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INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

February 1970

No. 3 in 1970

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20 cents

Published by

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

873 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003

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ATLANTA SWP-YSA JOINT WOMEN'S LIBERATION FRACTION MINUTES, JANUARY 26, 1970

[A number of branches have begun sending in minutes of their women's liberation fraction meetings, and this is very helpful. These minutes from Atlanta give an idea of the kind of information that is valuable, and a picture of the work the Atlanta comrades are involved in.]

* * *

Agenda read and approved.

I. The minutes were read and approved as corrected.

II. NOW Conference

This weekend NOW is having Elizabeth Kuck speak on Friday night on some phase of discrimination against women in employment. Saturday there will be workshops. The fraction decided to send rather strong representation to both events. Linda will announce to the group that there will be a women's contingent in the Agnew demonstration and that there will be a broad planning meeting February 8 to talk about plans for International Women's Day.

III. Planning meeting February 8

The Emory women's group has called for a broad coalition meeting on February 8 to plan actions for International Women's Day. There should be broad leafleting for this meeting, but the group so far has no treasury or money to pay for such a leaflet. We should build this meeting as much as possible. We will propose a teach-in and an action calling for "free and legal abortions." Also, if at all possible, the demonstration should be held at the State Capitol because there has been some discussion about abortions in the Georgia General Assembly. At the NOW meeting we should sound out people about plans for March 8 and get endorsers for our proposal. Also, we should look into the possibility of filing a suit similar to the one in New York. At the last Emory women's group meeting there were 25 action-oriented women present. They were very encouraged by the fact that they had succeeded in getting all women's rules abolished at Emory.

IV. Leaflet for Agnew demonstration

The leaflet should be headlined "Women Against the War" and follow the same line as the regular leaflet.

V. High school women

At the high school Antiwar Conference the women voted to participate as high school women in the women's contingent. They want to build a high school women's conference which may or may not materialize. The women from each high school will be responsible for advertising to the women in their schools. They should certainly have a speaker at the rally, which the YSA-SWP women will encourage.

VI. Classes

Originally, the first forum on women's liberation was scheduled for February 20, but as that is the anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X and we plan to have some kind of commemorative service, the classes will begin on February 26, March 6 and a panel on March 13. A leaflet will come out on these later.

VII. Articles for Bird

The articles on Novack and Reed pamphlets should be ready for the fraction to review on February 25 and into the Bird by March 1.

VIII. Downtown Women's Group

RYM-II and Newsreel women were not present at this meeting. The group discussed activities which they want to build and participate in. They looked to the YSAer present for information and are impressed by our activities in women's liberation. They have rented a room in the downtown hippie community center for child care and coffee. There are some high schoolers in this group. They were enthusiastic about the February 8 meeting and voted to send a representative to the Atlanta Mobe Steering Committee. There are many healthy members except for the leadership which is Bird, RYM, and Newsreel.

IX. Georgia State women's group

Linda will speak on campus on Thursday at the first meeting of women ever held on campus. She will speak on women in society and their oppression. Questions should be encouraged. After the speech there will be a call for the formation of a women's group on campus. The speech will be open to both sexes, but the organizational meeting will be closed.

AUSTIN WOMEN'S LIBERATION REPORT

By Laura Richardson

In the preceding period, all women's liberation activity of an organized nature had been carried out by a group called Women's Liberation Front, that concerned itself mainly with psychological and personal aspects of women's liberation. The turnover in this particular group has been quite large -- since its formation some 200 women have run through the organization. Meetings tended to be quite long (three to four hours) sessions with an "encounter group" atmosphere. The group, having a strange composition, has been for some reason quite unwilling to make a political analysis of the oppression of women, but has remained on the psychological level. Leaders of the group have made it known to other members of the radical community that they do not wish to have "left politics" injected into their meetings, but wish to continue as they are, although they are not particularly hostile to leftists on a personal basis. The main activity (the only public one) of this group is to run a Birth Control Information Center in the University Y.

As a result of the inadequacy of this particular group, some members of the Austin radical milieu (our SDS is non-existent, but if it were present, these women would be members; they are more or less RYM sympathizers, as far as I can tell) called a meeting on January 20 for the formation of a political women's liberation group. At this first meeting, only members of the various radical tendencies were invited, plus a couple of those nebulous "independents." Women from the YSA, SWP, SDS(WSA), CP, Spartacist League, and the aforementioned RYM-types were present. Discussion at first centered around the need for a second women's liberation group, so that women who wished to take action around issues of women's

liberation could do so. Everyone present agreed, and the decision was made to constitute ourselves as such a group. Further discussion centered around what type of activities we would like to engage in, and suggestions were made for monthly educational and public presentations on the politics of women's liberation; for the waging of political struggles around such questions as demanding that the University set up free day-care centers for the kids of students and staff; and that we have weekly meetings with time devoted to assigned presentations and readings. It was agreed that we were not on principle averse to having men included in many of the activities of the group, since we are all supposedly out of the thing of seeing MEN as the enemy.

A very small effort was made by one of the ex-SDSers to limit the group to only those women who agreed that capitalism was the enemy and who had decided they were revolutionaries. This suggestion was quashed for the time being.

On organizational notes, the new group decided upon the name Women United, and it was decided to become a registered campus organization with faculty sponsor so we could use university facilities. A small controversy raged over whether we should have a male faculty sponsor, but this died down when it was pointed out that none of us knew any women full professors.

From this last point alone, you can see that we in Texas have plenty of work ahead of us in the realm of women's liberation.

January 24, 1970

CERTAIN TRENDS IN THE U.S. AND THEIR IMPACT
ON THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN

by Evelyn Sell

In her report to the SWP convention panel on women's liberation, Mary-Alice Waters sounded "A note of caution ... We were involved in the black liberation and student movements for a long time before we attempted to set down transitional programs. The same process is going to take place in relation to women's liberation. Our job at this point, where the women's liberation movement is in an embryonic form, is not to sit down and start writing a full-blown program, but to begin getting involved in it, learning about it, and thinking about it."

This approach is the best one for leading to a serious examination of all the issues involved in the woman question and for preparing a definitive programmatic statement at the appropriate time. Our experiences in and with the women's liberation movement should be valuable in defining and testing our ideas. An unhurried approach will not in any way hamper our activities. We don't need a full-blown program to present women's liberation issues in our press, our election campaigns, or our daily political work.

With the above approach in mind, I would like to raise some points which I feel warrant further investigation and discussion. The following material is not in any way complete. It merely points to certain trends and attempts to relate them to the traditional role assigned women in our society. The facts and statistics cited are, I'm sure, familiar to the comrades; they've just been put together in a package to make the main point. To avoid confusion: there is no intent to prove that these trends will continue to operate in a non-capitalist society.

In trying to present the main idea, I have used figures for "all women" rather than breaking the figures up racially. The trends noted below hold true for both white and nonwhite U.S. women. The breakdowns are given in the appended tables. These tables indicate significant differences between white and nonwhite women; these differences deserve special, lengthy treatment. However, the differences do not contradict the long-range trends so I have not included them in the body of the article. There was no class breakdown available in the material researched. Again, class differences among women do not contradict the trends which hold true for the overwhelming numbers of women in American society.

THE LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE BASIS FOR WOMEN'S
LIBERATION

A number of trends have been at work in American society undercutting the role of women as primarily mothers and homemakers. These trends, affecting the total life cycle of women, provide an objective basis for the changing consciousness which has helped produce the current struggle against sexism. This changing consciousness, in its turn, will have repercussions on the objective factors in terms of affecting the pace, direction and depth of the changes still taking place.

One of the most important long-term set of changes taking place involves female longevity, the duration of the child-bearing/rearing period and family size.

Female longevity. Women are living longer. At the close of the 18th century the life expectancy for North Americans, with no specifics for sex, was 35-40 years. In 1850 the life expectancy of a Massachusetts female was 40.5 years (only Massachusetts figures available that far back). Fifty years ago the life expectancy figure for U.S. females was 54.6 years. In 1967 it had risen still higher to 74.2 years. Although men, too, are living longer, women's life expectancy is increasingly longer than men's. That Massachusetts woman with a life expectancy of 40.5 years in 1850 was not much longer-lived than the male of her time and state; his life expectancy was 38.3 years. By 1967 the male life expectancy in the U.S. had climbed to 67 years -- a much longer life but not keeping pace with the female's climb to 74.2 years. Another reflection of the female's longer life span is the ratio of males to females in the U.S. In 1910 there were 106.2 males for every 100 females in the population. In 1940 this had dropped to 100.8 and by 1968 it had gone down even further to 95.4 males for every 100 females.

Child-bearing/rearing period. Women are marrying earlier, having children earlier, having smaller families and spending less years bearing and raising children. The years spent in child-care are both relatively shorter in relation to women's total life span and absolutely shorter in terms of actual number of years spent in this role. The average female's reproductive period lasts from about 13 years of age to 46-47 years of age, about 30 years in all. When correlated with female life expectancy figures of 100

years ago, it can be seen that mothers of that time spent practically their whole lives bearing and raising children. During 1880-89 the median age of women at the birth of their first child was 22.9 years, at the birth of the last child was 32.9 years, and at the first marriage of the last child was 56.2 years. "In 1900," according to Dr. James E. Birren, head of the University of Southern California Institute of Gerontology, "the average family broke up with death before the last child had left home...[parents] couldn't look forward to life together without children." In sharp contrast, by 1960, "the average couple lived together 40.3 years, of which 13.9 were spent together after the marriage of the last child."

Family size. An obvious factor in the shortening of the child-bearing/rearing period is the decreasing size of American families. In 1790 the population per household was 5.79 persons. By 1900 this had been reduced to 4.76 and by 1968 to 3.23 persons per household. In 1968 the majority of U.S. families included 3 or less persons; 33.9% were 2-person families, 20.6% were 3-person families. About 1/4 of the families could be called "large:" 12.5% were 5-person, 7.1% were 6-person, and 6.8% were 7-or-more person families. The continually dwindling size of families is matched by the constantly falling U.S. birth rate. In 1910 there were 30.1 babies born for every 1000 persons in the population. This had dropped to 19.4 per thousand by 1940. During World War II and shortly after the birth rate climbed up to 24.1 per thousand in 1950 and 32.7 per thousand in 1960 (still below the levels at the beginning of the century). But in 1967 the birth rate dropped lower than ever: 17.8 per thousand.

Birth control. The growing use of contraceptives has helped decrease the size of American families and the duration of the child-bearing/rearing period. Historical statistics are not available to show the extent of or rate of expansion in the use of birth control in the U.S. but the first national studies on this subject show a big rise in use of contraceptives in recent years. The first national study of contraceptive practice in the U.S. was undertaken in 1955; this was followed by a similar study in 1960. The facts gathered at that time pre-dated the use of the pill and the first study included only white couples. According to the 1955 survey, 70% of white couples between the ages 18-39 practiced birth control; by 1960 this had risen to 81%. Nonwhite couples were included in the later study and it was found that 59% practiced birth control. Both contraceptive practice and the type of birth control used varied with religious affiliation, husband's income (higher income goes with more birth control used), and wife's education (higher educational level goes with greater birth control usage).

Educational level. The historic trend in the U.S. is for a greater percent of the population to enroll in schools, to be graduated from high school, and to attend college. (Following figures will concentrate on pre-college schooling since the difference between high school graduates and wives with some college who used birth control is now quite small.) In 1850, 44.8% of all U.S. females of public school age were enrolled in schools. This went up to 50.9% in 1900, to 78.4% in 1950, and to 86.2% in 1957. Median years of school completed by females in 1940 was 8.7 years, in 1950 was 9.6 years, rose to 10.9 years in 1960, and to 12.1 years in 1968. Since the surveys have shown a direct relation between years of schooling and the practice of birth control by females, the rising level of education attained by U.S. women indicates an increasing use of birth control.

WORKING WIVES

What impact have the above processes had on the role of American women? How have these processes interacted with other factors and trends in U.S. society? A look at the situation of working wives can begin to give some answers to these questions.

Interaction with urbanization. At the beginning of this century, rural residents comprised 54.3% of the U.S. population while urban residents comprised 45.7%. By 1960 this had been reversed so that rural residents comprised 30.1% and urban residents 69.9%. In 1968, of all U.S. families, 94.6% were in the urban and nonfarm category while only 5.4% were in the rural farm category.

This shift in population from the countryside to the city has undoubtedly played its part in bringing married women into the paid labor force. The economic pressures of city life cannot be relieved by mother cultivating a little garden plot to supplement father's paycheck; in the city, the supplement to a wage is another wage. The large families encouraged in a largely agricultural population are discouraged in an urban population by the exigencies of city life; smaller families are more easily supported and make it more possible for both parents to work while, at the same time, the possibilities and need for work make smaller families more desirable. The complexities and structures of urban life offer all of its inhabitants a greater variety of choices in what to do with their lives as well as cultivating different social viewpoints than those arising in agricultural groups.

Interaction with economic situation. The general economic conditions obviously play a critical role in encouraging or discouraging the participation of wives in

the labor market. The percentage of working wives continually rises as U.S. capitalism finds it increasingly difficult to pay a male family head enough wages to sustain the whole family at a socially acceptable standard of living. In 1890, 36.9% of women workers were single, 4.5% were married with husband present, and 28.6% were in a category of "other." The single category remained quite stable during the 40's and 50's: 46.1% in 1940, 46.3% in 1950, and 46.8% in 1957. But "married with husband present" showed large gains: 15.4% in 1940, 21.6% in 1950, and 29.6% in 1957. By 1966, over half of the women working were married (57%); this meant that the wife worked in 35% of all U.S. families; of all families with incomes over \$10,000 a year, almost half reached that category due to the combined incomes of husband and wife.

Work and "women's work." In a January 11, 1970 New York Times article summing up the major demographic features of the 1960's, Albert A. Kraus writes: "Smaller and more widely spaced families will continue to affect the participation of women in the labor force. One of the surprises of the sixties was the unexpected increase in the number of young women working or seeking work. Although an increasing proportion of mothers with young children chose to return to work, an important factor was the decline in the number of children under five. Another was the increased opportunity for part-time work."

That last line is a clue to the continued sex-defined division of labor in the home: women still bear the major burden of childcare and housekeeping duties. Part-time work is attractive for working wives because they still have the tasks of mother-homemaker. Full-time jobs do not replace traditional "women's work" but are added to it, increasing the contra-

ditions between the inherited concepts of a female's role and the new realities which increasingly take wives and mothers out of the home (physically and psychologically).

BIOLOGY IS DESTINY?

The biological facts of life are usually used to oppress women, i.e., nature endowed you with a uterus, therefore you must spend your whole life as wife, mother and homemaker. The demographic facts of life of 100 years ago tended to support that view of the female role in society. However, the demographic facts of life today (and increasingly in the future given the continuation of the trends cited above) counteract the role women have inherited from previous sets of conditions.

Contemporary life expectancy figures and family life cycle patterns pose the question: what will women do with their lives during all those years when they are not bearing or raising children and when they are outliving their husbands and males by larger and larger margins? Contemporary social and economic crises of U.S. capitalism pose additional but related questions for women throughout their lives.

Proceeding from the viewpoint that the objective realities of life are the most important determinants of consciousness in the long run, it appears reasonable to assume that the emerging life-pattern for American women has had and will have more profound effects on female and male consciousness than all the sexist efforts of preachers, publishers, Madison Avenue hucksters, sociologists, psychologists, school counselors, etc. American women are playing in a new ballgame now and it is becoming increasingly obvious that the new game needs a new set of rules.

TABLES

I. EXPECTATION OF LIFE AT BIRTH

Year	All Males	All Females	Female Nonwhite	Female White
1920	53.6	54.6	45.2	55.6
1930	58.1	61.6	49.2	63.5
1940	60.8	65.2	54.9	66.6
1950	65.6	71.1	62.9	72.2
1960	66.6	73.1	66.3	74.1
1967	67.0	74.2	68.2	75.1

TABLES (continued)

II. SEX RATIO OF POPULATION (Number of males per 100 females)

Ages	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1968
all ages	106.2	104.1	102.6	100.8	98.7	97.1	95.4
under 15 yrs.	102.2	102.1	102.6	103.0	103.7	103.4	103.8
15-24	101.2	96.9	98.2	98.7	97.8	98.3	97.7
25-44	110.5	105.3	101.0	98.7	96.5	95.7	95.8
45-64	114.7	115.4	109.2	105.3	100.2	95.7	92.1
65 & over	101.2	101.5	100.6	95.7	89.7	82.8	74.9

* * * * *

III. FAMILY LIFE CYCLE FOR WOMEN BORN FROM 1880 to 1939, By Year of Birth

Event	1880-89	1900-09	1930-39
Median age of women:			
at first marriage	21.6	21.1	19.9
at birth of first child	22.9	22.6	21.5
at birth of last child	32.9	30.4	?
at 1st marriage of last child	56.2	51.9	?

Median years between events for all couples:			
1st marriage to birth of last child	11.3	9.3	?

* * * * *

IV. SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS

Year	Median Size	Population per Household
1790	5.43	5.79
1850	---	5.55
1860	---	5.28
1870	---	5.09
1880	---	5.04
1890	4.48	4.93
1900	4.23	4.76
1910	---	4.54
1920	---	4.34
1930	3.40	4.11
1940	3.28	3.77
1950	3.05	3.52
1957	3.02	3.42

TABLES (continued)

V. PERCENT OF WHITE COUPLES EVER USING CONTRACEPTION: U.S., 1955 and 1960

	<u>1955</u>	<u>1960</u>
Religion of wife:		
Catholic	57	70
Protestant	75	84
Jewish	86	95
Education of wife:		
Grade school	48	66
High School 1-3	65	78
High School 4	74	83
College	84	88
Income of husband:		
Under \$3,000	58	70
\$3,000-\$3,999	69	77
\$4,000-\$5,999	74	80
\$6,000 or more	79	85
Entire sample	70	81

* * * * *

VI. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES

<u>Year</u>	<u>All Male</u>	<u>All Female</u>	<u>White Female</u>	<u>Nonwhite Female</u>
1890	84.3	18.2	15.8	37.7
1900	85.7	20.0	17.3	41.2
1920	84.6	22.7	20.7	40.6
1930	82.1	22.8	21.8	40.5
1940	79.7	19.0	24.5	37.3
1950	79.0	22.6	28.1	37.1
1960	82.4	37.1	36.0	47.2
1965	80.1	38.8	37.7	48.1

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NOTE ON SOURCES:

Table on use of contraception taken from Encyclopedia of Social Sciences.
All other tables taken from the following:

Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1969

The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present

REPORT ON DETROIT WOMEN'S LIBERATION

By Evelyn Kirsch

Up until the YSA convention we were not involved in the women's liberation movement. Immediately following the convention we began to start probing, and intervened in a Women's Liberation Coalition conference that took place in January. Apparently many small community-like women's groups have been forming and they decided that it was time to get together in some sort of coalition. This was where we entered the picture.

The coalition conference was not really a conference, only a meeting of all the women's liberation groups that could be contacted. They've opened up an office in the building where all the radical groups have offices, including SMC, Detroit Coalition to End the War, People Against Racism, NDC, etc. The coalition meeting consisted mainly of young people, although there were some older women there. Also all political tendencies were there: PL, WSA, RYM 2, Newsreel, Facing Reality, and us. The meeting was subsequently reported on in the January 30 Militant by Jacqueline Rice. The coalition is based upon opposition to male chauvinism as the main enemy.

It was at this coalition meeting that we first found out what was happening in Michigan around the abortion repeal issue. The abortion repeal seems to us to be the big issue right now and the one on which we are concentrating our efforts at this time. We attended a meeting called to plan for an abortion conference on March 7. No political tendencies have been involved in this except for us; I don't think they realize the explosiveness of this issue. The meetings are attended mainly by middle-aged women in the women's liberation groups who have been looking for an issue to work on, a few independent students, many elderly women

who are primarily legislatively oriented (let's-have-our-senators-speak-to-us types) and ourselves.

We have politically intervened in the planning of this conference and have prevented it from becoming a liberal, hear-your-senators meeting; it will be politically oriented toward coming out with a call for a mass action. We will have to put a lot of effort into this action if we want to see it come off, although the sentiment is very strong among the women to get some mass political activity going.

The abortion conference planners have formed the Michigan Organization for Repeal of Abortion Laws (MORAL). We are seeking broad sponsorship for the conference. Day after day there are articles in the newspaper about abortion repeal, about the hearings that are being held around the state (which our candidates will probably testify at), and the Detroit Free Press has come out in an editorial favoring repeal of abortion laws. The conference will be held on March 7, at Wayne State University, with a keynote speaker, workshops led by specialists (Religion and Abortion, Medical Aspects of Abortion, Poverty and Abortion, Mass Action), and a plenary session to call for activities including a mass action. The conference looks like it will be big: 500-1,000 women and we are trying to get it to be broadcast throughout the student center. All kinds of liberal-left, reformist, etc. organizations plan to sponsor it: clergy groups, Jewish women's groups, political groups, medical groups.

February 9, 1970

THE "WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK" SLOGAN

by Bob Langston

In the New York local -- and perhaps elsewhere -- the slogan, "wages for housework," has been proposed as a plank in our 1970 election platform. I have reservations about this slogan; I want to explain those reservations here, and propose a different approach to what I take the slogan in question to be aimed at.

In the first place, it is not, I think, immediately clear what the slogan means, what it is demanding of whom. This in itself would make it a dubious affair. The slogan does not, I take it, immediately mean to anybody what it strictly, literally says: that all performance of housework should become wage labor, exploited by some capitalist. In this literal, but surely very forced, interpretation of the slogan, a progressive element is present: it implies a measure of socialization of the reproduction of labor power. But I don't suppose such an interpretation would have too much appeal to many women, and it would surely be dubious for a party committed to the abolition of capitalist exploitation to propose a vast extension of it.

It is clear that what the slogan immediately means to someone who hears it, though, is that somehow or other, some instance -- either the state, husbands, or the "economy" (corporations, etc.) -- should make regular money payments, according to some definite schedule, to women as compensation for the work they do in maintaining households, that is, in providing the conditions of the social reproduction of labor power within the closed-in, isolated, nuclear-family "cell."

Even if it is obscure, the "wages for housework" slogan no doubt appeals to many women. Its appeal, I imagine, is based on three perfectly accurate perceptions. One is that in a society where worth, in an ethical or "status" sense, largely follows value, in the economic sense, work that is not remunerated -- like "woman's work" in the home -- is of little worth, and that those who perform it -- women -- are therefore of correspondingly little worth. Second is the perception that in a society where personal freedom is largely a function of financial independence, the financial dependence of many women on men determines a personal bondage of these women to men. Third is the perception that it is immediately unfair and oppressive for such arduous drudgery as housework to be unremunerated in a bourgeois society, whose ideological norms require payment for work performed.

The slogan suggests an inference drawn from these perceptions: if women were remunerated for housework, "woman's work" and thus woman herself would rise in worth; her personal bondage to the man would be lessened; she would be liberated from the immediate injustice done her in terms of the ideological standards of bourgeois morality.

But each of these inferences depends on an unspoken premise: that "housework" is by nature private, nonsocial work and that it is woman's work. In other words, the slogan, while building on three accurate perceptions, does not point towards what I suppose every Marxist would agree to be necessary if not sufficient conditions of the liberation of women -- the socialization of the process of the social reproduction of labor power and the elimination, to the extent possible at any given moment of historical-technical development, of the sexual division of labor. Yet these perceptions are admirably suited to raise just this question. But the slogan, if I am not mistaken, would tend to inhibit the development of this consciousness; it turns matters upside down.

For it is not true that woman's work in the household is of little worth because it is not remunerated. Rather, it is not remunerated because it is of little worth -- that is, because it produces no value. Those activities are indeed necessary to the reproduction of labor power, which, in capitalist society, becomes a commodity. But household toil makes no contribution to the value of this commodity, labor power. The socially necessary labor time that constitutes the cost of the reproduction of labor power excludes, in capitalist society where that reproduction takes place within the nuclear family, the labor time spent in housework. It is the cost of the groceries bought at the store, and not in the slightest the amount of time spent cooking them, that enters into the determination of the wage, the price of the commodity, labor power.

But production of value is the fundamental criterion of worth and of entitlement to remuneration in bourgeois society. This is just the reason that bourgeois political economy had to concoct theories demonstrating that capital produces value -- because only then is the capitalist entitled to his profit.

And just for this reason, too, despite the bourgeois norm requiring payment for work, women are not paid for housework because, no matter how hard, demanding and responsible her activity

may be, it is not work in the bourgeois sense; it does not produce any value. And it does not produce any value because it is essentially private, because it is carried on within the isolated cell of the nuclear family, economically isolated from other activity. For the system of bourgeois political economy, housework is no more work than is the energy expended by an individual in digesting food.

Also, the woman's financial dependence on, and hence personal bondage to, the man does not, in most cases, follow from insufficient command over money income relative to the man; in most working class families, at least, women manage the household budget, and whole industries have grown up based on the mass buying power of women beyond what is required for the immediate, material needs of the household. Rather, the financial dependence and personal bondage of women derive primarily -- ignoring "psychological," i.e., internalized superstructural factors -- from the overwhelming responsibility of child care as a private matter -- including the necessity of maintaining a household -- imposed on the woman, and from qualitatively and quantitatively bad job opportunities for women.

By turning these relations upside down, by not challenging the unspoken premise in the inference, the "wages for housework" slogan diverts attention away from the need to socialize the reproduction of labor power and to undermine the sexual division of labor, and directs attention towards the possibility of making this oppressive status quo somewhat more acceptable by -- paying women to remain housewives.

To the extent that the demand was realized one way or another -- say by state transfer payments -- it would presumably have just this effect. In this respect, it is similar to the subsidies paid to women or families by several capitalist states for bearing and rearing children. And it is just for this reason that the most vigorous proponents of such child subsidies in Europe are generally the conservative Catholic parties; their spokesmen quite rightly counterpose such child subsidies to the timid proposals for publicly supported child-care facilities presented by social democrats and liberals. At most, such payments would redistribute income somewhat in favor of women. They would not touch the structural elements in the oppression of women. If anything, they would discourage women from seeking to break out of the confines of the nuclear family.

On the other hand, I believe, the "24-hour, free, publicly financed, community-controlled child-care facilities" demand and the "preferential access to

education, jobs, and upgrading" demand point in the proper direction. Together with similar slogans pertaining to housework and with the "full-employment, no reduction in personal wage income" demand, they might constitute elements of a series of demands having a transitional character in the strong sense: immediate appeal to the felt needs of large numbers of women; a tendency to raise to consciousness the character of the nuclear family as a structure oppressive of women; a tendency to undermine this structure in reality so far as the demands are realized; a high probability that they are not fully realizable within the framework of capitalist society in its present stage of development.

The basic guidelines to formulating slogans in this area should, I think, be to raise demands for socialized institutions to assume the essential functions of reproducing labor power now carried out within the nuclear family and to raise demands for unlimited access to the social work-world for women.

In particular, the following series might be considered:

1. Free, 24-hour, publicly financed, community-controlled child-care centers;
2. Free or low-priced, publicly financed, industrialized, house-cleaning and house-maintenance services;
3. Low-priced, high-quality, publicly financed restaurants and take-out food-preparation centers;
4. Free or low-priced, publicly financed, laundry and cleaning services;
5. Full employment for all who wish to work with no reduction in personal wage income; corresponding shortening of hours of work;
6. Preferential access for women -- along with minority-group men -- to education, jobs and upgrading. (This demand ought to be carefully formulated so that taken together with [5] it avoids any implication that white men would lose jobs; it is a question of everyone who works or wants to work gaining, only with some gaining more than others; the preferential practices would be simply to assure that the inequalities and discrimination of the past would not continue to determine the present and the future; the goal is the end of the sexual division of labor with all its inequalities.)

Some such group of slogans might, I think, have at least as much immediate appeal as the "wages for housework" slogan, while it would appeal to the same accurate perceptions. Taken together, and if carefully formulated, these slogans

might help reduce the inevitable social conflict between men and women -- and thus, too, help counteract the weakening of the working-class unity these can cause. The rationality of these demands, if not immediately evident to men, could be relatively easily explained: the immense loss society suffers today because of the talent and energy wasted in maintaining households by small-scale, inefficient, private methods; how socialization of these functions could bring higher social productivity and hence the possibility of a reduction of necessary work and greater satisfaction of the material and cultural needs of all members of the society.

At the same time, partial realization of these demands would contribute to the undermining of the self-enclosed, isolated, nuclear family. It would off-set the harm done to children by the way in which

capitalism in its dotage is undermining the nuclear family. Through the socialization of the reproduction of labor power in general, and particularly through preferential access to jobs and education for women, partial realization of these demands would tend to undermine the sexual division of labor.

Finally, it is doubtful that capitalism in these days of its senility with all its structural rigidities, could absorb full realization of these demands. For realization of them would require a drastic reorganization of the economy, and it would require, under conditions in which an increase in the rate of exploitation would be sharply limited by the requirement that personal wage incomes not decline, a rapid increase in the rate of accumulation to finance the immense expansion of the new "service" sectors and to employ the extended reservoir of labor power. Or, in other words, struggle around such demands could offer the revolutionary vanguard growing opportunity to educate, agitate and organize for the social revolution.

REPORT ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION ASPECT OF THE NEW YORK STATE CAMPAIGN

By Terry Hillman
[Campaign Youth Director]

The New York State Socialist Workers Party is focusing on three main planks of our platform: the antiwar struggle, the demand for Black and Puerto Rican self-determination, and women's liberation. To date it has been the women's liberation aspect which has won us far more publicity and support than any other recent New York SWP campaign.

Of the six major candidates, three are women. Ruthann Miller, our candidate for comptroller, is known and respected as a women's liberation movement leader. She is a staff member of the People to Abolish Abortion Laws, a coalition of groups which has planned a mass demonstration for March 28 in support of four legal suits to abolish the New York State abortion law.

The press release inviting reporters to the news conference which announced the campaign focused on the women's liberation aspects of the campaign. The first two headlines on the press release read: "Abortion struggle leader to announce candidacy for New York State Comptroller. Socialist Workers Party candidates will launch statewide women's liberation election campaign." The subsequent headlines focused on the Third World and antiwar sides of the campaign. We got a good response from the press. Both major wire services attended the news conference, as well as one TV station and the major rock and soul radio stations. We received coverage in the New York Times (and the Atlanta Journal), and the radio stations carried announcements of the campaign and statements by Clifton DeBerry, SWP candidate for Governor. The woman reporter from AP was especially interested in our campaign because of the women's liberation aspects, and has indicated that she wants to attend campaign activities. Since then, the New York Times interviewed Ruthann and featured her, including her candidacy, in an article on the women's page about the women's liberation movement.

Several of our first major pieces of literature will be on women's liberation. This includes a printed leaflet, a poster, and a series of stickers with one women's liberation demand on each sticker. We are focusing on four demands which represent the major areas of concern in the women's liberation movement: free abortion on demand, free 24-hour child care centers controlled by those who use them, equal pay for equal work, and write women back into history. We are planning two posters, one saying "Fight for Women's Liberation" and including the four demands, and one specifically on the abortion question, since this is a big issue here.

We decided to put out a lot of women's liberation literature early in the campaign because of the importance of using our campaign to help lead the way in the women's liberation movement and because we felt we could raise money with this material. We felt that women would be attracted to and want to contribute to a campaign which will be going to millions of people with the issues of women's liberation.

To facilitate this the campaign committee, in conjunction with the women's liberation fraction, put out a draft of the major women's liberation leaflet we will be printing. This draft was then taken to various women's liberation groups and individuals by the women's liberation fraction to get opinions. The response was very good. The women in these groups have gotten the feeling of more involvement in our campaign. One woman has already done research for us. We are aiming for a women's supporter group for the campaign initiated jointly by comrades and independents. We also want to involve women in raising money for some of the campaign's women's liberation literature. We have asked women to contribute \$7.00 to put out one thousand of our basic leaflet, for example, and we will do the same with the posters.

We are also using the women's liberation issue to make ties with the Black and Puerto Rican movements. One woman, who is well known for her work with Third World organizations, has come to us to help organize women in defense of the Panther 21. She brought a woman from the Young Lords to our headquarters to meet with the campaign staff and leaders of the women's liberation fraction about defense of the Panthers and the Young Lords. While nothing concrete has come of this yet, it was an important step in making contact with these movements. It was the women's liberation question more than anything else which seemed to link us together.

The big openings that we have gotten in the press because of the women's liberation aspects of our campaign are especially important. For example, the New York Post has been almost impossible for our movement to crack. The first time we ever got coverage in this paper, at least in the recent period, was during the YSA convention. No matter how hard we tried, none of our recent election campaigns could get coverage. But this time, when we called a woman Post reporter to invite her to the kick-off rally and told her that the New Feminist Theater would be performing, she said "Right on!" and added that she would try

to attend and write a story for the Post. Two of the major TV news shows have shown a real interest in this side of the campaign. This is typical of the response the campaign has gotten from reporters. Women reporters in general are very friendly to us and already are beginning to relate to us on a more personal basis.

Our campaign kick-off rally demonstrated the potential of the women's liberation side of the campaign. The New Feminist Theater was featured at the rally. This group endorsed the campaign and has offered to do benefits for us and help us build the campaign. Myrna Lamb, who is becoming very well known as a women's liberation playwright, spoke at

the rally and also endorsed the campaign. Both the head of the New Feminist Theater and Myrna Lamb were enthusiastic about the tremendous response their play got from the people at the rally, and were inspired by the scope and seriousness of our campaign and what it will be doing for the women's liberation movement (see the article in The Militant February 20).

This kind of reaching out and involving the living movements in our campaign is what we are aiming for. We feel that the response we received from these leaders of the women's liberation movement is just the beginning of what will be accomplished in this area during the campaign.