the national leadership of both. It began falling into disfavor with the decline of the "mass," "independent," "objectively anti-capitalist" campus-based women's movement. The 1973 SWP resolution clarified this further in the emphasis (or relative lack of emphasis) given to feminism. There is a duality to this development. One aspect being the grudging reorientation occurring in which the SWP and YSA leadership is forced to make certain acknowledgements concerning the demise of the student movement while another may become an unfortunate shifting of emphasis from the woman question, an issue of great importance too long overlooked and neglected by our movement prior to 1969. The former aspect in this process with its resultant decline in such radical petty bourgeois ideologies as feminism, nationalism, etc., may hopefully be aided by this contribution.

Generally, the rise of the workers struggles and the re-orientation process which occurred in the American Left over the past few years since the May-June revolt in France has not only given rise to elements in this country similar to the new mass vanguard in Europe. The SWP and YSA have not been unaffected. Their single-issuism, nationalism, feminism, implicit pacifism, and studentism is becoming reoriented and transformed into a blatantly consistent refusal to work toward the building of united fronts (with those "sectarians") fighting (although not, as yet, "smashing") racism, and a workerist, tailendist approach to strike support activity, trade union interventions, the belated farmworkers activity, etc. In terms of method, in terms of providing the revolutionary leadership in practice, the process as a whole cannot be seen as much of an improvement.

While struggles may be waged and certain reforms won in the context of capitalism, and while we participate and forward those struggles, Marxists have ever recognized that an alleviation of the oppression of women can come only from material changes at the base of all social relations, i. e., the transfer of the ownership of the means of production, distribution, and services from the hands of individuals to those of society as a whole, organized, collectivized, and administered by the working class. Under such an analy-

sis, what advanced the interests of the proletariat furthered the emancipation of women. Attacks upon the interests of the proletariat--composed of workingmen as well as workingwomen--from any source--female as well as male--retard the struggle for female liberation and further rivet the chains of oppression upon womankind.

Either the interests of capital or of labor are compatible with the emancipation of women. We Internationalists see the material class interests of the working class as the very force which will compel it to integrate women into the productive processes, shift the responsibility for the reproduction and socialization of the work force from the shoulders of individuals to society as a whole, and abolish the bourgeois nuclear family as an institution. The liberation of women can be achieved only by the revolutionary readjustment of the material basis for their oppression, by the abolition of privately owned capital, and by the establishment of the international class dictatorship of the proletariat.

The interests of the proletariat are in constant conflict with those of the capitalist class; one or the other must triumph. There can be no middle ground. Radical women, like radical men, must ally themselves with the class interests of one or the other. Ultimately, there will be no hedging on this point. No sector, no nation, and no sex of the parasite class is "progressive" and any talk of welding the interests of a sector of the working class to those of a corresponding sector of the enemy class smacks of class collaboration and crass revisionism, or, at best, of theoretical unclarity.

Feminism, Historical Materialism, and the Waters Approach

Prior to the bourgeois democratic revolution, birth--not wealth in the form of capital, not individual abilities--was the criteria for class distinctions. In the revolutionary rise of the bourgeoisie, these old feudal barriers to the domination of society were destroyed. From the ashes of the old, democratic forms of government were built. Revolutionary France of 1789 and the North American democratic-republic established the same year were but the more classic examples.

The entire political philosophy of revolutionary democracy was based upon the system of natural rights, and the cornerstone of this system was the democratic "natural right" of an individual to own, buy, or sell property in the form of capital, and to exploit labor. Any "mass movements" or any struggles which accept this, the heart of bourgeois social thought, the basic premises of bourgeois society, cannot be "objectively anti-capitalist" "sui generis" (to use a rather undialectical LTF formulation).

As the grip of the dead hand of feudalism upon social progress was broken by the revolutionary democracy, new social forces came to the fore. A section of the capital-owning class--the section investing in manufacturing rather than mercantile ventures, in production rather than distribution--came to the fore as the new ruling class. This entire historical process was aided by the popularizers of bourgeois political philosophy such as Burgh, Cartwright, Sharp, Price, and Priestly in England, and Adams, Paine, and Jefferson in this country.

Their orientation to the lower classes and their egalitarian spirit differentiated the form of their revolutionism from that of the more orthodox political thinkers such as Locke. In later years, the lower class elements to which they directed their appeals came into conflict with the bourgeoisie on a number of points, but such radicalism prior to the advent of scientific socialism did not constitute proletarian revolutionism.

Thus, Spence and Ogilvie could call for a total, equal distribution of land and yet find their agrarian egalitarianism completely compatible with the historic tasks of the infant bourgeoisie to revolutionize agriculture. Their contemporaries could develop other forms of radicalism that similarly accepted the essential tenets of bourgeois social thought. Thus, in Godwin we see embryonic anarchism, and in his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of Vindications of the Rights of Women (1793) we see an embryonic feminism.

The form differed while the content remained that of bourgeois democratic ideology. A protest was registered not against the right of an individual to manage capital but against the particular individuals or type of individuals who were doing so. An objection was made not against the fact that the bourgeoisie had established their right to rule, but against the fact that the agrarian or artisan elements of society, or the capable, educated women of that society were denied their "right" to rule themselves, to control their lives. Anarchism, for all of its pretentious militancy, represented the mere protestations that not everyone could be a possessor of land and capital on an equal footing. Representing what became, in essence, the protests of the small bourgeoisie or the aspiring bourgeoisie, these forms of radicalism were to surface again and again in the ensuing decades.

Nor does this mean that the egalitarian radicalism of the more consistent bourgeois democrats was insignificant or unimportant. The radicalism of the abolitionists in this country shows the fallacy of such a superficial analysis. In the epoch of revolutionary democracy, they represented the aspirations not only of the middle class but also those of the developing proletariat. As such, radical democracy was the crucible from which socialism developed.

Today, the radicalizing workers as well as the youth on the campuses politicize around the issues of "democracy." This proved to be a promising development for the revolu-

tionary movement emerging from the isolation of the McCarthy years. However, a critical approach would view such politics in their proper context rather than labelling them as "objectively anti-capitalist." The tasks of revolutionists is to break the radicalizing masses from bourgeois democracy and to win them to the revolutionism of the transitional program.

In the context of radical democratic thought, we can see that "petty bourgeois feminism" is more than an epithet of the sectarians. It is a scientific phenomenon. In theory this middle class school of radical democracy seeks to find a common interest to unite all women, regardless of age, race, nation, or class, to struggle for the extension of bourgeois democracy to their sex.

As Marxists we know that the class struggle is the driving force of human history, and that the material class interests of every worker are incompatible with the material class interests of the capitalist class and every sector thereof. We know that the class interests of all workers--male as well as female--not the sex interests of all women will emancipate womankind.

In this light, "Feminism and the Marxist Movement," by Comrade Mary-Alice Waters (Oct., 1972 ISR) can be clearly seen as an effort to place the SWP Political Committee acceptance of feminism in a new historical context, one which justifies their capitulation to bourgeois pluralism, their Hydra-headed sectoralism in general, and their capitulation in the women's sector to feminism. An obvious shortcoming of Cde. Waters' talk is her total failure to relate feminism to the socialist movement. Her concept is: Feminism = Marxism. This represents a falsification of the historic legacy of both. It smuggles the conclusion into the premise; a curious method!

Cde. Waters treats the numerous "articles and resolutions" which "denounce 'bourgeois feminism' or just plain feminism, as a threat to the working class movement" as a "misunderstanding." She might have done better to have avoided a discussion of the terminology entirely. Writing it off as a difference between European and American feminism, she states that:

For us a feminist is any woman who recognizes that women are oppressed as a sex and is willing to carry out an uncompromising struggle to end that oppression. (ISR, p. 19).

What a menagerie such a movement would be! Women who may be aware of their oppression as a sex differ as to the way they should "carry out an uncompromising struggle." Feminists have concocted a whole range of schemes to do this, from educational reform to free love, while revolutionary socialists see the way to liberation as the class struggle for socialism. Yet Cde. Waters informs us that "the most consistent feminist must be a socialist" (p. 19). In-

deed Cde. Waters concept of what a "socialist" is differs considerably from the "orthodox" Leninist-Trotskyist view.

Her basic premise must be that only socialists can see the sex oppression of women and oppose it. The temptation is great to here reproduce numerous quotes by "consistent" democrats such as Paine, Wollstonecraft and others to prove that a recognition of women's oppression is far from restricted to scientific socialists. Many of the utopian socialists were militant defenders of women's rights.

Fourier, for example, placed a great deal of importance on the question. He wrote:

Every period has a certain characteristic which forms the pivot of mechanism, and the absence or presence of which determines the changes of periods. This characteristic is always derived from love. In the fourth period it is the absolute servitude of women; in the fifth period it is exclusive marriage, they would in a short time become civilised through this innovation alone; if we adopted the seclusion and sale of women, we should in a short time become barbarous through this single innovation; and if we adopted the amorous guarantees, we should find in this single measure an exit from civilisation, and an entrance into the sixth period.

Note that for Fourier:

Social advances and changes of periods are brought about by virtue of the progress of women toward liberty, and the decadences of the social order are brought about by virtue of the decrease of liberty of women. (His emphasis. Theorie des Quatre Mouvements Second edition, 1841, pp. 131, 195.)

In other words, the motive force of history is the struggle to extend privileges to women, not the struggle of the dispossessed class against their masters to alter not the quantity of of such privileges but their quality, their class content.

The link between utopian socialism and feminism was also clearly seen by the participants in the suffrage movement. According to the three volume History of Woman Suffrage by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Mathilda Joslyn Gage (Rochester, N. Y.: 1887) the immediate factors that led to the rise of American feminism were: the lectures and activities of Frances Wright and Ernestine L. Rose (two self-professed Owenites); the struggle for property rights for married women (led, in part, by Robert Dale Owen, the son of the great utopian); and the anti-slavery movement (another expression of bourgeois democratic radicalism).

In any case, the struggle for the extension of bourgeois democratic rights and privileges to women, the feminist movement, was not directed against the exploitation of the labor of working women. Rather, it was directed against, in theory, the sex oppression of all women, including the in-

equalities of bourgeois marriage as then existed. Robert Owen considered marriage one of the three great evils afflicting humankind, the others being private property and religion.

Thomas Skidmore, an American machinist and a militant early socialist, urged other members of the New York City Workingmen party in his Rights of Man to Property: to struggle to secure the civil recognition of the natural rights of women and black people to vote and hold property. John Francis Bray in his Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy evidenced similar views of the woman question. A consistent application of "democracy" was the cornerstone of pre-Marxist socialisms.

How does Cde. Waters "prove" the equation of feminism (the exceptional American-style) and Marxism? Point by point, the historical narrative of the Waters article reveals the following: the First International appointed a woman to its General Council and organized special women's branches in areas; the struggle of the left-wing of the German SPD with Lassallean socialism was reflected in a struggle over the woman question; the SPD had separate women's organizations; the Industrial Workers of the World organized women workers and had female organizers; the Third and Fourth Internationals related to the woman question, especially the struggles of working women; etc; etc; etc.

All this is well and good, but what does this have to do with "Feminism and the Marxist Movement?" The activities discussed were not "feminist." The participants did not consider them to be "feminist." Nor did contemporary feminists consider them to be "feminist." Nor did the revolutionary socialist movement until enlightened by Cde. Waters and her co-thinkers on the SWP PC and the YSA NEC.

Do they also consider Mother Jones, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg, or the other women warriors of the proletariat to be "feminists?" If not, they have no place in such a discussion. If so, then it is indeed unfortunate that these giants of our past did not have Cde. Waters by their side to enlighten them in their struggles since she and her co-thinkers seem to know something they did not.

To put it bluntly, the article is, in the main, pure obfuscation. It no more proves an affinity between Marxism and an exceptional American feminism than between Marxism and anarchism, Marxism and pure-and-simple trade unionism, or Marxism and radical democracy in general. Perhaps however, it might prove interesting to further investigate the activities of the "revolutionary" American breed of feminists with relation to the labor movement in general, and the socialist movement in particular.

A Brief Glance at "Revolutionary" American Feminism and the Labor Question

As we all know, or profess to know, the working class of

men and women will be the vehicle by which women will gain their emancipation. That is a revolutionary approach to the woman question. How then did the activities of the feminists coincide with the revolutionary class interests of the proletariat?

The first truly proletarian elements in this country were the women and children of the New England textile industry. All across this section of the country, the infant industrial capitalist class built factory towns and peopled them with the daughters, wives, and children of local farmers. Beginning in the 1820's and 30's, these working women began to engage in strike and organizing activity. The struggle for the ten hour day involved thousands in the decades prior to the Civil War. Of course, they were aided by the skilled workingmen and their craft organizations.

Opposition by male workers to the entrance of female workers into certain trades and crafts occurring primarily during wartime was generally short-lived and, as such, exceptional. In the long run, the solidarity of the organized male workers with the unorganized working women was the rule. At root was not any anti-sexist idealism, but material class interests. Female labor depressed wages but the influx of women into the skilled trades was an objective historical development. Male workers could not stop the process. It was in their interests to accept it, to build the working women's movement as part and parcel of the general class movement. In general, this is exactly what they did.

Out of this struggle "feminism" did not spring. The process described above was known as "class solidarity" and it stood in opposition to "feminism." The struggle of working women toward emancipation from their oppression as a sex and their exploitation as workers was not (and is not) a "feminist" movement. Feminism was, from its origins, a movement led by intellectuals, middle class radical women; nor was its content metaphysically divorced from its class base. American feminism was no exception.

From its inception in the Workingmen's movement of the late 1820's, the American labor movement has been faced with the woman question, and, because of this, it has clashed on occasion with the feminists. The New York City Workingmen's Party, spearheaded by Thomas Skidmore, a precursor of socialism, advocated the building of labor parties to take power, a redistribution of wealth, and putting the idle owning class to work.

Middle class radicals, "friends of labor" exerted their influence, even in that early date. Robert Dale Owen who rejected his father's utopian socialism for radical democracy and the defense of private property (and to later advocate women's rights in this regard), George Henry Evans who later became famous as a land reformer, and Frances Wright, the pioneer feminist united with other philanthropists to shift the decision making from mass meetings of workers to ward committees, and

to aver, whatever may be said to the contrary, by ignorant or designing individuals, or biased presses, that we have no desire or intention of disturbing the rights of property in individuals or in the public.

Further they denied "all intentions to intermeddle with the rights of individuals, either as to property or religion." ("Proceedings of a Meetings of Mechanics and Other Workmen," NY; 1830. Commons' Documentary History, Vol. V, pp. 157, 160.)

Skidmore and the original nucleus were then expelled. Representing the propertyless workers, "those and those only, who live by the labour of their hands," the ousted faction reorganized. At an early meeting, complained Frances Wright,

Few questions were asked regarding the candidates nominated, except, "Is he a rich man?"... If he was proved, or supposed to be possessed of any property, the meeting declared "he wouldn't do." (Free Enquirer, March 30, 1830)

Even in that embryonic stage of development, the middle class feminists were rather clear when it came to threatening their privileged position in society. Programs dealing with the distribution of the wealth as proposed by the workers were discouraged by Wright as one of those "reforms... beyond what the public mind can accurately appreciate." (Free Enquirer, Nov. 21, 1829.) The difference between Skidmore's approach and that of Owen, Wright, and the rest was that the former saw the social struggle as one of the propertyless against the propertied, while the latter saw the question as one of educational reform, woman's rights, and other such strides toward "pure democracy." This dichotomy in the pre-Marxist socialist movement reflected its multi-class composition.

In what remains an appropriate response to the Owen-Wright notion that the oppression of women came from the lack of accessible methods of birth control, Skidmore wrote:

Let us say it is owing to the fact that Miss Wright, that Mr. Owen, and ten thousand other Aristocrats possess in their hands, that wealth which the labor of others has created and those materials of nature, which are alike the property of all; thus placing a great mass of women, as well as men, in circumstances of the most afflicting, degrading, and oppressive poverty. (Moral Physiology Exposed and Refuted, NY: 1831, p. 35.)

The development of feminism was hastened by the rise of abolitionism, another struggle to extend bourgeois democracy. Both were similarly antagonistic to urban labor because the interests of the propertyless workers threatened the very essence of petty bourgeois radicalism in that period as now. However, the interests of the possessing classes had yet to exhaust their revolutionary role. The abolition of

slavery in the Second American Revolution could be accomplished only by mobilizing the Northern working class for emancipation. This was done in spite of the early abolitionist leaders, not because of them. The same held true in the struggle for women's suffrage.

A burst of trade union organizing accompanied the economic boom of the Civil War and, immediately afterwards, the National Labor Union was formed. Women workers of the period organized in essentially three ways. Some were in trade unions, with or without male workers. Others were members of general associations of working women such as protective societies. A few were in women's groups which, although containing working class women in the main, were under the leadership of the "revolutionary" feminists.

Susan B. Anthony, Mrs. Mary Kellogg Putnam, and Mrs. Mary McDonald appeared at the 1868 convention of the National Labor Union representing a number of formations of the last described category. After considerable discussion, Elizabeth Cady Stanton was seated as a representative of the Women's Suffrage Association. Although it was not a labor organization, the majority of delegates present, including the militant William H. Sylvis, felt that the issue of women's suffrage was one of great concern to working women and to the working class movement in general. This hailed a re-appearance of the woman question.

This was apparent from the fact that the women's unions were the only ones in which the leaders did not come from the rank and file but had to be drawn from the better situated classes, the educated women, (J. R. Commons et. al., History of Labour in the United States, NY: 1918. Vol. II, p. 127.)

Susan B. Anthony's credentials were rejected at the next convention a year later when the typographical union objected to her peculiarly "consistent" feminist ideas with regard to the labor movement. Women's suffrage was not the question. It seems that would-be Fellow Worker Susan B. Anthony had urged women to break strikes by working men. Apparently this "objectively anti-capitalist" union-wrecking did not settle well the workers.

The Party in its public propaganda has taken up this question of Susan B. Anthony and her scabbing which, even from the PC and NEC perspective might have been, in all good taste, ignored. We have conceded that she did not understand the double oppression of women, the majority of women as being both women and part of the working class. However, an effort is made to get her off the hook. "Anthony was pushed to this decision," we are told, "by the AFL, which had a formal position against sexual discrimination in employment, yet systematically denied women access to skilled jobs or to training programs, viewing them as 'temporary' workers in the labor force between pregnancies." (Sisters in Struggle, p. 14.)

One of the quickest ways to make American socialists froth at the mouth is to refer to the American Federation of Labor, the organized epitome of all the sellout labor fakers who have ever plagued the American working class movement. Of course--we are told--Anthony was incorrect, but she was "pushed to this decision" by the sexist AF of L! Of course the events under discussion occurred with the radical National Labor Union (which voted support to the First International), but it was the AFL that forced her to the pro-scabbing position! In 1869? A scant seventeen years before the founding convention of the AFL? Perhaps Susan B. Anthony was clairvoyant? Or perhaps we underestimated the power of the AFL? Or more likely the PC school of Marxist historiography allows some rather wide leeway for "creative writing."

One of the feminist papers more friendly to labor, The Revolution (the title of which should teach comrades not to take things at face value) declared that:

The worst enemies of Women's Suffrage will ever be the laboring class of men. Their late action toward Miss Anthony is but the expression of the hostility they feel to the idea she represents. (Aug. 26, 1869.)

This, of course, represents the classical view of the petty bourgeois. The issue was not one of women's suffrage but one of "feminism", which, in this case, boiled down to pure and simple scabbing. An analogy could be drawn between the Anthony school of union-building and the present support of the Party to the interventions of the bourgeois state into the trade union movements to enforce bourgeois equality. The leadership claims this heritage. Unfortunately, they may be correct.

The American sections of the International Workingmen's Association split over the woman question in the same period. A grouping of petty bourgeois social reformers and bourgeois philanthropists, freed from their abolitionist activity, turned their attentions to the labor question. Such a grouping around Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin in New York organized themselves into a formation called the "New Democracy." The organization was drawn to the IWA by its defense of the Paris Commune and consistent advocacy of black equality. Funded by Cornelius Vanderbilt, they set forth to remake the world.

Chartered as Section 12 of the IWA, their official organ, Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly, was the sole English press of the International in America. With the notable exception of having printed the Communist Manifesto for the first time in this country, the paper offered radicalizing workers: shocking exposes of sex scandals; the latest antics of the sixty-year old William West, some of which would make Abbie Hoffman blush with disbelief (on one occasion he issued his own writ of infallibility and announced his candidacy for pope); flaming manifestos on free love and the

feminist movement; and occasional statements on the working class movement and the International which were frequently misstatements. On September 23, 1871, an appeal from the International was printed urging Woodhull's grouping to print nothing about the IWA "except authentic information."

The Woodhull grouping too was in the midst of the broadest and deepest radicalization ever! Unlike the German-Americans led by Friederich A. Sorge, the pioneer American Marxist of Section I who felt that the formation of an independent labor party was premature and doomed to failure and demoralization as long as the workers were insufficiently organized, the zoo in Section 12 called for the formation of "something more than a labor party" to hasten the millenium. (Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly, Sept. 10, 1870.) Possibly a coalition of independent parties?

Thus was eventually born the Equal Rights Party, an isolated milieu of petty bourgeois social reformers. Perhaps we should reexamine our conduct in the early weeks of our 1972 campaign in light of the impression one Militant reader got:

In 1872 the Equal Rights Party nominated Victoria Woodhull, an outstanding feminist, and Frederick Douglass, a leader of the Black liberation struggle, for the presidency and vice-presidency. Good luck to Linda Jenness and Andrew Pulley in their 1972 campaign! (George Dolph, "Woodhull and Douglass," The Militant, Sept. 24, 1971, p. 7.)

The primary issues dividing Sorge and his allies from Woodhull and Section 12 centered on the woman question. This crucial difference came to a head when Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly declared that the women's movement should be given priority over the International's work in the trade unions and the eight-hour struggle. (Nov. 15, 1871.)

What may appear as a mere tactical difference with regard to a matter of temporary orientation was much greater. As Woodhull expounded the feminist position:

I would rather be the labor slave of a master with his whip cracking continually about my ears, than be the forced sexual slave on any man for a single hour. ("The Scarecrow of Sexual Freedom," a lecture at Vineland, N.J., cited by Emanie Sacks, The Terrible Siren, Victoria Woodhull, New York, 1928, p. 147.)

The oppression of women in marriage was therefore worse than wage slavery on the subjective scale of the feminists. Being less than dialectical materialists, scientific socialists, and closer akin to bleeding heart liberal moralists, "consistent" feminists saw the alleviation of what they felt to be a greater evil as having a prior claim on the energies of revolutionists. So too with Woodhull.

The implications of the position were quite serious. As

one historian of the Internationalists in America wrote, it meant that the IWA had to

shift its emphasis. Instead of advancing the cause which had been the reason for its foundation, it had to further the equal rights movement which, in its scale of values, was quite subordinate. The stress laid by Section 12 on what it regarded as the primary aim of the association had an even deeper meaning. If women's rights had the first claim on the efforts of Internationalists, there was no need to pursue the emancipation of labor. This, of course, spelled the abandonment of their program. (Bernstein, Samuel, The First International in America, New York: 1962, p. 118.)

In any case, the feminist wing of the IWA did not view the struggle for the proletarian seizure of power as the struggle which would emancipate women.

History does not record whether or not Section 12 thought that revolutionists should struggle to purge workers of their sexist backwardness before they could act in a revolutionary fashion. Possibly Section 12 felt that workers would radicalize around a multi-class movement for equal rights and be drawn into struggle like water by a sponge. Or maybe these would-be feminists/socialists thought that when the workers would start to move they would look around for the people who successfully led the struggle for equal rights. A more thorough investigation of Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly may prove enlightening on these points and we strongly recommend the project to Cde. Waters.

The revolutionists in the American sections were openly speculating as to why the General Council did not act decisively to crush the feminism that haunted the public image of the International in the United States. Marx then wrote Fred Bolte, a cigar-maker and member of Section 1 that he was "greatly astonished to see that German Section No. 1 suspects the General Council of any preference for bourgeois philanthropists, sectarians, or amateur groups. The matter is quite the contrary." (Nov. 23, 1871, Letters to Americans, New York: 1953, pp. 89-90.)

In the spring, Marx brought his influence to bear within the General Council. Section 12 was suspended until the Congress in the fall. Both sides were urged to send representatives to that Congress where the question was to be decided. In September the Congress was held and the question of Section 12's mandate came before the credentials committee.

There, as historian Bernstein wrote, "Marx levelled charges against the section that were a summation of the earlier indictment." Among its offenses were noted "its placing of woman's rights above labor's demands." (See pp. 124-6.)

The published minutes of the Hague Congress include Marx's report to the general session. "The credentials committee recommends to reject the mandate of W. West."

Marx "in the name of the credentials committee proposed that the mandate for W. West be declared null and void" because "West's credentials are signed by Victoria Woodhull." Section 12 "founded by V. Woodhull" was attacked as consisting "almost exclusively of bourgeoisie" and of concentrating on all sorts of issues that revolutionists considered peripheral to the tasks of that period.

The section "agitated especially for women's franchise, universal language, etc." If but Marx could have learned revolutionism from the Waters' school! Moreover, the feminists "give precedence to the women's question over the question of labor and take exception to the assumption that the IWA is a workingmen's organization." Indeed, Marx was so schematic and formalistic as to expect that the class struggle movement of revolutionary workers should consist of class conscious revolutionary workers! ("Minutes of the Fifth General Congress of the International Workingmen's Association at the Hague, Sept., 1872" in The First International, ed. and trans. Hans Gerth, Madison: 1958, pp. 194-9.)

West's answer lasted nearly an hour and a half. "The labor question is also a woman's question" by virtue of the fact that most women are in the working class. He also vigorously defended the right of the petty bourgeois intellectuals and reformers to membership in the International. "The best leaders are not the working men themselves, but those who, mixing more in intellectual society, see with a clearer eye the inequalities and vices of the present conditions of things." He "who had advanced" to the middle class had "the necessary experience and intelligence which we need in the movement."

Maltman Barry's report to the London Standard further rounds our view of West's defense of Section 12 which Barry claimed was "composed exclusively of bogus reformers, middle-class quacks, and trading politicians" expounding the "pet doctrines" of Woodhull's feminist "mongrel programme." Barry quotes West as having said:

The preamble to the general rules lays down as the great aim of the society the emancipation of the working classes. Well, any emancipation of the working classes must comprehend the emancipation of working women. Sexual equality is the first step in the true path of liberty. (Gerth, "Minutes," pp. 198-9. "Barry Report," pp. 264-6.)

Working women were oppressed more importantly and more fundamentally as women. Therefore, they would struggle as women first. There thus existed (in the Woodhull-West view) objective grounds to unite a section of the working class to a section of the possessing classes. Where have we heard such logic before?

Apparently Marx did not see the "dialectical" compatibility of his politics with those of Woodhull. It was left to

the Political Committee of our Party in the period from 1969 to 1971 to "understand" it as taught by the leadership of the YSA in that period. Marx made an important statement concerning "Marxists" who forwarded "Marxist" positions he did not understand: "Then I am not a Marxist!"

At issue in the IWA was a central point of division between those who see the class struggle as the dynamic force of history and those who assign that role to technological developments and struggles for democratic rights (as Cde. Sarah Johnston informed the 1970 YSA Convention, feminist rage). Marxists, while conscious of these other factors, have always seen the division of society into various classes corresponding to their relation to the production processes and to their social role with regard to distribution and exchange. Not so the petty bourgeois radicals under the influence of bourgeois pluralism!

A question arises in this entire discussion of America's exceptional feminism. Aren't the PC and NEC losing sight of some not unimportant class perspectives. Have we even found it in our hearts to praise the Women's Christian Temperance Union which "tackled a problem especially crucial to working class women." (Debby Woodroffe, Sisters in Struggle, pp. 17-8.) The "problem": Demon rum!

There can be no denying that alcoholism was--and is--a serious problem among the "lower classes," but to praise a bunch of Victorian middle-class fanatics who wrecked bars with axes seems a bit excessive. Were the most consistent teetotalers also revolutionary socialists? After all, they did utilize formations such as the Prohibitionist Party to engage in "independent political action."

A precursor of Cde. Waters' work is the article by Milton Alvin (Militant, June 11, 1971, p. 18) in which he disusses Mother Jones taking "her place in the history of women's and labor's struggles as a predecessor of the present generation of fighters." She was hailed as "an example for feminists then and today"! After all, "although she did not identify with the women's movement of her time, she was a strong woman an fighter"!!!

Later in the struggle, the "most consistent" feminists also kicked up quite a fuss over "foreigners," Black people, and other elements of the lower classes. How indeed could Black men, the subhuman sons of slaves, be accorded greater privileges than white womanhood! Women's suffrage was pushed by these feminists as the way to countervalance the radical, red-tinged politics of the immigrants, the Blacks, and the working class. What was the class basis of this argument? Rest assured that it was "objectively anticapitalist!"

The petty bourgeois radicals ("feminists," including the exceptional American breed among them) have clashed with revolutionary socialism on occasions where they would venture into the proletarian movement. As James P. Cannon wrote:

The American movement has had very bad experience with intellectuals. Those who have appeared on its horizon up to date have been a pretty shabby crew. Adventurers, careerists, self-seekers, dilettantes, quitters--under-fire--that is the wretched picture of the parade of intellectuals through the American labor movement as painted by themselves. (The Struggle for a Proletarian Party , p. 21.)

In this country, as well as the other advanced capitalist nations (American chauvinism notwithstanding), "feminism" is more than female radicalism. It is more than a female recognition of sex oppression. It is more than female advocacy of radical social change. Historically, feminism represents the protest of women of the possessing classes against their exclusion from the enjoyment of bourgeois rights and petty bourgeois privileges. Its original protest was against the exclusion of married women from access to private property and ownership of capital, i. e., the right to exploit labor.

Feminism in this light can be seen as a scientifically defined phenomena, a radical ideology of middle and upper class women struggling to extend bourgeois democracy, not the revolutionary ideology of working class women and men struggling to overthrow the bourgeois order. Contrary to Cde. Waters' feeble defense of their compatibility, feminism can here be seen as not only different from but counterposed to the class struggle approach of scientific socialism.

Indeed, the battle to place the struggle for women's liberation on a sound "historical and materialist basis" has been "one of the dividing lines between revolutionary and reformist currents within the working class movement; between those committed to a class struggle perspective and those following a line of class collaboration" (Waters, ISR , p. 9). But not always in the context of a struggle against the male chauvinism of the Lasallean socialists! Often the struggle was against the "petty bourgeois feminists" who happened to blunder into a serious movement, that of the revolutionary proletariat, a class movement of women and men.

Prior to the enlightenment offered the world Marxist movement by Cde. Waters and her cothinkers, scientific socialism had no problem distinguishing their approach from that of the feminists. This, along with the fact that the two currents moved in distinct class milieus, was why the great contributors to our revolutionary heritage spent so little time dealing with polemics against them. As we may assume that the "exceptionalism" of American feminism has been adequately refuted, the revolutionary critique by the world socialist movement of the first wave of feminist radicalism should be noted.

The Revolutionary Labor Movement and Feminism

In July of 1876, the first national party of the socialist movement in America was founded. It resulted from the

fusion of a number of minor Lasallean sects and the remnants of the IWA. The founding convention resolved that:

The emancipation of women will be accomplished with the emancipation of men, and the so-called women's rights question will be solved with the labor question. All evils and wrongs of the present society can be abolished only when economical freedom is conquered for men as well as women.

Women of the proletariat were urged to

organize themselves and take their places within the ranks of struggling labor. To aid and support them in this work is the duty of the men. By uniting their efforts, they will succeed in breaking the economical fetters and a new and free race of men and women will rise, recognizing each other as peers.

The "perfect equality or rights of both sexes" was regarded as a "principle" to be "strictly observed" within the Party and women were given full rights along with their male comrades. ("Official Proceedings of the Unity Congress," cited, Bernstein, pp. 296-7.)

The struggle of the Marxists against the Lasalleans over the women's rights question in the German SDP did not occur within the Workingmen's Party of the United States. On paper at least the American party had a better position. Unfortunately, the Lasallean currents dominated and the party, renamed the Socialist Labor Party, developed electoral fetishism and abstained from ongoing struggles, a road others would later follow as well.

The struggle within the Second International further clarified the issue and the struggle for women's suffrage waged by the German Social Democrats was not an unimportant facet of the question. A revolutionary approach was urged by Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg, and others. Far from labelling it "objectively anticapitalist" and assimilating the demands of the feminist movement, the German revolutionists clearly saw the tasks of utilizing the struggle for bourgeois democratic reforms as a tool to escalate the class struggle and exacerbate the class divisions among women as well as men.

As Rosa Luxemburg noted in one of her speeches which, not surprisingly, did not find its way into Rosa Luxemburg Speaks (edited by none other than Cde. Waters), she declared that

Women's suffrage is the goal. But the mass movement to bring it about is not a job for women alone, but a common class concern for women and men of the proletariat.

Further, she argued, the issue was not to relate to women as women in a multi-class feminist movement for

In truth, our state is interested in keeping the vote from working women and from them alone. It rightly fears they will threaten the traditional institutions of class rule, for instance militarism (of which no thinking proletarian woman can help being a deadly enemy), monarchy, the systematic robbery of duties and taxes on groceries, etc. Women's suffrage is horror and abomination for the present capitalist state because behind it stand millions of women who would strengthen the enemy within, i. e., revolutionary Social Democracy. If it were a matter of the bourgeois ladies voting, the capitalist state could expect nothing but effective support for the reaction. Most of those bourgeois women who act like lionesses in the struggle against "male prerogatives" would trot like docile lambs into the camp of conservative and clerical reaction if they had the suffrage. Indeed, they would be a good deal more reactionary than the male part of their class. (Aside from the few who have jobs or professions, the women of the bourgeoisie do not take part in social production. They are nothing but co-consumers of the surplus value their men extort from the proletariat. They are parasites of the parasites of the social body. And co-consumers are usually even more rabid and cruel in defending their "right" to a parasites life than the direct agents of class rule and exploitation. The history of all great revolutionary struggles confirms this in a horrible way. Take the great French Revolution. After the fall of the Jacobins, when Robespierre was driven in chains to the place of execution, the naked whores of the victory-drunk bourgeoisie danced in the streets, danced a shameless dance of joy around the fallen hero of the Revolution. And in 1871, in Paris, when the heroic workers' Commune was defeated by machine guns, the raving bourgeois females, surpassed even their bestial men in their bloody revenge against the suppressed proletariat. The women of the property-owning classes will always fanatically defend the exploitation and enslavement of the working people by which they indirectly receive the means for their socially useless existence.

(Economically and socially, the women of the exploiting classes are not an independent segment of the population. Their only social function is to be tools of the natural propagation of the ruling classes. By contrast, the women of the proletariat are economically independent. They are productive for society like the men.)

Not in her opinion was the "stuffy, narrow existence," "the miserable and petty mindlessness of household management" the qualitative exploitation that was material class interests. By the phrase "productive for society"

I do not mean their bringing up children or their housework which helps men support their families on scanty wages. This kind of work is not productive in the sense of the present capitalist economy no matter how enormous an achievement the sacrifices and energy spent,

the thousand little efforts add up to. This is but the private affair of the worker, his happiness and blessing, and for this reason nonexistent for our present society. As long as capitalism and the wage system rules, only that kind of work is considered productive which produces surplus value, which creates capitalist profit.

("Women's Suffrage and the Class Struggle," a speech at the Second Social Democratic Women's Rally in Stuttgart, May 12, 1912, in Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg, ed. Dick Howard, NY: 1971, pp. 218, 219-220.)

Luxemburg, of course, related to the living struggle for women's rights in the highest traditions of revolutionary socialism. She was building upon the theoretical foundations of her predecessors such as Friederich Engels and August Bebel. Bebel's Women Under Socialism appeared in 1883 shortly before Engels' Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State. It is generally considered a pioneer work of scientific socialism on the woman question.

Bebel well understood the section of the women's movement which

demands that competition for work be not limited to the field of the lower occupations, but should also extend higher, to the professions, to the field of arts and sciences. This set demands the admission of women to all the higher institutions of learning, namely, the universities, which in many countries are still closed to her. Their admission is advocated to the classes of several branches of study, to the medical profession, to the civil service (the Post Office, telegraph and railroad offices), for which they consider women peculiarly adapted; and they point to the practical results that have been attained, especially in the United States, through the employment of women. The one and the other also make the demand that political rights be conferred upon woman. Woman, they admit, is human and a member of the State, as well as man; legislation, until now in the exclusive control of man, proves that he exploited the privileges to his own exclusive benefit, and kept woman in every respect under guardianship, a thing to be henceforth prevented.

It is noteworthy that the efforts here roughly sketched do not reach beyond the framework of the existing social order. The question never is put whether, these objects being attained, any real and thoroughgoing improvement in the condition of woman will have been achieved. Standing on the ground of the bourgeois, that is, of the capitalist social order, the full social equality of man and woman is considered the solution of the question. These folks are not aware, or they slide over the fact that, in so far as the unrestricted admission of women to the industrial occupations is concerned, the object has already been actually attained, and it meets with the strongest support on the part of the ruling class who as

will be shown further on, find therein their own interest. Under existing conditions, the admission of women to all industrial occupations can have for its only effect that the competitive struggle of the working people become ever sharper, and rage ever more fiercely. Hence the inevitable result--the lowering of incomes for female and male labor, whether this income be in the form of wages or salary.

That this solution cannot be the right one is clear. The full civic equality of woman is, however, not merely the ultimate object of the men who, planted upon the existing social order, favor the efforts in behalf of woman. It is also recognized by the female bourgeois, active in the Woman Movement. These, together with the males of their mental stamp, stand, accordingly, with their demands in contrast to the larger portion of the men, who oppose them, partly out of old-fogy narrowness, partly also--in so far as the admission of woman to the higher studies and the better-paid public positions is concerned--out of mean selfishness, out of fear of competition. A difference in principle, however, a class difference, such as there is between the working and the capitalist class, does not exist between these two sets of male and female citizens.

Let the by no means impossible case be imagined that the representatives of the movement for the civic rights of woman carry through all their demands for placing woman upon an equal footing with man. What then? Neither the slavery, which modern marriage amounts to for numberless women, nor prostitution, nor the material dependence of the large majority of married women upon their marital lords, would thereby be removed. For the large majority of women it is, indeed, immaterial whether a thousand, or ten thousand, members of their own sex, belonging to a favored strata of society, land in higher branches of learning, the practice of medicine, a scientific career, or some government office. Nothing is thereby changed in the total condition of the sex.

The mass of the female sex suffers in two respects: On the one side, woman suffers from economic and social dependence upon man. True enough, this dependence may be alleviated by formally placing her upon an equality before the law, and in point of rights; but the dependence is not removed. On the other side, woman suffers from the economic dependence that woman in general, the working-woman in particular, finds herself in, along with the workingman.

Evidently, all women, without difference of social standing, have an interest--as the sex that in the course of social development has been oppressed, and ruled, and defiled by man--in removing such a state of things, and must exert themselves to change it, in so far as it can be changed by changes in the laws and institutions within the framework of the present social order. But the enormous

majority of women is furthermore interested in the most likely manner in that the existing State and social order be radically transformed, to the end that both wage slavery, under which the workingwomen deeply pine, and sex slavery, which is intimately connected with our property and industrial systems, be wiped out.

The larger portion by far of the women in society, engaged in the movement for the emancipation of woman, do not see the necessity for such a radical change. Influenced by their privileged social standing, they see in the more far-reaching working-women's movement dangers, not infrequently abhorrent aims, which they feel constrained to ignore, eventually even to resist. The class antagonism, that in the general social movement rages between the capitalist and the working class, and which, with the ripening of conditions, grows sharper and more pronounced, turns up likewise on the surface of the Woman's Movement; and it finds its corresponding expression in the aims and tactics of those engaged in it.

All the same, the hostile sisters have, to a far greater extent than the male population--split up as the latter is in the class struggle--a number of points of contact, on which they can, although marching separately, strike jointly.

In addition to these areas of mutual concern, however, and the basis for Bebel's advice to socialist and proletarian women to "march separately" was the fact that

the working woman has also a special interest in doing battle hand in hand with the male portion of the working class, for all the means and institutions that may protect the working woman from physical and moral degeneration, and which promise to secure to her the vitality and fitness necessary for motherhood and for the education of children. Furthermore, as already indicated, it is the part of the working-woman to make common cause with the male members of her class and of her lot in the struggle for a radical transformation of society, looking to establishment of such conditions as may make possible the real economic and spiritual independence of both sexes, by means of social institutions that afford to all a full share in the enjoyment of all the conveniences of civilization made by mankind.

The goal, accordingly, is not merely the realization of the equal rights of woman with man within present society, as is aimed at by the bourgeois woman emancipationists.

Further, Bebel is clearly antagonistic to associations which

have loved to place themselves under the protectorate of higher and leading ladies. The bourgeois females imitate herein the example of the bourgeois males, who

likewise love such protectorates, and exert themselves in directions which that can bring only small, never large results. A Sisyphus work is thus done with as much noise as possible, to the end of deceiving oneself and others on the score of the necessity for a radical change. The necessity is also felt to do all that is possible in order to suppress all doubts regarding the wisdom of the foundations of our social and political organization, and to proscribe them as treasonable. The conservative nature of these endeavors prevents bourgeois associations of women from being seized with so called destructive tendencies.

Nevertheless, "the bourgeois women will not succeed in pulling themselves out of the quagmire by their own top-knots." (Women Under Socialism, NY: 1904, pp. 3-5, 142, 143.) Despite Bebel's later demise, along with that of the entire German Social Democracy, his work remains a classical socialist pronouncement on the woman question.

Daniel DeLeon, Bebel's American translator, is described by Cde. Waters as one who "fought to establish a correct line in theory and practice" (p. 12). While yielding to few comrades in our admiration of DeLeon's contributions to our legacy, we do feel the necessity to point out that the practice of the Socialist Labor Party was marred in all areas by its ultra-sectarianism. Because of this we find it difficult to agree with Cde. Waters. Insofar as "theory" goes, it should be noted that DeLeon differed with Bebel on the question of the nuclear family, feeling that it would blossom under socialism, and viewing this as less a "clash" than a "variety of shades" of opinion.

Of the writings of Lenin on the woman question, the great bulk dealt with working class women, their special needs and interests and the necessity of relating to those needs and interests. Lenin agreed with the International Socialist Congress of 1907 that working women were to struggle for their rights "not in conjunction with the bourgeois supporters of women's rights, but in conjunction with the class parties of the proletariat." Lenin urged extreme caution in approaching bourgeois women for "The proletarian view must be clearly distinguished from and contrasted with them." (International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart, Sept., 1907, in Collected Works, Vol. 13, p. 90; Letter to Inessa Armand of Jan. 24, 1915, in CW, Vol. 35, p. 183. Both reprinted in part in The Emancipation of Women, NY: 1966.)

Lenin advised Zetkin to "lay stress on the unbreakable connection between woman's human and social position and the private ownership of the means of production. This will draw an ineradicable line against the bourgeois movement for the emancipation of women." The American IMT concurs with this advice; the PC and NEC ignore it.

On point after point, Lenin noted that "It goes without saying that I am not referring to the bourgeois ladies," but to the "vast majority of women," i. e., women of the working class and the lower middle class.

Despite his hostility to the bourgeois feminists, Lenin's approach to Zetkin's proposal for an international congress of women was not at all sectarian or narrow. It was to be "not only proletarian women" but "the peasant women and the women of the various sections of the lower middle class.... This is not bourgeois feminism; it is practical revolutionary expediency." (Clara Zetkin, "My Recollection of Lenin," The Emancipation of Women, pp. 110, 114-5.)

Cde. Waters finds this "striking" in "the degree to which this proposed congress parallels the general way in which the SWP and YSA have approached the need to build a broad, mass-action-oriented campaign around the abortion issue." (ISR, p. 16.) In what way were they "parallel"? That both were to be held indoors? The proposed conference differed from the WONAAC debacle considerably. It was not to be held on the basis of the single-issue fetishism which has been elevated to the level of principle by the leadership. Nor was it to be held on the basis of any lowest-common-denominator reform struggle.

Rather Zetkin's proposal and Lenin's approval were for a conference in which "communist solutions and slogans should be the focal point" for this would force the "respectable reformist lackeys" to "fight under our leadership." This is in obvious contrast to Cde. Waters' view which would have us drop our "communist solutions and slogans" or water them into slogans more palatable to the Women's Political Caucus and the National Organization for Women, our contemporary "respectable reformist lackeys."

Lenin also warned us that "we must not make a fetish out of our demands for women" and that those demands must always be raised in the "general interests of the proletariat." (Zetkin, Emancipation of Women, pp. 112-3, 113, 119.) How could it be that Cde. Caroline Lund could wrench from this last statement that "Lenin had a very clear position on the need to mobilize women as women" is beyond comprehension! (Our emphasis, The Family: Revolutionary or Oppressive Force, p. 7.)

Indeed, when Lenin heard of the strange goings-on in the German movement such as the organizing of prostitutes, he quipped as to their becoming a "special revolutionary guild contingent" and asked, "Are there really no industrial working women left in Germany who need organizing, who need a newspaper, who should be enlisted in your struggle. This is a morbid deviation." (Zetkin, p. 100.)

Such was the legacy of the relations between the revolutionary proletarian movement and the bourgeois movement for female liberation. No amount of repeating historical truisms such as the presence of women in the socialist movement, the legacy of Marxism in relating to the woman question, etc., can alter or falsify that heritage. The fact that some socialists happened to be women or that some of the fighters for women's rights became socialists does not and cannot alter the political distinctions and antagonisms be-

tween Marxism and feminism. These distinctions have shown themselves wherever the two have come into contact.

Rather predictably, Cde. Waters' farcical effort to "go back and retrace the true lines of our history in order to establish the continuity of Marxist theory and practice" (her emphasis, p. 8) has numerous shortcomings. Not the least of which is the conspicuous absence of a discussion of the legacy of our own party, the American party in solidarity with the Fourth International, which she mentions and then drops like the proverbial hot potato. If, indeed, feminism, the movement of women as women represents a ready substitute for the class movement, then why was a discussion of the phenomena absent prior to the early 1960's?

Cde. Waters' assertion that the Party leadership "recognized the profound importance of the fact that women as women were beginning to move into action" in a Second Wave of feminism is a gross understatement (p. 8). Not only did the Political Committee recognize its "profound importance," but it mystically applied the dynamic of the permanent revolution to women as a multi-class oppressed sector, opportunistically seized upon the spontaneity of the movement, labelling its demands for democratic reforms "democratic and transitional demands," tail-ended the spontaneity of the right wing of the feminist movement, and declared its "logic," "dynamic," and "general thrust" to be "objectively anti-capitalist." Consistent feminism thus became transformed into revolutionary socialism.

The role of revolutionists then became less the injection of revolutionary proletarian perspectives than its political liquidation into "consistent feminism." The party's role ceases to be that of a vanguard and becomes one of a coordinator of the spontaneous campus-based and student-led vanguards of consistent activists from the "independent 'mass movements'", a sort of multi-issue Socialist Workers Action Coalition! And the YSA is to be the vehicle for this process!

Some Early Discussion in the American Trotskyist Movement

The Party did recognize the necessity to relate to women who "are considered a labor reserve that can be used or laid on the shelf at will." Obviously this does not include women other than those of the proletariat. Any discussion of the woman question in this period of orienting to women as a particularly oppressed section of society is restricted to the women who

have been released from the drudgery and confinement of domestic labor and became an essential part of the productive life of the community. They have won financial independence. They have joined unions and become active in the labor movement. They have learned that nurseries can free them from a 24-hour day as mothers, and at the same time provide an ideal environment for the growth and development of their children.

The women under discussion in the early days of the Party were women "who have already learned the elementary lessons of class struggle." Distinctions were clearly drawn between women of the working class and women of the parasite class.

A war-time contribution speculated as to what would become of the millions of female industrial workers at the end of the war. These women "will want to use their new skills and not be pushed back into the kitchen. They will need work desperately. They will revolt!"

Dependent upon the forms taken by the expected revolt of these working women, it was suggested that the Party should formulate "appropriate demands and slogans" with "special committees and forms of organization." The idea that such activity among women workers was "feminist" was repudiated and Lenin was quoted as having said: "That is not feminism; That is practical revolutionary expediency." (Irene James, "Women Workers and the Post-War Crisis," SWP Internal Bulletin, Oct., 1944, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 30-31. Lenin quoted by Zetkin, The Emancipation of Women, NY: 1966, p. 110.)

That capitalism in the post-war years did not enter a period of crisis but an economic boom enabled reassimilation into the work force of the millions of workingmen in the Armed Forces without driving women from industry. The mass revolt did not take place. This is cited as an example of the correct approach to work around the women question: from a proletarian base.

Another internal discussion that needs to be cited here is the 1954 discussion on cosmetics, fashion, beauty, etc. We will cite extensively from a reprinting of the major contribution to the discussion in a later section, so we will deal with it very briefly here. Articles appeared in the Party press dealing with the commodity-fetishism cultivated by the cosmetics and textile industries. Certain comrades objected to attacking the use of cosmetics by women and defended the right of women to "control their own bodies" in this regard. Their position was ably refuted by none other than Cde. Evelyn Reed.

Rejecting any attempts to "identify the interests of all classes of women as a sex," she stated that the emancipation of women rested not with women as a sex but with workers as a class. "The fate of humanity," she wrote, "lies in the hands of the working class of men and women."

Discussing some of the problems facing us in our task to win over a "lower middle class of housewives and low-paid white collar workers," she noted that

Large sections of housewives and white-collar workers do not identify their interests with the proletariat. On the other hand they cannot identify themselves except in imagination with the rich bourgeois women. They chafe

and churn, having none of the advantages of the proletariat such as their unification into trade unions, and yet none of the advantages of the bourgeoisie.

The way to win middle class women was the same as the way to win the middle class as a whole; establish a proletarian base, a pole of attraction to serve as an alternative for the middle class to that of the bourgeoisie!

When the complaining comrades charged that Cde. Jack Bustelo (a pseudonym then used by Cde. Hansen), the author of the articles under discussion, had "ridiculed women when he used the sardonic method to attack the cosmetic profiteers and hucksters," Cde. Reed noted that "no such criticism" was offered when the Party press ran the Laura Gray cartoon some years ago, lampooning Mrs. Rich-Bitch. If we ran those cartoons today, would Laura Gray be accused of ridiculing women, or insulting the Women Question? That "some middle class women were offended by the Gray cartoons" was regarded as inconsequential. "This did not concern us, for we were addressing ourselves to the workers, and they chuckled over the cartoons."

The Woman Question was not to be solved by women as a sex, but by female members of the working class and its revolutionary vanguard, and by the class as a whole and the Party as a whole. The emancipation of women was clearly seen as a task of the class and its party in which, on the woman question, "it is the women... who must take the lead." Because of this, Cde. Reed asserted that, within the Party, the study of Marxism and the Marxist position on the woman question was a "primary duty of women." ("The Woman Question and the Marxist Method," Oct. 18, 1954 SWP DB, Oct. 1954, A-23, pp. 29, 39, 41, 42.)

The potential role of women in a coming radicalization was recognized by the Party even in the depths of the McCarthy era. Indeed, the Fifteenth Party Convention saw, as one of the influences "at work beneath the surface helping to prepare the next turn in the situation," that

twenty million women are already employed in American economy, and millions more will be brought into industry as the war program unfolds. At the same time, the economic consequences of militarization weigh most heavily upon the housewives and the war casualties upon the wives and mothers. The bitter protests against keeping the boys in Korea is a foretaste of the vigorous role American women will play in the struggle against the rise of militarism in America. ("Political Resolution" as adopted by the Party Plenum, approved by the Convention, SWP DB, May, 1952, Vol. 12, No. 10, p. 8.)

Through that dark period, our Party under the Cannon leadership struggled to retain its revolutionism despite the isolation and pressures of the witchhunt years, and this was reflected in our stance on the woman question. Yet, the long years of isolation from the masses of American people,

and from the proletariat in particular, weakened us quantitatively as a whole, and qualitatively in terms of the number of comrades experienced in mass work in the working class who were theoretically capable and organizationally competent enough to correctly analyze new turns in the political situation and to properly formulate revolutionary interventions into the historic process. The Party that saw the beginnings of the "current radicalization" was considerably weaker in this regard than the Party of 1946.

Early Signs of Unclarity on the Woman Question

These problems began to manifest themselves in the attitude of sections of our Party and its leadership to the woman question. Very early in the radicalization, Cde. Myra Tanner Weiss, a member of the Political Committee, expressed an obvious affection for the good-old-Yankee, trial-and-error pragmatism that was to run rampant among sections of the leadership in the coming years. "Frankly," she said, in discussing the development of revolutionary politics, "if I had to choose I would rather learn it from life as Castro did, rather than to have learned it from the books because I'm an activist." (No. 13, Part 3 Plenum Discussion of the World Movement, SWP Discussion Bulletin, Nov., 1962, Vol. 23, No. 6, p. 52.) The unconscious theory of "activism" rears its head!

Less than a year later, Cde. Weiss further codified and developed her impatience with the then-majority of the Party. In the section of her contribution to the pre-convention discussion in 1963 entitled, "The Coming Upsurge," she continued her attack on both the Wohlforthite minority and the majority on the Political Committee. Both expected that "we shall experience something like a return to the Thirties" in which we would be "deeply involved in trade union work, in fighting as left wing, as it was in the Thirties except that the problem of political action, a labor party, will be posed."

She rejected this "classic view" that the working class with trade unionists in the vanguard would make the socialist revolution "supported by the minority peoples, the women, and the youth, as auxiliary forces thus solving the more acute problems of the latter" for "the Negroes, the women and the youth are not waiting and cannot wait." Why this distinction? Because the Blacks, women and youth under discussion were seen as something separate and apart from the working class as a whole! This embryonic sectoral thesis saw these non-working class sectors as passing "beyond the consciousness of those who fought before."

The "older cadres of more privileged workers" were to be brought into motion by their support of the struggles of "the larger, less privileged sectors." In this section, we also get a foretaste of Cde. Breitman's thesis on the "current radicalization" as the broadest, deepest, longest, etc. "The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, the women and others are demanding equality now. We are in an upsurge already--but it is not quite like

the anticipated one."

In her next section on "The Struggle Against Sectarianism," she attacked the failures of our Party to: "effect a union with the socialist elements in the nationalist movement" around defense work; "properly orient our forces in the new peace movement;" take advantages of the opportunities afforded us to work with "high school youth;" and understand comrades with new ideas instead of labelling them "'nuts,' 'screwballs,' 'crackpots,' and other such apolitical insults."

Her solution was to make the Party "the boldest advocate of freedom, its most consistent defender, not only in our program but in our way of life." She told us that "the younger generation in America is not immune to this stage in revolution. On a mass scale, with Negro youth in the lead, it is stirring the country up."

Were these new "independent" "mass movements" to be based upon the transitional approach of Trotskyism? Here, too, Cde. Myra Tanner Weiss was a pioneer in that she gave a glimpse of the present PC and NEC concept of "democratic and transitional demands." As she noted:

Democracy is the common denominator, the universal demand, in all the struggles today--the labor movement, the peace movement, the radical movement, the youth, and the civil rights struggle. Freedom is the way out of the monstrous terror of the age in which we live. ("Comments on the Political Resolution," received June 3, SWP Discussion Bulletin, June, 1963, Vol. 24, No. 22, pp. 7, 8, 9, 10, 13.)

Cde. Weiss was answered ably on behalf of the then-majority by Cde. Hedda Garza (currently of the International Tendency). As a spokesperson for "the old fuddy-duddy majority," she cautioned that "things are moving but slowly." She explained that although the Party may "notice the Negro movement," Cde. Weiss felt that it failed "to see the Puerto Ricans, the youth, and the women on the march," and consequently would "miss the whole picture."

The concept of these sectors tossed together "like extra ingredients in a vegetable soup" was correctly seen by the leadership in that period as a substitute for "that old-fashioned idea about the working class leadership of the revolution."

Of particular interest to us are the remarks made by Cde. Hedda on behalf of the leadership that

There are, of course, many separate women's grievances, but it seems most likely that the women of this country will continue to move with their class. When the working class moves, it will be working men and women. The Negro struggle is far from an all-male movement, and the middle and upper class women are strong defenders of their property rights and their parasitical rights,

along with men of their class. ("An Answer to M. T. Weiss' 'Comments'", SWP Discussion Bulletin, July, 1963, Vol. 24, No. 29, p. 8.)

We may be certain that Cde. Hedda might have had much more to say on the subject had she suspected that ten years later, the leadership of the SWP and the YSA would embrace the essential tenets of Cde. Weiss' critique.

We had, at this point, maintained that there existed no objective, material basis for uniting women across class lines in an ongoing movement to wage a struggle not only to the socialist revolution but beyond. Bebel's advice to "march separately" was heeded; one of the reasons for this may have been that there was, as yet, no alternative to the socialist analysis.

Our recently adopted position on Black nationalism made no exceptions to suggest that a material base existed for unifying women of different races as well. However, the Kirk-Kaye grouping in the SWP disagreed. In a curious section of their document entitled, "The Emancipation of Women," the first sign of an organized, coherent position comparable to the present line of the Party, they rooted themselves in what they felt to be "the mass movements of the present day."

Southern white men "degraded the white women into a truly segregated dependent chattel." The myth of "'sacred white womanhood' is one of the focal points of the ideology of white supremacy" and these factors tied "the struggle for the emancipation of women directly to the Negro struggle." They also noted that Black women in the civil rights movement "have the support of an important section of Southern white women, even though this support is quiet and even secret. For many decades hundreds of Southern white women have worked closely, clandestinely in the crevices of the police-state, on behalf of their Black sisters in bondage and 'The Problem.'"

The perspective of the Party, they argued, should be to get Black women and white women "working together, which offers promise of their ultimate convergence and alliance on the basis of their mutual oppression by men and by society."

Not only did the Kirk-Kaye grouping assert that there was an objective, material basis for uniting women of different races but for uniting all women regardless of race, nation, or class. The "objective," "material" basis for this analysis --a novel one in the Marxist movement--was that all women "regardless of class distinctions and regardless of whether they are wage-earners, are the victims of social prejudices."

Middle class and upper class women are included because dependency and parasitism, even more than slavery, are degenerative to mind and body. The rebellion against this condition therefore transcends all classes of society." Flow-

ing from this "Marxist" analysis, they then declare that, as the "logic of feminism is to expand inexorably into generalized radicalism," the "militance of an ideologically emancipated woman can have far-reaching effects in any sphere where she finds herself; this is particularly true in the labor movement." Here we see the concept that working women will radicalize as women, identifying their interests with those of radical women of the enemy class as opposed to radicalizing as working class women. Note also the use of the term "feminism" for the first time in a positive context. (Richard Kirk and Clara Kaye, SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 25, No. 8, pp. 30-32, 34-36.) The Kirk-Kaye grouping was soon out of the Party, but--within six years--the Political Committee would find itself adopting a position which was essentially theirs with regard to the woman question, and the National Executive Committee of the YSA, as well.

The "Tactical Turn" to Middle Class Radicalism

The period from 1969 to 1971 saw our Party's position on the oppression of women and how to fight for women's liberation change considerably. Compare:

The conflict is therefore basically a class conflict. And in their struggle the class interests of bourgeois women are considerably more fundamental than their interests as women.

The participation of bourgeois women in the fight for certain reforms, such as birth control, may at times be useful. But their participation is circumscribed by their interest in maintaining the capitalist system and will be withdrawn as the dynamic of women's liberation closes in on those who are the real oppressors--the capitalist class. (Susan LaMont, book review of Problems of Women's Liberation, Young Socialist, October, 1969, p. 27.)

And:

Given the fact that women are divided by class, race, age, and other factors, what are the possibilities for uniting women in the struggle for liberation?... There is an objective basis for a unified struggle of women of different nationalities and classes because all women are oppressed as women by capitalism. Sisterhood is powerful because of this universal female oppression, and this is the basis for the existence of an independent mass feminist movement, with an anti-capitalist logic. (Political Committee Resolution, "Towards a Mass Feminist Movement," adopted April 19, SWP Discussion Bulletin, April, 1971, Vol. 29, No. 4, p. 11.)

Note that the "independent mass feminist movement" referred to in the PC resolution of 1971 was to be one of several on-going "independent" "mass movements" which were "objectively anti-capitalist" and were to fight together up to,

through, and after the socialist revolution. (See, for an example of this, almost any section of Towards an American Socialist Revolution.)

Although the theoretical undermining of our movement's position on the woman question may have been at work in the preceding years, it was not until the period from 1969 to 1971, not until the challenge of politically relating to the newly developing women's liberation movement, that we found ourselves capitulating to petty bourgeois feminist ideology, the concept of the sex struggle in counterposition to that of the class struggle.

Cde. Della Rossa made a brief contribution to the discussion in the documents of the 1969 Party Convention (See "Women's Liberation," August 16, SWP Discussion Bulletin, August, 1969, Vol. 27, No. 12, pp. 10-11), but the general approach of the leadership was one of caution in relating to the phenomena--indeed! Perhaps overcaution!

The convention of the YSA in Minneapolis at the end of December made no real national projections for building the women's movement politically. There was a panel discussion of comrades involved in the movement in their local areas, but no documents were presented, no projections were made, and no nationally coordinated plan of action was specified beyond very limited and localized interventions which could best be described in the nature of a probe.

It is important to note that, even before these discussions, women comrades were involved in the movement. Without a full political discussion and prior planning, and without a recognition by the leadership of the necessity for such discussion and planning, our line was developed not out of our theoretical arsenal, but out of our immediate practice.

The fact that the formulation of our line grew out of our prior interventions (practice) rather than a Marxist methodology (praxis) could only lead us into a situation where our political program in concrete practice was shaped by the "independent" "mass movement," the arena of intervention. Although our Party may have had the proletarian, Marxist position on the oppression of women and the struggles for women's liberation, it did not have the class base to substantiate and strengthen it.

The activists of the women's liberation movement did not come out of the working class. Rather, it was based among sections of the middle class such as professional women and non-proletarian, declassed layers such as the students. The politics of this "Second Wave" of feminism was no more metaphysically divorced from its class base than the first wave. The opportunities afforded us by this new development, to enter the movement with a revolutionary class line, were lost in the overhesitant, and then overeager way, in which the Party leadership responded.

While it was necessary to link the women's liberation

movement to the struggle for socialism, what was lacking was a proletarian base of cadres within our Party capable of directing and guiding the Party's intervention and the movement in general towards the broader masses of workers, re-orienting it towards working class women. In our actual practice, we attempted to bypass the less conscious and more slowly moving working class women and oriented toward the middle class and student women and their political approach (feminism) by uncritically assimilating their slogans and demands.

Despite the slow start, our Party leaders, between the 1969 and 1971 conventions, wrote a number of pamphlets in addition to greater coverage in the press dealing with the women's movement. In 1969, the following pamphlets were issued: Problems of Women's Liberation by Evelyn Reed--August; The Revolutionary Dynamic of Women's Liberation by George Novack--November; and Pioneers of Women's Liberation by Joyce Crowley--December. 1970 saw the publication of: In Defense of the Women's Movement by Ruthann Miller, Mary-Alice Waters and Evelyn Reed--May; The Politics of Women's Liberation Today by Mary-Alice Waters--June; Women and the Equal Rights Amendment by Caroline Lund and Betsey Stone--November; and Sisterhood is Powerful by Betsey Stone, Black Women's Liberation by Maxine Williams and Women and the Family by Trotsky--December. In 1971 The Family: Revolutionary or Oppressive Force by Caroline Lund--January; and Sisters in Struggle: 1848-1920 by Debby Woodrooffe were published. Also in this period the plays of Myrna Lamb and Women and the Cuban Revolution by Linda Jenness were published. For our purposes we are not concerned with the long-overdue publications on the Marxist anthropological approach to the oppression of women or those that deal with literature or history or the role of women in a post-capitalist state.

Cde. Evelyn Reed's Problems of Women's Liberation was the first major piece of party literature that was carried into the struggle by our comrades. As such, it bears close study. This collection of essays and lectures has been through editions. Let us take up the first edition and examine the line of our movement in 1969 as we entered the women's liberation movement.

In the section on "Women and the Family," we are reminded that

Hatred of a social curse which is part and parcel of an exploitative society that discriminates not only against women but also against other sections of society should not be confused with "hatred of men." The enemy is not one sex or the other--it is the capitalist system which needs, breeds, and feeds upon oppression of all kinds.

After all, very few women would really advocate a society of "women only" with all the men exiled to the Moon. What we need is a realistic program and mass

movement which is directed against the real enemy--the capitalist system. Many men would welcome and participate in a liberation struggle involving women which would, in the process, liberate them as well. That is why both sexes should join together on the campuses, in their place of work and elsewhere to win their emancipation through a revolutionary socialist movement.

But the most interesting section for our purposes is the section entitled, "Sex Against Sex--Or Class Against Class?" Cde. Reed's excellent introduction remains quite relevant to the current discussion.

Male chauvinism arouses great indignation on the part of women and breeds a deepening antagonism between the sexes. How to deal with this aspect of women's liberation has resulted in two essentially different approaches to the problem.

One is the Marxist position. We recognize that women suffer severe handicaps and humiliation in male-dominated society and are fully entitled to organize themselves in actions against these evils. At the same time Marxism teaches that this sexual subjugation is part and parcel of the more fundamental oppression and exploitation of the working masses by the capitalist possessors of property and power. Therefore, the struggle for women's liberation is inseparable from the larger struggle for socialism.

The other viewpoint is that all women, as a sex, are in the same boat and have identical interests and aims regardless of their economic position and social class. Thus, to achieve emancipation, all females should band together to wage a sex war against the chauvinistic males, who are their sworn enemies. Such a one-sided misleading conclusion can do great harm to the cause of women's liberation and freedom.

It is true that women in general, even those in the upper classes, do suffer to some degree from male chauvinism. On some occasions and issues it is necessary and useful for women belonging to different social strata to form special organizations and take united action to eliminate injustices and disabilities inflicted upon the whole sex. One example is the movement to legalize birth control and give all women the right of abortion.

However, the securing of even such urgent reforms as these will not eradicate the basic causes of women's oppression, which are rooted in the class structure of society. Of all fundamental questions concerning private property holdings, wealthy women are just as likely to uphold the status quo and their privileged positions in it as are the wealthy men. Whenever they do so, they betray their own sex for the sake of their class

interests and comforts.

Thus, class against class must be the guiding line in the struggle for human liberation in general and women's liberation in particular. Only the revolutionary victory over capitalism, led by working men and women and supported by all sections of the oppressed, can release women from their subject status and give them a better life in a new society. This assertion of Marxist theory and policy has been confirmed by the experience of all the victorious revolutions over the past century--from Russia to China and Cuba. Whatever their shortcomings, the improvements these revolutions made in the conditions of women were achieved not through a sex war but through a class war.

No matter how radical it may seem, the substitution of sex hostility for the class struggle by overzealous women would be a dangerous diversion from the real road to liberation. Such a tactic could only play into the hands of the worst enemies of women and of the socialist revolution.

This type of ultraradical error, which tended to counterpose sex against sex rather than class against class manifested itself in a controversy that was conducted within the Socialist Workers Party in 1954. Some important issues were raised during that debate around the use of cosmetics, fashion, etc., to give women the desired or required standards of beauty and make them attractive to men. This curious adaptation to male chauvinism by women who were most vociferously condemning it should be of interest to radical women who are considering the problem today.

Cde. Reed then reproduced reworked selections from her contribution to the 1954 discussion on cosmetics and fashion cited above.

The class distinctions between women transcend their sex identity as women. This is above all true in modern capitalist society, the epoch of the sharpest polarization of class forces.

(Note: The 1954 discussion here includes the paragraph: "The Woman Question cannot be divorced from the class question. Any confusion on this score can only lead to erroneous conclusions and setbacks. It will divert the class struggle into a sex struggle of all women against all men.")

Historically, the sex struggle was part of the bourgeois feminist movement of the last century. It was a reform movement, conducted within the framework of the capitalist system, and not seeking to abolish it. But it was a progressive struggle in that women rebelled against almost total male domination on several fronts. (The '54 contribution specified the "economic, social

and domestic fronts.") Through the feminist movement a number of important reforms were won by women. But that feminist movement has run its course, achieved its limited aims, and the problems we face today must be placed within the context of the class struggle.

The "woman question" can only be resolved through the alignment of working men and women against ruling men and women. This means that the common interests of workers as a class override the special interests of women as a sex. (Originally: "This means that the common interests of workers as a class are identical; and not the interests of women as a sex.")

Ruling class women have exactly the same interest in upholding capitalist society as their men have. (Originally: "upholding and perpetuating.") The bourgeois females fought, among other things, for the right of women as well as men to own property in their own name. They won this right. Today plutocratic women hold fabulous wealth in their own name. They are completely at one with the plutocratic men in their desire to perpetuate the capitalist system. On basic social and political issues they are not in sympathy or alliance with the working women whose needs can be served only through abolishing this system. Thus the emancipation of working women will not be achieved together with women of the enemy class but just the opposite--in a struggle against them as part of the whole anti-capitalist struggle. (The original more explicitly warns of the dangers to working women of a political "alliance with women of the enemy class.")

The attempt to identify the interests of all classes of women as a sex takes one of its most insidious forms in the field of female beauty.

At the end of this section of the pamphlet, Cde. Reed wrote:

... And yet, this relentless abuse of the female sex cannot be overcome through a sex war, for wealthy women profit from it as well as wealthy men. Only through class struggle will this problem of the great majority of women be solved. (Original edition of Problems of Women's Liberation, NY: 1969, pp. 21, 43-4, 52. "The Woman Question and the Marxist Method," Oct. 15, SWP Discussion Bulletin, Oct., 1954, A-23, pp. 28-9.)

Although certain sacrifices were made in translating the internal Party discussion of 1954 into a piece of public propaganda for 1969, its basic content remains quite sound. While it may have been a bit too pessimistic insofar as the ability of the revolutionary proletarian movement to win upper middle and even upper class women to its cause, and while it did not foresee the reemergence of bourgeois feminism in a "Second Wave," it remains an excellent summarization of a revolutionary socialist approach to the oppression of women and the struggle for female liberation, an approach

with which we internationalists generally concur. Indeed, our support for such a position on the woman question is a cornerstone of our tendency.

If, however, any comrades think that this is the line of the Political Committee, they need only turn to the "revised" edition of December, 1970. (See pp. 27, 77, 89.) This fifth printing, the "new enlarged edition" was somewhat altered. The section on "Sex Against Sex--Or Class Against Class" had become "Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women." FURTHER, THE ENTIRE SECTION ABOVE QUOTED WAS TOTALLY DELETED. Why? Comrades are urged to reread the deleted section with the recent activity of the Party in mind. The reasons for the deletions will become clear. It was these deleted sections that provided the basis for Susan LaMont's statement which began this section. Cde. Evelyn herself rejects her old position, explaining that, in 1954, there was no mass women's movement to tailend!!!

Without the proletarian orientation and base, the politics of the Party suffered in our initial contacts with the women's movement. Indeed, a "tactical turn" to the student radicals was called for by the events of the mid- and late 1960's, but not the "tactical turn" to the radicalism, to the political outlook and approach of a non-proletarian milieu.

As it were, the vacuum created by the absence of such a base and such an orientation resulted in our uncritical assimilation of the radical democratic approach of the students in general, and of radical campus feminists. Such was the reality behind the "tactical" shifts of the Party leadership in that period. Despite the claim of Cde. Mary-Alice Waters that her politics represent the heritage of 125 years of Marxist thought on the subject of the oppression of women and women's emancipation, the reality reveals that an approach such as that of Cde. Waters and her co-thinkers can claim no more than three or four years of rather unstable and vacillating "continuity."

Empty Theorizing and the Departure from Historical Materialism

In November of 1969, with the pressures (both external and internal) mounting, Cde. Novack's Revolutionary Dynamic of Women's Liberation was printed in pamphlet form. It spelled a new low point in the Party's "theoretical" approach to the question by applying the theory of permanent revolution to women.

Although Trotsky "originally applied the proposition to the political role of the bourgeoisie in backward regions like Russia and the colonial world, which had not yet experienced a bourgeois-democratic revolution," Cde. Novack assured us that "the historical-sociological generalization he made holds good not only for retarded countries which had not been democratized but also for those advanced capitalisms whose bourgeois revolutions defaulted in consummating their democra-

tic assignments."

Not only did Cde. Novack apply permanent revolution to an advanced, industrialized imperialist democracy, but to a multi-class sector of the population! But what of the very real dangers of this implication? What of the warnings in Problems of Women's Liberation? Of these, not a word!

Several questions need be dealt with here. What were the "democratic assignments" of the bourgeois revolutions with regard to women? Their freedom from the nuclear family? Their right to be free from the crushing responsibility of childbearing and child-rearing? Their right to fully develop their potential as human beings? Apparently, Cde. Novack feels as though these are some of the incomplete "democratic assignments" of the bourgeois revolutions. They were not! For the great majority of women, bourgeois democratic rights means only their right as working women to be exploited, their right as housewives to be locked inside the shell of the nuclear family, their right to be sexually oppressed as women under capitalism. The right of women to be freed from the chains of the family is no more a bourgeois "democratic assignment" than the right of workers to control industry. Nevertheless, Cde. Novack, basing his arguments firmly upon his confusion, continued.

... these unsolved tasks of the democratic era have been transmitted for solution to the next stage of revolutionary advancement in this country, which is centered around the struggle for socialism. The American revolution now in the making is called upon by the course of our national development to do two sets of jobs at one and the same time. It must make the unfinished business left over from the preceding revolutions, such as equality for Blacks and women, together with the tasks associated with the construction of socialism. (See pp. 16-18.)

Herein lies an essential tenet of the "theoretical justification" of the Political Committee for its accommodation to feminism. Implicitly, the struggle for workers' control, for equal pay, and for abortion reform are all "revolutionary." Such empty theorizing reduces Marxism to banal liberalism. Thus, the impressionistic: "We're revolutionaries and therefore when anybody starts fighting against the ruling class, we're on their side!" (Peter Camejo, Militant, March 26, 1971, p. 12) and "If you love revolution, then you'll love feminism" (Caroline Lund, The Family, p. 22).

Our weakened theory was unable to adequately cope with the August 26, 1970 demonstration. We approached them uncritically because "a mass demonstration is an appeal for all women to join us" and it was not long before it was our perspective to "call on all women to march together as women." (Militant, Sept. 25, 1970, p. 8, and March 12, 1971, p. 9.)

Both the SWP PC and the YSA NEC seemed to become quite enamoured with "the emergence of a women's libera-

tion movement that involved women from different economic and social backgrounds." While

Of course, there are class differences. But the women's liberation movement as a whole, involving women from all class backgrounds, can and will be an ally of the working class in the struggle to abolish the capitalist system. (Politics of Women's Liberation Today, pp. 19-20.)

Dialectical materialism transformed into a crystal ball! Women of "many different backgrounds, different political outlooks, different generations" were to be united by "a growing awareness of our oppression as women, and a determination to break the chains which keep all women oppressed" (Ruthann Miller, Militant, Sept. 11, 1970, p. 12).

Coupled with these new amendments to Marxist-Leninist thought were an entire series of theories to justify this warped notion that all women, as women, have an objective material basis for unity into a multi-class international sisterhood, an ongoing "objectively anti-capitalist" (i. e., revolutionary) mass movement to continue up to, through, and beyond the socialist revolution. A brief look at our Party press of late 1969 and 1970 would prove quite educational on this score. Once the "material" basis for the revolutionary character of feminism was the "fact" that sex had become a commodity (and women commodity producers)! Then the basis is found in the "fact" that women are the means of production! Upon the basis of such nonsensical, anti-materialist theorizing, the Political Committee made its next step with the NEC of the YSA riding along.

The approach to feminism was obviously to be a carbon-copy of that to nationalism for "women are an oppressed sector of the population, too" (Diane Feeley, Militant, December 26, 1969, p. 9). The January 15 (1971) issue of the Militant carried a photo of the doodlings of women delegates to the New York YSA convention. The slogans included, "Sisters of the world unite!" and "Let no man come between sisters!" (See pp. 11-13.)

It was in this period that our comrades in the women's movement raised such slogans as "Women of the world, unite!" and "When women want the war to end, the war will end!" One an obvious mockery of Marxism, the other a circular bit of stupidity, are sufficient evidence of the degeneration of our approach to the women's movement.

By 1971, the Political Committee was clearly satisfied that an objective material basis existed for an ongoing mass movement of all women as women, a movement which was projected as continuing its struggle up to, through, and beyond the socialist revolution. More correctly, the Political Committee had codified its rationalizations for the capitulation in "Towards a Mass Feminist Movement."

But, beyond the concept of a multi-class women's move-

ment--a concept which Cde. Evelyn Reed had polemicized against a scant two years before--the responsibility for the emancipation of women was shifted from the shoulders of the world proletariat onto those of a multi-class movement of women as women. The material basis for this was, again, "universal female oppression." As Cde. Ruth Getts noted, "It is only by organizing ourselves that we can build the independent power to free ourselves" (Militant, Jan. 16, 1970, p. 8).

According to Cde. Jeanne Lafferty:

A socialist revolution will clear the way for establishing completely new institutions not based on the oppression of women. But it is necessary for us to have an independent women's movement to fight all the way through. The independent women's movement that has emerged today, under capitalism, should continue to exist right through and after the socialist revolution. This is the only real security women will have that their needs will be satisfied. (Militant, Nov. 27, 1970, p. 10.)

Farewell to the old-fashioned notions of Bebel, Engels, Luxemburg and Lenin! The class interests of all the workers was no longer to liberate women! Rather the emancipation of women was to be brought about by all women themselves, regardless of their class.

"We can depend on no one to fight this struggle for us" and "It is we who must determine for ourselves what our identity is, what our goals and needs are as human beings." (Ruthann Miller, Militant, Sept. 11, 1970, p. 12, and In Defense of the Women's Movement, p. 6.) "Our strength comes from unity in the common struggle to liberate all women" (Militant, Jan. 22, 1971, p. 12). Even "feminist culture" was forwarded as a revolutionary thing. (See, for example, the "Insurgent Majority," Militant, Mar. 12, 1971, p. 18.)

This "universal female oppression" was recognized by Marxists (and some non-Marxist radicals such as those in the feminist movement) for decades. Had the PC of the Party and the NEC just discovered it? If so, we had better discuss the need for the education of our cadres.

Assuming the oppression of all women as a sex is a materialist basis for such an "objectively anti-capitalist" movement, Marx, Engels, Bebel, Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky, Cannon, Reed, and LaMont (up until the conversion and salvation of the last two) were oblivious to its importance, ignorant of its implications, and "sectarian" in their approach to the question. Unless a social revolution has occurred to alter the relationship of all women to the productive and distribution processes, the Marxist method has been both misunderstood and misapplied--either by the Political Committee of our Party and the National Executive Committee of the YSA or by Karl Marx himself and all of his followers since his day (with the exception of the PC and NEC "theor-

ists").

What then is to be the role of the Party? Here the white hat of "Leninist-Trotskyist orthodoxy" worn by the PC, NEC and LTF in the international dispute appears to be, when brought down to the concrete, something a good deal different, perhaps a lesson in the innerpenetration of opposites: a sectarian, sterile "orthodoxy" and a tailendist opportunism! Describing the women's liberation groups as "an organization of women, who can lead their own struggle, and make their own decisions," Cde. Jeanne Lafferty describes the YSA as that which "draws together and coordinates" the sectoral movements. (Militant, Nov. 27, 1970, p. 10.) Or

The SWP's role is to unite and help organize all the independent movements for change but the strategies must be determined by the movements themselves. (Debby Woodroffe, Militant, Dec. 4, 1970, p. 15.)

Or:

While we build the movement uniting women against their oppression, we try to win over the most consistent women to join us in building a revolutionary party that can unite all oppressed sectors of the population in decisive struggles against the capitalist class. (Lund, The Family, p. 22.)

What of the role of the working class? Cde. Waters credits scientific socialism with "proving that capitalism itself produces a force--the working class--strong enough to destroy it, capable of carrying through the momentous task of abolishing the tyranny of the possessing few over the overwhelming majority of humankind" ("Feminism," ISR). So the proletariat is seen as the only force capable of overthrowing capitalism. This is well and good as far as it goes, but the recognition of the proletariat as a powerful force or even a decisive force is not peculiar to scientific socialism. The capitalists themselves see the working class as a force capable of carrying some social weight. The Waters school allows the workers to have the brawn, but not the brain; the power they possess may come from the fact that they are workers, but not their material interest. That, we presume, comes from ideas we put into their heads via press sales, lawsuits and electioneering.

The material interests that will move the workers are obvious to the PC and NEC:

If we take the social layers now in motion--the youth, Black people and women--these three layers make up about 60 percent of the working class.... If you start adding the Chicanos it goes over 60 percent. And that doesn't mean that the rest of the working class isn't going to be on our side. I'm just pointing out that the social layers that have already begun to move potentially make up the majority of the working class. (Peter Camejo, Militant, Mar. 26, 1971, p. 12.)

Women of the proletariat were to be mysteriously drawn across the class line, thus putting bulk and social weight behind the sex interests of all women. After all,

We must ceaselessly point out that the working women suffer the most from their oppression as women. (C. Lund and B. Stone, Women and the Equal Rights Amendment, p. 13.)

Class solidarity in action? Solidarity in interests? Not any more! It would, presumably, be futile to struggle for such goals since "The working class is already disunited" (The Family, p. 7).

Wrote Marx and Engels:

In the conditions of the proletariat, those of old society at large are already virtually swamped. The proletariat is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bourgeois family relations; modern industrial labour, modern subjugation to capital, the same in England as in France, in America as in Germany, has stripped him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, religion, are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests.

All the preceding classes that got the upper hand, sought to fortify their already acquired status by subjecting society at large to their conditions of appropriation. The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property. (Communist Manifesto, our ed., pp. 25-26.)

Thus, the role of the proletariat may be seen to be somewhat more complex than that of mere bulk, mere social weight. The question of material interests totally exposes the garbled concept of the "political leadership" that "universal female oppression" is the source of the revolutionary interests that will liberate women with the working class as such providing the brawn. As Marxists, we know that the force which will liberate womankind is the class interests of all workers not the sex interests of all women. Thus, the Marxist concept that we "have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole" (Communist Manifesto, our ed., pp. 25-27).

This essential concept is ignored by Cde. Waters, who notes that, with the advent of scientific socialism:

The struggle for women's liberation was thus lifted out of the realm of the personal, the 'impossible dream,' and unbreakably linked to the victory of the progressive forces of our epoch. It became a social task in the interests of

all humanity. (ISR, p. 10.)

As Marxists, we know that an issue is "classless" in the abstract. Its constituency may be multi-class but never "classless" or "supra-class." In the case of feminist ideology, the class content is either bourgeois (or petty bourgeois) or proletarian. From the conduct of the Political Committee and its carbon-copy, the YSA NEC which has not only failed to place the woman question in a class perspective, such trivial, old-fashioned concepts as class interests are easily dismissed. Obviously, if the concept of class interests is ignored or misunderstood, the entire process of building a revolutionary vanguard party will have to be replotted to fit the new scheme.

It would indeed prove enlightening if the National Exec would inform us if it feels that all of our historic predecessors in the struggle for socialism were incorrect or if it feels that "times have changed." Of course, the more slick choose the latter. The times are now different. "Women as women" have social weight, a solidarity of interests that flows not from their material relationship to the means of production and distribution but from their sex.

Marxists have historically and scientifically negated feminism as a revolutionary ideology, but--we are told--the times have changed. Indeed! Is this Cde. Waters' concept of dialectics? A negation of the negation with no antithesis beyond her own wishful thinking? Indeed! We seem to be witnessing a process of "revolutionizing" Marxism.

But, no! The current line and orientation is paraded as the "continuity" of scientific socialist thought. After all, we are told, Marxism is a method not a dogma. True, but if the methodology is being applied competently to a similar objective situation, then would not the resultant analysis be similar? Assuming the competence of Cde. Waters and the other theorists of the national leadership, we must examine the objective situation in our day and discern exactly how it differs from that of the age of Marx and Engels, and that of Lenin and Trotsky.

We pose these questions: What has so altered the class relations in the past five, ten, fifty or one hundred years so as to bring about such a radically different approach to the woman question? Have all the women in society been forced into the factories, displacing the men, and thereby gaining their social weight as a sex? Have all women been proletarianized (perhaps "feminized" might be here more appropriate) to give them a social cohesiveness, a solidarity of interests flowing from a concrete material base? Obviously, something happened to bring about such a different analysis! What was it?

Assuming that the revolutionary party is perceptive enough to notice a social revolution--for this is what would be required for such an alteration of society--we are curious to know exactly at what point this change in class relations took place. Evidently it occurred in the past four years for it was only

in this period that the Political Committee discovered this "new" continuity of Marxism, and embraced "revolutionary" feminism. Isn't it a bit odd, however, that no one else on the Left noticed this social revolution? One would almost expect the Stalinist to enter into N. O. W. and betray that noble, revolutionary band of feminists to the slaughter of the threatened and terrified bourgeoisie!

The tasks of revolutionists then became, in the eyes of the PC, NEC and LTF, a struggle not to maintain revolutionary proletarian perspectives but to weld together a multi-class "sisterhood" based upon the lowest common denominator possible. Thus, our efforts to educate the working class elements involved in such a movement as to the character of their class interests and how those interests conflict with those of the feminists, the "bourgeois women's emancipationists" became one of bemoaning the fact that

Society has created many divisions among women. Women have been isolated from each other in individual homes, divided by class and race and pitted against one another. (See section on "Women as a Political Force" in Women's Liberation and the Socialist Workers' Campaign, national campaign for 1972 presidential election.)

Thus, what Marxists have always viewed as the only road to women's liberation, the class struggle, becomes something to regret because it stands in the way of a greater sisterhood. Indeed, Cde. Waters' use of the term "feminist" is, whether intentionally or not, in keeping with our heritage of using the term scientifically.

Abortion Reform and the Minimalist Program in Practice

As revolutionary socialists we raise certain democratic demands (or "minimal demands," or "immediate demands," "reform demands" or whatever we prefer to call demands for social change that do not go beyond the bourgeois property relations, the bourgeois state, and the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.) We as revolutionists, support the struggles for higher wages, expanded voting rights, abortion reforms, etc. We see our support for and participation in such struggles as necessary in that even the most superficially trivial struggles for the most limited goals play some role in the politicalization and radicalization of the working masses. Further, we see such struggles as fertile grounds for revolutionary propagandizing and recruitment. This was not, however, the PC, NEC and LTF's approach to supervising the activity of our comrades within the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition. In fact, WONAAC began as an artificial attempt to initiate an "independent" "mass movement" and its character was such that we, the ranks of the Party had to substitute ourselves for the phantom masses of women.

Initially, our Party, like Cde. Waters noted, did not wish "to ignore the fact that pressure from the extreme 'feminist'

point of view is reflected inside our party at times as well." The key to our successful intervention into the women's movement was that "it is our program that is decisive, and we are the only organization that can put forward a genuinely revolutionary program and perspectives for women's liberation." As indicated above, the proletarian cadres needed to put force behind such a revolutionary program were lacking. In any case, what was the program for women's liberation?

To begin with, a program for women's liberation that retains its revolutionism, its "transition character" would be one which would link the struggle for women's liberation to the class movement of the proletariat and pose the question of state power. In any case, the three demands were: "Free Abortion on Demand!" "Free 24-hour Child Care Centers!" and "Equal Pay for Equal Work!" These were all "Democratic and transitional demands," i.e. democratic demands. None posed the question of state power from the point of view of the proletariat as a whole. This does not mean they should not have been raised, but it does indicate that such a program was of dubious "transitional character." Presumably, however, the inadequacies of such a program, divorced from the class and the class movement were overlooked and it was seen as filling "the need to develop a program to lead women's struggles in an anticapitalist direction." (Politics of Women's Liberation Today, pp. 10, 13, 16, 18.)

The invalidity of this statement is dealt with in the section on "The 'Theory' of 'Democratic and Transitional Demands'" of my earlier contribution ("Political Committee Theory" in No. 24 of Party discussion). The objections need only be summarized. A distinction must be drawn between "democratic" and "transitional" demands and slogans. No slogan or demand in an advanced nonfascist capitalist nation such as the United States can be both capitalist and working class, bourgeois democratic and proletarian democratic, democratic and transitional, reform and revolutionary. Elements of either may be found in them, but these contrasts and distinctions are reflective of the irreconcilable class struggle in society.

While, prior to its reversal in 1971, the leadership held that no single demand could encompass the entire spectrum of woman's oppression under capitalism, it was also maintained that the "abortion question" was "made-to-order as the initial issue on which the women's liberation movement can cut its teeth. It involved the most fundamental rights of women--to control their own bodies, to remove from the state prerogative to decide who will bear a child and when." Abortion was an issue with "a built-in appeal to millions of men and women, which makes it possible to build an action-oriented mass movement."

A major issue reasons that support for the abortion was "growing so rapidly is that a real possibility exists for making a historic breakthrough." Further, "The abolition of abortion restrictions in the U. S. would be a historical step forward and a tremendous boost to the burgeoning women's

liberation movement. Women would see it as a direct result of their actions, a proof of their power, and it would increase their confidence and determination to fight for their liberation." (Ibid., pp. 22, 23.)

What was clear was that the bourgeois legislatures and the congress and the courts were considering the issue and may make a decision on it. We were to opportunistically jump into the movement, organize demonstrations and the women involved would see the demonstrations as having pressured the bourgeois state to make the concession. Apparently, the harmful effects of giving women the illusion that their liberation can be legislated or given them by the bourgeoisie by court decision or proclamation were ignored.

A further implication was the concept of "the fundamental right" of women to control their own bodies. Shades of Locke's Second Treatise! That an individual's freedom in this regard is an important point to raise is indisputable. However, was it "fundamental?" The Novackian application of permanent revolution to women and its general approach to the subject resulted in a affirmative response in our practice.

The question then arises as to whether the right of female wage slaves to control their own bodies rather than selling their labor power to the master class for forty hours a week is more fundamental. According to the PC and NEC concept it is not! Demands and slogans calling for the abolition of such servitude are regarded as "transitional" in both cases. Both the demands of the fuddy-duddy old-fashioned transitional program of Trotsky (now the "Transitional Program for the Trade Unions") and the demands of the new program of "democratic and transitional demands" indicated above were to topple capitalism.

Therefore, the practice (and the theorizing to justify the practice) of the SWP and YSA leadership superseded the idea that abortion reform would be a mere "historic step forward," a mere democratic victory. It was in 1971, prior to the Party's convention (as might be suspected), that the leadership initiated WONAAC, dropped the old three demands of women's liberation, and raised "Repeal All Abortion Laws!" as the single "democratic and transitional demand."

Of course, the stature of abortion reform developed from the level of a "campaign" of the general, more broadly-based women's liberation movement to that of "movement" in and of itself, and, finally, to the stage of an "independent" "mass movement" displacing and superseding not only the earlier three demands but the women's liberation movement itself!

In any case, we (members of the Trotskyist movement in the SWP and YSA as well as the gullible masses of women) were told that we faced a long, hard struggle to win abortion reform. It was even hinted that the capitalists would

not grant it, and that they even could not grant it.

But most significantly, we again and again turn to the question of its "transitional character." What was meant by this effort to imbue the new slogan with a "transitional character?" It certainly was not, as Cdes. Hansen, Waters, Novack, Barnes, et al would prefer to think regard it: "the transitional approach" of Trotskyism. Indeed, such an approach to transform the bourgeois state is more the "transitional approach" of Bernstein.

In either case, the crux of the matter came when the U. S. Supreme Court granted this demand of a "transitional character" thus, we suppose, posing the question of state power, abolishing the bourgeois property relations, smashing the bourgeois state, and ushering in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Unfortunately, they did not do so before we had suffered quite a black eye from our whole flirtation with the National Organization for Women, the Women's Political Caucus, and that milieu, the right wing of the women's movement.

Cde. Hansen, the rest of the Political Committee and its carbon copy, the YSA NEC hold to the peculiar concept that "proletarian methods of struggle (not sabotage, not armed struggle, not all of the proletarian methods of struggle but only "peaceful, legal, mass demonstrations!") can be metaphysically superimposed upon any struggle that develops around any demands. Indeed, this is one of the ways Cde. Hansen has revolutionized bourgeois democratic demands,

However, the character of the struggle and the methods it employs are determined by its goal. Where "redress of grievances" is possible or is felt to be possible, demonstrations are only a tactic, a part of an overall strategy to pressure the legislators and justice-dispensors of the capitalist state to grant the reform. Because of the failure of the leadership to understand the real dynamic of the abortion reform struggle, because it failed to learn the lessons of its pragmatic experimentation with the tactic of demonstrations on Nov. 20, 1971, it became obsessed with abortion reform in and of itself. It became swept with the "logic," "dynamic" and "general thrust" of the abortion struggle and soon found itself either initiating or condoning all sorts of things.

Petitioning the legislature for abortion reforms was perhaps foolish enough although we have engaged in petitioning before. It was not a principled question although it was not quite a tactic as claimed by the PC and NEC. It was all part of the grand scheme, the general strategy of the abortion reform movement; "logic," "dynamic," and "general thrust" of the movement determined its "methods of struggle." It was not quite all that "anticapitalist," objectively or otherwise.

But what remains a real embarrassment to any thinking communist was the way our Party functioned in the defense of New York's liberalized abortion law. Prior to the legis-

lative hearings on the law at the legislature in Albany on Jan. 30, 1973, a leaflet was issued from the WONAAC office. On one side, bold print announced:

LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS ON ABORTION IN ALBANY;
TESTIMONY IN DEFENSE OF A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO
CHOOSE

Below it, in fine print, it explained:

The right to abortion in New York is under attack again. If we are to save a woman's right to choose in New York we will have to unite in a visible and massive campaign. A constant presence in Albany of abortion rights supporters will be an essential part of the defense of the law. The Legislative Hearings on Abortion arranged by Assemblyman Franz Lichter will be a focal point for this campaign. In order for these hearings to be a success it is imperative that our position be represented en masse and that our state legislators attend. Please contact your state legislator and urge him or her to be there. Plan on coming with us to Albany by bus on Tuesday, January 30th. We can spend the day visiting our legislators and participating in the hearing. Our power is in our numbers and determination. Come with us to Albany!

The reverse side declares:

THE RIGHT TO ABORTION IS UNDER ATTACK IN N. Y.
and

YOU CAN HELP SAVE THE PRESENT LAW
Very well, how can we "help save the present law?" One reads further

Converge on Albany to hear testimony from medical and legal experts on abortion along with reports from women who have had legal as well as illegal abortions. Visit your legislators in the morning; attend the Hearings in the afternoon. SET JANUARY 30 ASIDE!

There may be other examples of similar statements by WONAAC.

Originally, we were told it was not comrades that issued this particular leaflet. There's very slim chance such a leaflet could escape without our comrades knowing it. In any case, the leaflet was not recalled or repudiated. Later we were told it was a "proletarian method of struggle" because: a) workers sometimes lobby; b) it was "mass lobbying!!!"

Such was the logic of the "independent" abortion reform struggle. The comrades involved only followed a logical extension of the LTF line (as did the Canadian co-thinkers of the Party leadership, the would-be English Canadian nationalists/socialists) and their loyalty to "consistent" feminism (and, hence, "revolutionary socialism").

If the right to legal abortion was indeed "fundamental" to the oppression of women and constituted a "democratic and transitional demand," then we may assume that the bourgeois Supreme Court, inspired by adherence to "consistent" bourgeois democracy, and spurred onward by the "independent" "mass movement" to extend bourgeois democratic women (co-ordinated by our Party through participa-

tion in WONAAC) made a revolutionary step forward, "fundamentally" liberated women, and made a socialist revolution. Such is the applied revolutionism of the bogus heritage of the politics of Cde. Waters and her co-thinkers!

A Brief Attempt at an Evaluation and Conclusion

Here arises an army of straw men! "The Internationalists are sectarian!" "The Internationalists are opposed to relating to the women's movement!" "The Internationalists represent the reflection within the party of male sexism!" "The Internationalists don't think we should raise democratic demands!" Ad infinitum. Ad nauseum.

To comrades considering the possibility of coughing up such phlegm to spit into the midst of this discussion, we urge only that you read the documents which are the foundation of our tendency. Political clarity should be the goal of every Party member rather than the winning of gold stars from the leadership.

The Waters article clearly represents an effort to falsify the revolutionary heritage of the Marxist movement (and the history of feminism). No dichotomy at all is drawn in practice or even considered between Marxism and feminism, between a scientific revolutionism and a broader, generalized radicalism.

Feminism is more than the recognition by women that they are oppressed as a sex. It is an entire ideological approach to social ills, the basis of which is contrary to the class struggle approach and method of revolutionary socialists. Feminist theory, in its most consistent, militant form, sees the motive force of history as the struggle of the sexes. Material interests flow not primarily from your relationship to the productive and distributive processes but from your sex. The primary social evil, the root of all other social evils is the oppression of women. The "most consistent" fighters for sexual equality are revolutionaries: women, raising women's demands and building a multi-class "movement." Sisterhood will therefore have an "objectively" revolutionary dynamic.

Socialist theory--scientific socialism--sees the motive force of history in the struggle of social classes. The "root evil" of modern society is private ownership and management of capital. Its abolition will bring about an end to racism, sexism, poverty, illiteracy, wars and the other forms of oppression with which the middle class radicals be-so exclusively engrossed. It sees human liberation as dependent upon the class movement of the proletariat--composed of workers of all nations and both sexes.

Nevertheless, the consistent fighters for a middle class radical perspective in the labor and socialist movements are now hailed as our revolutionary predecessors! Cde. Waters, the PC and the NEC have laid claim to the heritage of Frances Wright, Susan B. Anthony, and Victoria Woodhull,

and orient us to their contemporaries in N. O. W. Grudgingly, we concede that, yes, our leadership seems to belong to them. What has happened in our Party should serve as a warning to the entire world Trotskyist movement in dealing with the radicalism of an alien class milieu.

With Cde. Waters as its mouthpiece, the American leadership claims for itself not only the heritage of feminism, but to "the unbroken continuity of a 125-year struggle by the Marxist movement against women's oppression, and to establish a socialist world which alone can lay the basis for the liberation of women. Everything we do and say today is in harmony with this tradition and a continuation of it." (Waters, "Feminism," ISR, p. 19.) Upon what does Cde. Waters base that claim? What does her position and that of her co-thinkers have in common with that revolutionary heritage? Good intentions?

That Cde. Waters and her co-thinkers have broken from that heritage is obvious. In practice, the PC, NEC and LTF's "feminism" equals "Marxism" schematism negates the methodology and practice of revolutionary socialism in favor of an accommodation to middle class feminism.

The only example cited in direct support of her argument was that elements of the Debsian Socialist Party considered themselves to be "feminists." It need only be added that sections of that formation also equated Christianity and Marxism, pacifism and Marxism, Populism and Marxism, accommodation to anarcho-syndicalism and Marxism, etc. In short, the American S. P. was a hodge-podge. Any revolutionary analysis of the Debsian socialist movement makes that point. The appeal of the PC and NEC school to social democracy as a recourse is not quite self-indulgent (for some of us, at least).

In any other precedent comrades may find in the "125-year struggle" of revolutionists for major interventions into multi-class women's formations, they will note the following factors absent from the approach of our movement under the leadership of Cde. Waters and her co-thinkers are generally present or will note that these factors will be generally present (or, if not, a revolutionary wing is struggling to develop them).

A politically critical approach. Revolutionists draw a dichotomy between the sector or arena of struggle into which they are intervening and the politics they carry into that struggle. Especially, this is the case in multi-class reform movements.

An interventionist approach. They relate their revolutionism to the arena of struggle but do not shed their right to political independence and action because of their assuming organizational responsibility.

A revolutionary approach. They openly maintain their orientation toward their ultimate goal: the establishment of

a class dictatorship of the workers and socialism.

A class struggle approach. They retain at all times a class perspective, never viewing their interest as apart from or above the general interests of the working class as a whole, and orienting to the proletarian elements involved.

A proletarian base. They recognize that the greatest insurance against any capitulation to reformism or liberalism is a rank and file of class conscious workers.

How has the LTF leadership stood in this light? Both the PC and the NEC have swallowed whole the methodology and social analysis of feminists, labelling it to be "objectively" anticapitalist." Both have tailed the "independent" women's movement, particularly its most right-wing tendencies. They have assimilated the political practices of the milieu in which they attempted to intervene. Both have liquidated the revolutionary practices of Leninism to assimilate the political practices of the milieu into which they attempted to intervene in such cases as the abortion reform struggle. Both have made no effort whatsoever to raise propaganda around the transitional program or even bourgeois democratic demands of particular interest to the working

class women. Both have not only failed to build a proletarian base but have failed to attempt it; in fact, both have failed to comprehend the necessity for building such a base.

The approach of scientific socialism on the woman question has been relegated to "theory" and is seen by the SWP, YSA and LTF's approach as having nothing to do with "practice." "Praxis" then becomes "theoretical" justification for pragmatically accommodating the present, reform-consciousness of the radical movement in general and radical women in particular.

We Internationalists reject that political approach and the methodology utilized to justify it and we counterpose to it the scientific socialism of the world Trotskyist movement. As proletarian revolutionists we reject American exceptionalism in all areas, including that against the question of female oppression. The only road to women's liberation is, as that to the liberation of all humanity, through the proletariat--Indian and Soviet, French and American, Black and white, female and male.

November 1, 1973

IN DEFENSE OF THE PST

By Vaughn Hogikyan, San Francisco Local

The minority in the YSA attempts to inject into the pre-convention discussion the same kind of distortions and confusion as did the IEC majority supporters during the SWP pre-convention discussion. We heard how the principles of merger with the PSA, the electoral program, and the very core of the PST itself are saturated with reformism. The YSA pre-convention discussion and convention will prove to be very important this year. At issue, especially in regards to Latin America, are the very tenets of the Trotskyist movement. In order to have a thorough and meaningful discussion it is essential to present facts as clearly and precisely as possible.

First let's start with the document entitled "The Basis of Unification of the PSA-PRT" as outlined in the November 13, 1972 issue of Intercontinental Press. Here are a number of points excerpted from that document:

In the course of building the party organization, there must be a deepening of theoretical criticism of the opportunist, reformist and populist deviations that divert the Argentine proletariat from its historic goals, but this critique must not be seen as a hinderance to alliances between the party and all working-class layers that are struggling, around concrete and clear issues, for national liberation and socialism.

It is essential for the party to establish fraternal ties with

the working masses who today are caught up in Peronist populism and its bourgeois reformist ideology. The utilization of the legal methods of struggle within its reach must not be allowed to divert attention of the party away from the tasks of also preparing its organization to take up the struggle for political power on all levels and by every means that conditions permit or require. That the only combination in which the proletariat and its party can participate is one that moves toward the conquest of state power by the working-class, that is, socialist and working-class combinations with any sector of the bourgeoisie are rejected as a way of taking power.

The demands for immediate struggle include:

For immediate release of all political and social prisoners, especially the guerrillas and trade union activists... For free medical care and medicines for every inhabitant. For nationalization of all the clinics, hospitals and factories that produce medical supplies. For workers' control of all welfare institutions. For a national health plan drawn up by the workers' movement with the aid of doctors and all health service workers.

For immediate nationalization without compensation of all national and foreign banks, insurance companies, foreign trade, the big meat packing plants and monop-

listic national and imperialist owned industries. For workers' control in the big plants in nationalized industries, and in foreign trade.

For an agrarian reform based on expropriation without compensation of the big estates, and for their being handed over to the wage workers and small rural producers to be developed into collective forms of production.

This does not sound very reformist to me. The list goes on, comrades.

Some of the YSA minority sneer at the PST's raising of slogans for democracy within the military. Trotsky was for that; read the Transitional Program. The Socialist Workers Party raises similar slogans. The minority doesn't like the demand of opening up the rank of officer and field officer to non-commissioned officers. Not strong enough. Well, this was something that the Allende regime never carried out. It was just the lack of one of those democratic rights that helped make the military as strong as it was in the coup. There's no delusion as to how we intend to gain state power fostered in any of the literature of the PST.

As for the election campaigns this year, besides all the immediate demands already mentioned, the following are also raised in PST literature:

Equality for women in work, wages, opportunities and rights. Free twenty-four hour child care centers. Allowances to unmarried or separated mothers equivalent to half of their wages for each child... For immediate 40 percent wage increases, a minimum salary of 1,200 pesos, sliding scale of wages. For a university government consisting of a majority of students and made up of students, teachers, and non-teaching workers... Unconditional support to Cuba against imperialist attack.

As for supposed delusions that the PST fosters about the elections, let's see what the party has to say. At the PST Congress on December 18 of last year Nora Ciarponi, vice-presidential candidate of the PST, stated:

For a victory, not in votes, but in gathering together the best of the vanguard of the workers' movement in the Frente Obrero. For the construction of our revolutionary party to take political power.

At a PST rally on March 3 of this year Jose Paez stated to a crowd of 12,000:

We are not here to get votes, the bourgeoisie is going to get the votes. We are going to build the Party.

In an interview in the PST's Avanzada Socialista dated August 1, 1973, Juan Cora1, presidential candidate of the PST stated:

It is not a question here of preparing the party to carry out an electoral function but of putting the elections at the service of building the party. During this period as during any other we will have to carry out the three-pronged task described by Lenin: agitate among the masses, propagandize for our ideas and educate the cadres.

So much for what the PST really had to say and what they stood for. What were the results of all this electoral work with the same platform of which I've already written.

In March, in addition to running its own members as candidates, the PST offered use of its official ballot status to trade unionists and other workers who wished to run for office in a front against all the capitalist candidates and parties. A total of 2,300 candidates ran from the PST and the Workers' Front. The PST and its youth group, the JSA, increased from a few hundred members and a handful of branches to 3,000 members and 70 branches. They received 77,000 votes. Most important of all was that they presented to the Argentine working class a principled socialist alternative to the bourgeois parties. They were able to establish a youth group which in every way is a model Trotskyist youth organization.

Our comrades in Argentina were also able to get out tons of propaganda and greatly increase the distribution of their weekly press. Just six months after the March elections, the PST was able to poll over 190,000 votes in the September 23 elections. A breakdown of the vote by district shows the PST's support to be overwhelmingly working class. This time they were the only working-class tendency which ran in opposition to Peron.

in the end we find that the basis of unification between the PRT (La Verdad) and the PSA was principled, the electoral campaign was correct, and that in the past year there have been unprecedented gains made for a clearly revolutionary Trotskyist movement in Argentina. Contrast this to that petty-bourgeois Frankenstein heir of the Ninth World Congress-- the PRT (Combatiente). The IEC majority supporters slosh through murky waters in their quest for reformists. They will learn that all they see is their own reflection.

November 20, 1973

LATIN AMERICA AND THE DIFFERENCES IN THE INTERNATIONAL

By Tom Kissner (Internationalist Tendency), Oakland/Berkeley Local

When discussing the topic of Latin America and what strategy for revolution applies to that continent, it is necessary to understand the relative role that Latin America plays in the international discussion as a whole. There are many crucial questions facing the World Trotskyist movement at this time, and Latin America is only one of them.

The Leninist-Trotskyist Faction (LTF), which has been endorsed by the national leadership of the YSA, has put forward the position that the debate on Latin America is the central political question facing revolutionaries. Numerous times we have heard this Faction's supporters claim that it is upon this point that the survival of the Fourth International will be determined. Today, only the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction and the Santucho wing of the PRT-ERP (which walked out of the international) agree on this political point.

While some of us who are supporters of the International Executive Committee Majority Tendency (IMT) may have at one time accepted this assertion, we can now see that it represents merely a superficial examination of the political debate. The supporters of the I. E. C. Majority Tendency recognize that the question of strategy for Latin America is important, but that it holds secondary importance when compared to the basic points of disagreements which exist in the Fourth International today. (Because of reactionary legislation, the YSA and the SWP are not members of the Fourth International, but are in fraternal solidarity with it.)

We could briefly summarize what we feel are the most important issues involved in the current debate among the cadres of World Trotskyism:

- 1.) The nature of the Transitional Program and how to apply it in practice.
- 2.) The importance of a proletarian orientation, particularly in the advanced capitalist countries.
- 3.) An understanding of the Leninist theory of organization; this involves the revolutionary cadres of the vanguard orienting to the advanced layers of the working class--that is, the vanguard of the class.
- 4.) The correct appreciation of the role of armed struggle in the revolutionary process and the role of the vanguard in the armed struggle.
- 5.) The importance of the revolutionary organization taking the initiative in action and educating the vanguard workers in revolutionary methods of struggle.
- 6.) The correct use of election campaigns--that is, using the elections to dispel the illusions of the masses in parliamentarism and the "peaceful road to socialism."

7.) The method and necessity of striving for a democratic-centralist international to coordinate and lead the movement on a world scale.

8.) The correct application of the theory of the Permanent Revolution to national liberation struggles--this means understanding the relationship between the democratic and socialist tasks of revolution.

This contribution cannot go over all of the differences; these will form the content of the entire discussion within our movement. The point I am trying to make is that these are the basic questions upon which there is disagreement and which overshadow any particular approach which is taken in any particular country or continent.

The Internationalist Tendency in the YSA is not alone in its view of the nature of the difference in the international movement. The statement of 19 I. E. C. members published in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin shares this view. Recently, five leaders of the Israeli Socialist Organization (Marxist), the Israeli sympathizing organization to the Fourth International, published a statement expressing their views on the debate in the international (I. I. D. B., Vol. 10, No. 18, Page 11, Oct. 1973). While the statement expressed disagreement with some of the I. E. C. Majority Tendency's positions on Latin America, it asserted the following view:

We don't think that the discussion in the International is counterposing ultraleft partisans of guerrilla war on the one hand and those who want to build a Leninist party on the basis of the Transitional Program, on the other. In fact, the discussion concerns the character of the period, the method of building Leninist parties in a prerevolutionary period, and the role of the Transitional Program. (my emphasis)

These leaders of Israeli Trotskyism conclude their statement with:

That is why, despite our criticism of certain aspects of the concepts of some of the leaders of the International Majority Tendency, we intend to proclaim our affiliation with this tendency.

Thus, despite the fact that these comrades hold some disagreements with the IMT on Latin America (which the LTF sees the whole discussion revolving around), these comrades agree that the debate on Latin America is only one aspect, and not even the most important aspect of the current discussion. Their disagreement on this one point in no way prevents them from supporting the International Majority Tendency.

Electoral Intervention

In dealing with Latin America, there are a couple of

specific points which I would like to cover: a) what constitutes a revolutionary approach toward elections as opposed to a minimalist approach and b) when does the revolutionary vanguard begin raising the call for the arming of the masses and what role should it play in this process? Through the answering of these questions, we shall see which side has the revolutionary approach, the LTF or the I. E. C. Majority Tendency.

No Marxist would uphold an automatic principle of boycotting every election. The participation in elections by revolutionary Marxists is determined first of all by the stage of the struggle of the masses. There are times when participation in elections would be incorrect--especially in a situation where the masses are at a higher level of consciousness than parliamentarism and running candidates in elections would actually be a step behind the masses and could only disorient and pull the struggle back. An example might clarify this. In Russia 1905, the Czar scheduled elections to the Duma--the first time such elections were scheduled under the absolutist monarchy. The Bolsheviks utilized the tactic of boycott toward the Duma elections. Lenin later assessed this tactic as having been correct and successful. What had happened was that a mass upsurge and general strike in October 1905 swept away the Duma altogether. Lenin and the Bolsheviks understood that the country was in a period of mass mobilization and that to boycott the elections was consistent with the objective conditions of the time. He pointed out that at such a time it would have been obviously wrong to rely on the parliamentary tactics that would have applied during a more stable period.

The corollary to this is that there are obviously times when it is correct to participate in elections--when they can be used as a vehicle for raising the level of consciousness. Both the majority tendency and the minority faction agree that it was not incorrect to participate in the first elections in Argentina. The differences exist in how you participate and most importantly on what kind of program you put forward. The PST (the result of a fusion between the PRT-Verdad and the PSA in Argentina) failed this test not so much by what it did but by what it didn't do.

It is clear that the bourgeois regime in Argentina is in a state of severe and almost permanent crisis. The recalling of Peron was preceded by successive mass struggles. But, we understand that bringing Peron into office can do nothing to solve any of the contradictions that cause the mass struggles (Cordoba uprising, etc.). Thus we can already predict and envision a new outbreak of struggle and resulting crisis. Is not the most likely course of events in the situation of a new upsurge which cannot be controlled by Peron an attempt by the military to stop this struggle by force? Isn't it likely that the Argentine military views the recent Chilean massacre as a guide to action? We think this is the case. In this situation revolutionaries face a two-fold task in their work in Argentina: breaking the masses from the illusions of Peronism (a bourgeois nationalist current) and explaining the necessity to prepare

to defend the mass movement against any attacks or attempted coups. The PST propaganda revolved around minimalist demands for reform, wages and democratization which do nothing to prepare the masses for the armed struggle of self-defense. In relation to breaking the masses from electoral illusions and Peronism, the PST raised the demand to "comrade" Peron to allow workers to be included in the Peronist election slate--the slate of a bourgeois party!

Although most of the slogans in the PST platform might have been correct for a country that was undergoing a period of lull in the class struggle, and some might even make sense in a pre-revolutionary situation like Argentina was in at the time, the central thrust of their electoral intervention was not focused on the two essential tasks listed above. A correct approach toward the Argentine elections would have been to call for workers committees and councils on a plant, regional and national level; the creation of a workers militia to defend the movement and for a workers government PLUS a denunciation of the capitalist dictatorship and an expose of its phony elections. These slogans explain the actual objective needs of the class struggle and cut across illusions. The PST campaign did not have this central thrust which meant a failure to properly educate and prepare the masses politically and organizationally for the coming upheavals.

Armed Struggle and the Vanguard

Since we as Trotskyists realize that socialism and the seizure of state power cannot be brought about by peaceful means, the question is posed for us as to how to prepare for the necessary armed conflicts. In the United States we don't call for arming the masses during our election campaigns. The reason is obvious. The intensity of the class struggle and the consciousness of the masses are at such a level that to put forward this demand would be out of step with reality. While no one in the world movement is opposed to workers on strike defending themselves against brutal attacks by police and company guards, this is different than the preparations for the general arming of the masses to seize state power. But in Argentina the situation is quite different than in North America. Both the LTF and the International majority agree that Argentina is in a pre-revolutionary situation. The question is...what flows from this understanding? The Leninist-Trotskyist Faction advocates either ignoring the arming of the masses or at best, making it a secondary question. They hold this position for both election campaigns and in day-to-day work. Is this the type of approach to be taken in a country which could suffer an attempted military takeover any day? Hardly! It is important to realize that it is not enough to just sit back and wait for a spontaneous upsurge of the masses before the question of arms is posed. By then it will be too late. Trotsky emphasized this point in the Transitional Program:

The sharpening of the proletariat's struggle means the sharpening of the methods of counter-attack on the part of capital. New waves of sit-down strikes can call forth and undoubtedly will call forth resolute counter-measures

on the part of the bourgeoisie. Preparatory work is already being done by the confidential staffs of big trusts. Woe to the revolutionary organizations, woe to the proletariat if it is again caught unawares! (my emphasis, T.P., page 17, paragraph 3)

Doesn't this paragraph describe Chile perfectly? Replace the words "big trusts" with I. T. T. and read it again. Is this lesson lost on us? It is necessary for the revolutionary party to educate the workers as to the necessity for armed action so as to dispel any illusions as to the "peaceful road to socialism." I might add that this can be put forward through defensive formulations demonstrating that the source of the violence is the land-owners, industrialists and bankers. It is not enough, however, to sit back and tell the workers to get arms. Even Allende supposedly did this just before his death! One thing that the Transitional Program teaches us is that the revolutionary vanguard must take the initiative, it must set the example. After all, that is the reason why the party is referred to as the vanguard. The revolutionary party must take the lead in actually arming the masses. Obviously, the party cannot do this by itself. It must start in those working class organizations where it has influence--among the vanguard workers. It should start on the level of armed self-defense pickets, whether for strikes or demonstrations, and proceed

from there. This is exactly what the POR (our Bolivian section) did and events proved them to be absolutely correct in this (the Banzer coup!). Once again, the LTF fails on this test, and consequently fails to prepare the masses for the establishment of dual power and the ultimate seizure of state power.

In short, it is clear that the side which squarely faces reality is the I. E. C. Majority Tendency with its recognition that the masses have to be prepared both ideologically and materially. It is important to realize that the real priority in Latin America is not building large election campaigns but rather building cadres through active participation in the workers movement and by putting forward appropriate transitional slogans. This means educating the more advanced workers through our propaganda and activity and through this the organizing and popularizing the need for the organization of armed workers detachments. These are all things which prepare the masses for the seizure of power and the overthrow of capitalism. This perspective is put forward by the International Executive Committee Majority Tendency and is supported by the Internationalist Tendency supporters in the Young Socialist Alliance.

November 21, 1973

LEARNING ABOUT CLIQUES THE HARD WAY

By Carl Rennhack, South Boston Local

I'd like to begin by quoting from Joseph Hansen's Education for Socialist Bulletin on "The Abern Clique." Comrade Hansen writes, "To understand cliquism, it is necessary to begin with the fact that a revolutionary Marxist party is not monolithic. Its ranks, coming from various sectors of the working class, are unevenly developed. This unevenness may be further increased by the recruitment of persons of petty-bourgeois origin in the process of becoming proletarianized. Actions engaged in by the party, while raising the general political level among the ranks, can also sharpen the differentiations, since... various sectors... become involved in different ways and to different degrees, most often determined by local circumstances. Among other things, teams of unusual effectiveness may form as a result of working closely together in difficult situations... Friendships formed in such circumstances can prove to be very enduring." (P. 3, emphasis added.)

Further, Comrade Hansen points out that, "At bottom, cliquism... reflects the pressure of the surrounding capitalist society. When the going gets tough, pessimism and demoralization can set in. A tendency to withdraw from what appear to be fruitless battles can arise. Some sectors of the party are certain to be more affected than others--again because of the unevenness in the composition of the party, differences in

origin of its components, different experiences, varying capacities in local leaders, and so on. Such moods favor the appearance of cliques that come to believe that the true source of the party's lack of progress must lie in the leadership or in the program." (P. 4, emphasis added.)

While I was a member of the Lower Manhattan YSA I had a chance to see a clique in action; in fact, for a while I agreed with its political positions. This contribution explains what happened.

Hedda Garza and Frank Manning are two of the most prominent supporters of the Internationalist Tendency in Lower Manhattan. Most of their political work is done in Long Island, a reactionary part of New York state. For a long time I was friendly with them. I had roomed with Frank for several months, and I had always liked and respected Hedda, both personally and politically. I had known for several months that both of them had been at odds with the local and national leadership, for a variety of reasons, and after having some things happen to me I started agreeing with them and the I. T.

What happened? Well, I was under the impression that the SWP was "bureaucratized" because nearly 40 people had

been sent to Oakland-Berkeley after the 1971 SWP convention (so I heard), the FAPO group hadn't been given equal time to PC reporters at that convention, the number of comrades needed for a delegate was increased at the 1973 convention, and political discussion was limited to only 3 months out of 24, thus putting a gag on anyone who supports the IEC Majority.

My disagreements with the YSA were over the treatment of regional comrades. I imagined that people out in the region were being shafted by heartless bureaucrats in the center.

I had gathered my impressions about the SWP from comrades who later became I. T. supporters, Hedda and Frank being the most prominent. I also talked to several regional comrades who gave me the impression that the center was out to get them. Combining this with what was happening to me, it all wound up with myself supporting a clique.

(I should explain that, to the best of my memory, Hedda and Frank never expressed political disagreements of the type that eventually arose. They did make it clear, however, that they didn't like the local or national leadership.)

The time span I'm referring to was about 10 months, from Sept. 1972 to July 1973. Two things were bothering me at this time: (1) There was something "wrong" with the Trotskyist movement, but I couldn't put my finger on it. I realize now, of course, that the problems were my own (inactivity, problems in getting along with other comrades). Curiously, once I became more active I stopped looking for "wrong" things; (2) Twice in this time span I had applied for membership in the SWP, twice I had been rejected on the grounds that I wasn't mature enough. Both times I was under the impression that I was rejected simply because I was friendly with Hedda and Frank. Twice I went to those comrades as if looking for a shoulder to cry on.

Shortly after my second attempt two things happened: Ginny Hildebrand became YSA organizer, and SWP pre-convention discussion began.

I found Ginny a little more friendly and easier to talk to than the previous organizers. I explained to her what I thought was wrong and asked her about some of the things

that Frank and Hedda were complaining about. It's not necessary to detail about our conversations; suffice it to say that she put me back on the right track.

Pre-convention discussion helped to open my eyes a lot further. Hedda and Frank's answers to questions from myself and other comrades became more and more untenable.

Then came the Barzman Letter (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 31, No. 27). I realized that what was a clique in Lower Manhattan was part of a secret faction within the world Trotskyist movement. That, and the SWP convention, finished me with the Internationalist Tendency.

A noteworthy incident occurred shortly before I left New York. I was in the elevator with Hedda, Frank and some overseas comrades. I. T. supporter Charlie Post was talking to the branch financial director. Hedda saw this, and after the elevator door closed turned to Frank and said, "I don't want him talking to them alone."

What is this "them" business? Comrades of the YSA I. T., does the concept of "we" (the tendency) and "them" (the leadership, the leadership elected by the comrades) guide your commitment to and activity in the Trotskyist movement?

One of Trotsky's major criticisms of the Workers Opposition (WO) in 1921 was their referral to the Bolshevik leadership as "they" and themselves as "we." Will the I. T. supporters go the route of the ultraleft WO? I hope not, but I can't guarantee that they will not.

Well, I can safely say that I've seen first-hand how a clique operates. Any comrade who feels neglected (as I did, when Lower Manhattan was recruiting new comrades and working double time to integrate them), or who is inactive or semi-active (as I was), or who has real or imaginary grievances with the leadership, is prey to cliquists of the I. T. variety. Personal friendships between comrades and groups of comrades are fine, but cliques have no place in a revolutionary youth organization, a revolutionary party, or in an International chosen by history to bury capitalism and Stalinism.

November 23, 1973