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These discussion articles and resolutions were written for the Young Socialist National Convention to be held at the Manhattan Center in New York City, December 27-31, 1970. They were written by members of the Young Socialist Alliance from around the country.

Similar resolutions and discussion articles will deal with other activities in which young socialists are involved. They are being circulated prior to the convention to assure the fullest possible discussion on political perspectives and activities before the convention meets.

Young Socialists from around the country are invited to participate in the written discussion and urged to attend the convention. Contributions to the discussion and inquiries can be sent to the Young Socialist Alliance, P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station, New York, New York 10003.

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CONTRIBUTION TO THE 1970 WOMEN'S LIBERATION DISCUSSION

by

Toba Leah Singer

The suffragist movement of 50 years ago shared certain common characteristics with today's women's liberation movement. It came at a time when there was tremendous political ferment in this country in reaction to the slaveocracy and the social issues which emerged from this general civil upheaval. Questions of Black people's "rights" as opposed to a Black movement against racism invited a movement of women and even men fighting for women's "rights" as opposed to a movement of women against sexism. In spite of the narrow scope of the suffragist movement, it met with probably more hostility and violent attacks than today's women's liberation movement which includes many, many more women and whose demands rattle the very foundations of capitalist society, which the suffrage question did not directly do. That is not to say that a strong leadership was not built amongst the suffragists--the suffrage question had an important dual effect--it won for women the right to vote and it also politicized many women around questions unrelated to the right of women to vote--abolition (which actually sparked the women's movement but which also grew as a result of it) as well as trade union organizing of women--those issues which dominated the political scene of 100 years ago. It was inevitable, due to the highly political atmosphere which the suffragist struggle evinced, that female, political leadership would emerge.

What the suffragist movement failed to do was to deal with the social questions which made unequal voting laws possible--the capitalist system. As Malcolm X would say-- "It treated the symptoms, not the cause." In addition, those bourgeois women, whose sole interest lay in their right to vote and own property, took control of the movement and cut it off from further achievements.

In the fifties, there was a brief resurgence of feminism around the writings of Betty Friedan whose Feminine Mystique inspired the formation of the National Organization of Women (N.O.W.) which had a limited appeal, mainly to professional women and whose activities, no matter how militant, always returned to the road of electoral politics within the twin parties of capitalism.

Today's movement for women's liberation began very much the way the suffragist movement began but had as its historical detonator--not the civil war which characterized the downfall of the Southern land slaveocracy, but rather the

war in Vietnam--the last, desperate stand of a moribund capitalism--a war which drags on and on with no light yet evident in the dark tunnel of imperialist decay. Women's liberation emerges at a time when Black America is fighting for its life in the ghettos across the country--which get worse, not better as unemployment and inflation rise to doubly attack the United States working class. The feminism which comes out of the 70s is a highly conscious feminism--it has behind it experienced, political women who have worked both in the civil rights movement and the Black power movement--as well as in the antiwar movement--women with organizational experience--an important feature which was lacking in the first stages of the suffrage movement; it has the historical lessons of these movements within its recent memory. The left wing of the present women's movement wishes to stay independent of electoral politics; it sees the necessity of defining its membership by the yardstick of its own oppression--women, for the first time, are organizing on their own, for their own needs. They are demanding control of their bodies, their status as human beings and their destinies--they are no longer willing to accept roles as nursemaids and housekeepers for the working class without pay and with only secondary or marginal choice of any other vocation. It is important that comrades fully understand what is meant when we say that women are without choice in this matter of controlling their lives. In our discussion of the importance of male comrades taking child care assignments at women's liberation actions, which took place several weeks ago in Boston, some comrades erroneously put forth the idea that women have children by choice and that care of children at political events is the mother's and father's (which assumes that a father is present and available) "personal" responsibility. It is true that in many cases, especially in the middle class, that women do choose to have children--these women also choose to marry husbands who provide for the children. Such women also generally have access to birth control or abortion referral. But the vast majority of American women do not have children because they choose to. A husband and children--"a family of one's own"--are often escapes from a bad, oppressive family situation. Many women can't get away from home by going to college, their families can't set them up in their private apartment and a family is not so much a choice as it is the lesser of two evils in the minds of the women who have children; this is all true without even considering that a class

society, by dint of social and legal pressures, sanctions no other form of social relations. It is also true that one out of four women are forced to marry because they become pregnant. If we were to exclude any of these women from participating in politics because our male comrades feel that childcare for a few hours, during a conference or demonstration, wastes their otherwise politically useful time, we must also understand that having no childcare at women's conferences does several things:

1. It assumes that women who have children also have responsible husbands who want and love those children, who are living with them, and who don't work at the time of the activity planned and are free to babysit.
2. It assumes that women who choose to have children, are opting for child-rearing, rather than politics and falsely counterposes the two, relegating women with children to a status of being less political and places less value on their attendance at the activity than women without children.
3. It assumes that we don't want women at our conferences who can't afford babysitting.
4. It denies the importance of the oldest form of Jimmy Higgins work.

The child-tending aspect is just one example of how women are shackled to their biology. The discussion document gives additional examples: women as sex objects, the use of women in advertising, the manipulation of women on the consumer market, the discrimination against women in hiring, wages, advancement on the job, their treatment on the job, the fact that women earn less than 58% of what men earn each year. As a result of these inequalities, women undergo a heavy and dwarfing psychological oppression--the value of the work they do is underestimated because women do it, their various roles in life are falsely elevated under the guise of chivalry, and truly denigrated by every aspect of our culture from social norms and mores to language and art and in every branch of bourgeois scholarship. It is mainly this psychological aspect--women just plain fed up--which prompted the beginnings of the "small groups" of women's liberation. The document discusses the value of consciousness raising groups. While the term "consciousness-raising" may cause us to bristle at its new-left overtones, these groups are really the place where the women in the movement educate themselves and others. The questions under discussion constantly point to the fact that women's liberation and capitalism are incompatible--that experiments in "alternative lifestyles" (such as communes and collectives) cannot help but expose this incompatibility all the more when these alternatives fail

to conquer the pressures which intrude from the outside world. In these consciousness-raising groups, the role of the family is discussed again and again. As women discuss the failure of the family, they understand more and more what they don't want to happen under socialism. With women as conscious as these, who want an entirely new and different social arrangement in a socialist society, setbacks such as the Stalinist return to the family, would be difficult to ram through as was done after the first ten years of the Russian revolution.

The discussion document says that the issue of mass action is the subject of greatest debate in the women's liberation movement--that women in the movement counterpose the activities of the small groups to the perspectives for mass actions which the YSA favors. In Boston, at least, mass actions, per se, have not been the greatest issue of debate within the movement. We have been able to forge large, representative coalitions for August 26, as well as for abortion repeal. The only obstacle has been Bread and Roses who have had a rather inconsistent policy of taking part in some actions and avoiding or walking out of others. Right now, the August 26 coalition is being reconstructed with the hopes of sponsoring many joint actions which will be bringing more women than ever, into action. The largest issue of debate, at least Boston-wide and I would venture nation-wide, is the question of whether women constitute a class, caste, or as we maintain, an oppressed sector of society. The independent women in Female Liberation who still maintain that women are a caste and that ruling class women are oppressed as much as working class women within that caste have learned a sharp lesson in recent weeks when a ruling class woman attempted to claim ownership of the organization because she had donated (as had the other members) a contribution commensurate with her means. We must be educating our membership and periphery that it will be working and Third World women who are most valuable to our struggle because they will fight the hardest and the longest to throw off the oppression which hurts them the most. We welcome all women, the most bourgeois included, to join the women's movement, to contribute all that they can, but as equals in the movement--not as owners of the movement. Of course, we understand that the Jackie Onassis are oppressed as women, but in spite of the fact that we live in a patriarchy, inheritance is still bi-lineal and the fact is that 75% of the wealth of the ruling class in the United States is controlled by women. In order for the masses of women to be liberated in this country, that wealth is going to have to be vastly redistributed to its rightful owners, the working class, and I don't think we can expect even the oppressed women of the ruling class to sit

by idly as this process takes place. We have been a bit lax in making this point within the movement and the document just briefly deals with it. Instead, I would refer comrades to Maxine Williams' speech at the Female Liberation conference of November 13 in Boston in which she very cogently deals with the question of class versus caste.

Our opponents within the movement are in general opposed to the idea of an autonomous women's movement. The ultra-lefts such as PL and certain formations in Bread and Roses attempt to make the women's movement multi-issue. They fight male chauvinism within the left through verbal purges and fight it not at all on the basis of demands which unite women on the specifics of women's oppression. The CP defends the family--and even--as PL does occasionally, calls for the "revolutionary family." This is among the least appealing aspects of the CP amongst women's liberationists--that the CP has the gall to defend that unit which is nothing but a transmission belt for all the material oppression and bourgeois ideology which submerges women squarely in the mire which they are trying to throw off. As if this were not sufficient, the CP adapts to the Panther's charge that the call for abortion repeal is the call for the genocide of Black people and does not participate in the abortion repeal movement. On the subject of abortion, comrades may question why, in Boston, we put forth the slogan of "Repeal All Abortion Laws, Now"--instead of "Free Abortion On Demand; No Forced Sterilization"--as was done in New York. It is our feeling that "Repeal All Abortion Laws, Now" is a slogan which has broad support at this time and that when the laws are repealed, the YSA certainly expects that the left-wing of M.O.R.A.L. (the local abortion coalition) will go all the way for "Free Abortion On Demand; No Forced Sterilization." At this juncture, when we have a strong repeal bill coming up and while M.O.R.A.L. is a relatively stable organization, we feel that it would be somewhat sectarian to lead a

left-wing split on a question which has little significance if the bill is not passed through the pressure of the movement.

In our work in both Female Liberation and Boston Women United, we have run into red-baiting and must continue to defend the right of all women, members of political groups and otherwise to be members of women's liberation groups. The charge that the YSA is a male-dominated group must be answered. The tactic of attempting to exclude women who belong to organizations of women and men should be answered in the manner that Caroline Lund did in her article on the New York Women's Center. If women who belong to groups with men and women were excluded from women's liberation, it would leave us with no one: we would have to exclude women who came from families, women in unions, women in churches as well as women in political parties--this would effectively cut off all women from women's liberation activities.

YSAers should take note of the rapidity with which the women's liberation movement has grown over the past two and a half years. It has faster than any other movement grown to include organizations of Third World women--it has held mass actions such as the August 26th action in New York of 40,000 within only one year of having achieved any mass character.

Women's liberation has the potential of continuing to grow--to reach, in fact, the majority (52%) of the population with the most radical perspective for social relations which this country has ever seen. YSAers must continue to build women's liberation and prepare both our own ranks and the masses we reach in our daily work for a society which is free of the oppression of women.

Cambridge

December 2, 1970

WAR, REVOLUTION, AND GI'S

by

Al Greengold

In his introduction to Marx's pamphlet "Class Struggles in France 1848-1850," Engels makes a point which was as valid then as it is now and as misunderstood then as it is now. He points out that in the taking of state power, it is not the building of barricades in the streets which is crucial, but rather the army of the old order coming over to the side of the revolutionary masses. Napoleon, leader of the French Thermidor, put it simply, "Revolution is an idea that has found bayonets."

The twentieth century provides us with a number of examples of Engels' all-too-true proposition.

In the Russian revolution the major turning point was the Tsarist army first deserting the battlefields of WWI to come home and regain their land and then re-mobilized into the Red Army, thus establishing the first workers state.

In the Chinese revolution, from the time of the Japanese invasion (1933) one of the major advantages that Mao's army had over Chiang's army was that battalions and even entire divisions deserted the latter for the former.

In Vietnam, the South's army (ARVN) is a politically unreliable tool. With a monthly desertion rate that the bourgeois press estimates as between 20%-80% (in the ARVN desertion is a capital offense) it is clear to all but military hacks and the State Department pundits where the ARVN's sympathies are. Thus another reason for the success of the Vietnamese revolution.

Thus it is necessary for revolutionaries to understand the role of the army in general and the politics of the US army in particular.

Role of the Colonial Revolution

We live in an era of wars and revolutions. Revolutions are waged by an oppressed people seeking self-determination. Wars are waged by imperialist powers in an attempt to counter these revolutions. In other words, permanent revolution vs. permanent counterrevolution.

Because of the recalcitrance of imperialism (a recalcitrance produced not so much by the subjective desires of the imperialists as by the contradictions of constantly seeking new markets, cheap labor, and cheap raw materials

that imperialism objectively requires) colonized countries find that they cannot make a half-way revolution against imperialism, i.e., they cannot become independent capitalist countries.

India is the best example of this. Although there is no longer a British military apparatus on its soil, people there are still oppressed by low wage-paying British-owned concerns.

Furthermore "independent" capitalists and their agents who rule the colonized country soon find out that they are unable to carry out land reform and other basic measures and are confronted with a revolutionary movement to oust them from political and economical control of the country. It is at this point that these "independents" appeal to imperialism (most often the US) for military support against such movements and the sham of "independence" is soon exposed. A good example of this is the abortive revolution in Bolivia in 1952. (see Fifty Years of World Revolution, pp. 185-187)

Thus the only way a country can guarantee the success of its self-determination is to make a socialist revolution--the only way to cut the fatal political-economic umbilical cord that ties it to the colonial power.

For its part the US is happy to play its role of chief world cop for imperialism and to counter the phenomenon of colonial revolution. This arises from a set of factors:

- A. The general contradictions (outlined above) that beset imperialism.
- B. Its domination of the unliberated Third World which exceeds that of other imperialist powers.
- C. Its political leadership role among the imperialist powers.
- D. The astronomical profits to be made from manufacturing war goods by the military-industrial complex.

Concretely US aid to "independent" (in reality puppet) countries is manifested in two ways--"aid" (arms) and "advisors" (troops). With the broadening and deepening of the colonial revolution this process is accelerated almost daily. Thus the GI question looms ever larger on the horizon.

The colonial revolution in large part determines the politics of the US armed forces as well as the consciousness of GI's in the following ways:

- A. The US is forced to increase its

armed forces. Already there are over 3,000 military installations outside of the US and its "possessions."

- B. In order to man these installations the US must draft an ever increasing number of men into its armed forces. With over 3,500,000 military personnel the US cannot find enough "volunteers" to do its dirty work of putting down revolutions.
- C. An ever increasing number of GI's who are drafted begin to see that the war benefits neither them nor the civilians back home. This rude awakening is often on the road of anti-war, anti-militarist, and in a few cases anti-imperialist positions. This process is especially true of Third World GI's. Furthermore, with 10% of all draft call personnel having some college education the politicalization of GI's is further catalyzed.

(It should be pointed out that while it is the army that does most of the drafting, it does not do all of the drafting. The Marine Corps now takes 10% of all personnel from each draft call. Added on to this should be the hundreds of thousands of men who are coerced into "volunteering" for one of the services in the hope of escaping combat duty. Thus the politicalization of GI's occurs in all services although it is most pronounced in the army. A measure of this phenomenon is the significant number of GI underground newspapers published by GI's not only in the army but in other branches of the service.)

Class Nature of GI's

There is a temptation to equate or strongly compare the class nature or the lack of it of students and GI's. This equation rests on two factors:

- A. Both are in a transitional state on the road to becoming workers.
- B. Neither produces a commodity which is for sale on the open market, i.e., neither is an industrial proletarian.

This superficial logic breaks down rather easily under Marxist methodology.

- A. GI's are wage-earners. They must depend on the dole the government gives them to support themselves and their families. Students are in a more privileged position. They are supported by their families, and are not wage-earners. And as to those students who work, they receive wages not for their status as students but for being part-time workers.
- B. GI's are directly engaged in a "class" struggle. They must consistently fight with the lifers

over how much work to do, when and how to do it, when to get time off, when to get promotions, etc. In short they must fight for an even mediocre existence. Students on the other hand, in spite of all confrontations with the administration, do not engage in such a struggle for daily existence.

- C. Students in spite of all restrictions imposed upon them by the school administrations have infinitely more political freedom than GI's. GI's on the other hand can easily be imprisoned for the slightest infraction of Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), Army Regulations, Post Regulations, Division, Battalion or Company Standard Operating Policy (SOP). This myriad of laws is used liberally by the ruling class via its agents in the army (officers and non-commissioned officers) to stifle any form of independent political expression especially of the anti-war variety.
- D. GI's are GI's for the most part through an involuntary set of circumstances. They are drafted and forced to serve. Even those GI's who enlist do so in the hopes of getting an easy assignment in a non-combat area. Thus they are strongly coerced into volunteering. Students however are not drafted into their status. Although capitalist society assures them that more education means higher income--they still are not forced to become students.
- E. Corollary to this is the length that GI's and students spend in their respective status. Most GI's serve in the army for two or three years whereas most students spend 10 or 12 years in school. Thus GI's spend a shorter time in their transitional status.
- F. GI's for the most part are workers when they are drafted. They bring into the army the level of class consciousness (low though it might be) that exists among the working class. Students however have for the most part no experience as workers and thus lack even this elementary empirical outlook. In the final analysis, though, both students and GI's are on the same path, one to resume being a worker and one to become a worker.
- G. Finally and by far most important, this distinction is to be made. GI's play a central role in the preservation of American (and indirectly West European and Japanese) imperialism. Without GI's, continued imperialist domination of the Third World would be impossible and the third American revolution a reality. Students on the other hand play a very marginal role both politically and economically. Unlike GI's, who have tremendous social weight in

* See my analysis of class nature of officers in section entitled "Political Consciousness Among GI's."

this country, students have relatively little.

Summing up we might say the following. GI's can be classified as temporarily de-classed elements. Specifically GI's are workers temporarily removed from the ranks of labor (de-classed) and students are elements yet to enter the ranks of labor (unclassified). GI's are actively engaged in a somewhat modified form of the class struggle while students are not. GI's have great social weight and by themselves can "pressure" the government to stop the war, while students have at best marginal social weight, by themselves can effect no fundamental social change, and cannot stop the war.

Some interesting considerations flow from this. Since students, college students especially, have the privileged position of being continually exposed to social, political and economical theories, speakers, knowledge, etc., they tend to be more politically advanced in political consciousness than GI's. Since their relationship to the means of production is practically non-existent while that of a GI is more tenuous, student political consciousness tends to be very theoretical and highly mercurial*. GI political consciousness however is more empirical more consistent but of course on a lower level. In compensation for this latter factor, however, objective reality provides GI's with such oppressive conditions in the name of defense of such a rotten system that the politicization of GI's continues at a hitherto unheard of rate, which will undoubtedly increase geometrically.

One additional word on the subject of students. A distinction should be made between high school and college and their relationship to the army. Just as the average GI has less political "book" knowledge than a college student so too the average high school student has less political "book" knowledge than a college student. However high school students are proving to be at least as radical and serious about their radicalization than college students. This combined with the facts that:

- A. There are more high school students than college students;
 - B. Because of their youth they are more subject to the draft lottery;
- will insure the further radicalization in the ranks of the army and other services.

* The antics of such student organizations as PL, SDS clearly illustrate this. In addition one can cite the pendulum politics of the student antiwar movement which now zigs to mass mobilizations and later zags to left-liberal "clean Gene" electoral shell games.

GI Organizing: Some Historical Background

When the antiwar movement began in the early 60s its form and content were consciously liberal. This was inevitable for three reasons.

- A. Its political precursor had been the pacifist dominated "ban-the-bomb" movement. This movement had attempted to restrain American militarism by limiting the types of arms the military agents of the ruling class had at its disposal rather than the fact that it had any arms or men at its disposal. Rather than look at the cause of American militarism as being in the nature of imperialism they preferred to see nuclear militarism as the cause of an unjust foreign policy on the part of the US. This putting of the cart (or a portion of the cart) before the horse relieved the pacifists of any need of a revolutionary solution. All one had to do was to convince misguided State Dept. and Defense Dept. officials of the need to abandon nuclear weaponry and then miraculously US foreign policy would assume a benign if not a benevolent nature. This ideological baggage severely burdened the early antiwar movement.
- B. The early antiwar movement was also burdened by the fear of a repeat performance of McCarthyism of the 50s. The possibility of a red-baiting witch-hunt hung over the antiwar movement like the proverbial sword of Damocles. The liberals and reformist were cunning enough to use this as an antidote against any radical paths the antiwar movement tried to tread. Related to this very directly was the fight against exclusion from the antiwar movement based on one's political beliefs. The ones to be affected by this were of course the revolutionary wing the YSA and the SWP. We did however wage a very successful fight against this unprincipled maneuvering.
- C. The above two factors combined with the lack of a global colonial revolution enjoined most antiwar activists from choosing a revolutionary alternative for themselves and a radical perspective for the antiwar movement in general. This phenomena put the political wind at the back of the liberal-pacifist-Stalinist-Social-Democratic leadership and gave them the momentum to keep the antiwar movement running along in "safe" channels. The results of this political stagnation were manifested in a few ways--most noticeably such exciting slogans as "Peace Now!" "Stop the Bombing" and "Negotiate Now!" Even the ultralefts such as the Youth Against War and Fascism could think of no slogan more radical than "Negotiate with the NLF."

Given all of the above it is not surprising that the early antiwar movement took a hostile attitude toward the perspective of having GI's as a political ally in the movement to end the war. GI's were looked on as being one political step above the police. All GIs were thought to be jingoists, John Birchers, and the like. Common sense would dictate that if people outside the Army could be against the war, there were bound to be some drafted into the Army who would also share this feeling. Nevertheless true to reformist colors the leadership of the antiwar movement refused to acknowledge this possibility.

From the beginning the sole exception to this proved to be the SWP and YSA and with good reason. Unlike liberals and their colleagues we are not interested in curing the cancer of imperialism with the iodine of reformism. Instead we seek to remove the cancer of imperialism with the scalpel of socialist revolution. To this end we have always fought for the perspective of building the broadest possible antiwar movement to include students, Third World peoples, workers and GI's.

Because of this perspective we have a unique attitude toward the draft. We don't encourage YSAers to resist the draft. YSAers allow themselves to be drafted. For if the ruling class is foolish enough to draft YSAers to become GI's, then we are clever enough to see the advantages of revolutionaries as GI's who can exercise their constitutional right to talk to other GI's, explain the meaning of socialism to them and bring them into the antiwar movement. There is no other group on the left which shares this perspective. And it has paid off, to wit the Petrick case, the Al Myers case, the Ed Glover case, the Ft. Jackson case and undoubtedly others yet to come. And we'll be more than ready for them.

In the end, the upturn of the colonial revolution combined with the growth of the antiwar movement and the outbreak of such incidents as the Ft. Hood Three, helped to put pressure on the liberals, pacifists and the Stalinists to at least nominally accept GI's as potential antiwar allies. As a by-product of this phenomena the pacifists were removed from the scene as a dominant or even influential political entity.

Three Ways of Organizing GI's

With the onset and growth of the Colonial Revolution, the deepening radicalization in the US and the outbreak of the Ft. Hood Three, Ft. Jackson Eight, etc., cases, various elements in the antiwar

movement and the "New" Left began to take an active interest in the GI radicalization.

One of the first ways this was manifested was the development of "GI Coffeehouses." Started by left-liberals the coffeehouse perspective aimed at drawing GIs into the movement on an amorphously radical multi-issue level. A GI could go to a coffeehouse, drink coffee, listen to records, look at posters hanging on the wall and possibly discuss politics. Objectively these places served as radical USO's and did not raise the GI level of political consciousness very much.

Today there are probably not more than a dozen coffeehouses nation-wide and there is every indication that their numbers are still decreasing as other forms of political struggle arise. There is very little political support for them among GI's and very little corresponding financial support. To my knowledge there is only one organization that financially supports them, the US Serviceman's Fund, which in itself is in financial crisis.

The coffeehouse approach was succeeded by what might be termed an SDS approach. This involves the formation of a multi-issue radical (sometimes ultraleft) political grouping. The best two examples of this are Movement for a Democratic Military (MDM) and the American Serviceman's Union (ASU). MDM and ASU were of course both begun by civilians and are still controlled by civilians. MDM is made of elements from the SDS milieu. ASU on the other hand is the brainchild of YAWF.

Like the coffeehouse approach the ASU-MDM approach is multi-issue. However unlike the coffeehouse approach ASU and MDM have specific political programs. And unlike coffeehouses they attempt to recruit GI's to these programs and raise their consciousness. In spite of these noble gestures MDM and ASU fall far short of the mark. This is true for two reasons.

- A. Recruiting people to a program means recruiting people on a multi-issue level. In order to recruit on a multi-issue level one presupposes an already existing high level of radical consciousness among the GIs. In other words a consciousness that had radicalized on many different issues. This situation is not true for the masses of GI's. If they are at all radical it is on one issue. The war issue. To present 10 or 20 radical demands to a GI just beginning to radicalize on one issue is ultraleftism. It is a futile attempt to speed up the revolution artificially. This results in driving away GI's from the movement.
- B. The demands themselves are extremely variegated and do not present one

definite political line for GI's to follow. They range from such "economist" demands as higher pay to such "revolutionary" demands as the right to refuse to go to Vietnam. In the same breath MDM and ASU want to reform the imperialist army and destroy it. This approach is understandably confusing to many GI's. They repeat in its essence the mistake of the IWW-- trying to be at the same time a political party and a trade union.

The following is the MDM program.

- 1 WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
- 2 WE DEMAND ALL CONSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS
- 3 STOP ALL MILITARY CENSORSHIP AND INTIMIDATION
- 4 ABOLISH ALL MENTAL AND PHYSICAL CRUELTY IN MILITARY BRIGS, CORRECTIONAL CUSTODIES AND BASIC TRAINING
- 5 WE DEMAND THE ABOLITION OF THE PRESENT COURT-MARTIAL SYSTEM AND N.J.P.
- 6 WE DEMAND WAGES EQUAL TO THE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGES
- 7 WE DEMAND THE ABOLITION OF CLASS STRUCTURE IN THE MILITARY
- 8 END ALL RACISM EVERYWHERE
- 9 FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS
- 10 STOP THE GLORIFICATION OF WAR NOW PREVALENT IN ALL BRANCHES OF THE MILITARY
- 11 ABOLISH THE DRAFT AND ALL INVOLUNTARY ENLISTMENT
- 12 GET OUT OF INDO-CHINA NOW

There are many things wrong with this program and I will not take the time or space to analyze all of them. The first and most obvious point is that the demand for immediate withdrawal appears last. The most important political question in the world is MDM's 12th demand!! The right to collective bargaining and a minimum federal wage is evidently more important.

Secondly they demand a minimum federal wage for those who are forced to carry out counter-revolutionary tasks. A novel revolutionary approach.

Thirdly their seventh demand is rather confusing. There are no classes in the military. Officers form a separate caste but are not a class. And if they mean by this that the military should not carry out tasks assigned to it by the capitalist class that means a Red Army under workers control in which case the first demand is superfluous.

The tenth demand sounds like it is out of the mouth of a pacifist babe in the woods. Marxists neither glorify war nor anathemize it. War is a strategy which must at some time be waged by a revolution. It is intrinsically neither good nor evil. For instance, real revolutionaries do not condemn the Vietnam war as a whole. They condemn the US destroying

Vietnam, but support the right of the Vietnamese to defend themselves by any means necessary.

The eleventh demand implies that a purely voluntary imperialist army a la Canada is acceptable just so long as none are forced to serve in it. The point is that these demands are a chaotic conglomeration of ultraleftism, reformism, and Alice-in-Wonderland wishful thinking. The ASU program is quite similar in its outlook and demands.

The third way of organizing GI's is the so-called single issue way. This method consists of the mobilization of GI's around the demand of total, immediate, and unconditional withdrawal from S.E. Asia. (A second demand raised is free speech for GI's. This is in line with the Marxist perspective of demanding that bourgeois democratic rights be granted to all sections of the population, not just the bourgeoisie.)

This approach has been the most effective for organizing and radicalizing GI's. Let's look at some examples of this.*

April 18, 1970 - 500 GI's head up an antiwar demonstration in Austin
April 18, 1970 - 1000-1200 GI's lead an antiwar demonstration in El Paso
May 16, 1970 - 800-1000 GI's march through the streets of Killeen (outside of Ft. Hood) along with about 50 civilians
October 31, 1970 - 400 GI's head up antiwar demonstration in Austin
October 31, 1970 - 1000 GI's in a contingent in an El Paso antiwar demonstration

This list could be expanded considerably, but these few examples will suffice. The point is that large numbers of GI's were mobilized on these occasions around one central demand--US OUT NOW!!! This is a demand that GI's can immediately understand and relate to. The ultralefts on the other hand call multi-issue demonstrations whose politics GI's do not understand, or which they correctly disagree with. Theory can only be proved or disproved in action. Let the ultralefts cite all of their demonstrations in which a large number, indeed any number of GI's participated in. I fear that such a list would be pitiful. Action has validated our approach and invalidated theirs. What more is there to be said on the subject?

* I quota figures only from Texas because this is where I was in the Army.

Political Consciousness Among GI's

GI's bring into the Army the existing level of consciousness of the civilian world. It cannot be otherwise. This consciousness is then heightened and sharpened by the oppression that GI's undergo in the army. The oppression of being treated as unthinking robots, the oppression of being ordered to sacrifice their lives upon the altar of imperialist conquest before the god of profits. Between the anvil of their liberal political consciousness and the hammer of the cruel realities of army life is forged a new and higher level of consciousness. The consciousness of militant anti-militarism and the prospect for an alternative to the two party system. This does not mean that masses of GI's consider themselves revolutionaries nor socialists. It merely means that they are beginning to consider the need for an alternative. Many GI's do consider themselves radicals. It is not unusual to go into a company and see a volume of CHE, Malcolm, Mao or underground newspapers lying around. This even more prevalent among Black GI's where a copy of Malcolm's autobiography will pass from hand to hand. Even more surprising is the revolutionary consciousness among Puerto Rican and Chicano GI's.

Let me illustrate this by an anecdote from personal experience. When I was in the Army just a short time ago there was a Puerto Rican who slept in the bed next to mine. I was friendly with him but I never discussed politics with him very much. This was so because he came into the army with a classification of CO (conscientious objector). This entitled him not to carry a weapon even in a combat zone as he was morally opposed to violence. One day I had left the door to my wall locker open. He came over and looked at the revolutionary poems, pictures, cartoons, etc. which I had pasted up on the inside of the door. When he saw that I had up such slogans as Venceremos, Patria O Muerte, he was astounded.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked.

"Of course," I replied. "Slogans of the Cuban Revolution."

"Do you support the Cuban Revolution?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered.

He just went wild with enthusiasm, slapping me on the back. That night he brought other Puerto Rican and Chicano GI's from our battalion to see what I had on my locker door. After that they sat down and rapped with me about politics every chance they got.

Now of course all GI's are not this far advanced, not even all Third World GI's. But it is an indication of the tremendous political ferment inside of the army.

For its part the army is at a loss of how to deal with this phenomena. It tries everything from punitive transfer, to court-martial, to discharge as they did in my case and other YSAers.

This radicalization is not confined to rank and file GI's. It affects even lower ranking officers. I ran across several 2nd lieutenants who were opposed to the war to one degree or another. I even met a lieutenant who described himself as an anti-imperialist although he didn't really understand what imperialism is.

A few words on officers before we proceed. Ultralefts and pseudo-Marxists to the contrary, officers do not constitute a class. A class is a group of people who distinguish themselves by their relationship to the means of production, i.e., are they the owners of factories, farms, slaves, etc., or do they operate the means of production for their owners? Officers are neither capitalists (although a few generals might be in their own right) nor feudal lords, nor slave-owners. At best they can be described as wage earners of a privileged variety. They can be classified as a caste, i.e., a group of people who distinguish themselves by certain rights, privileges and obligations. The best analogy is perhaps with the mandarins of feudal China.

Almost anyone can become an officer if he enlists for three years (or goes through ROTC) passes a few tests, and goes to Officer Candidate School. Thus the lower-ranking officer caste is reflective, albeit to a lesser degree than the ranks of the enlisted men, of civilian political consciousness. Of course officers who stay in the armed forces for say 10 or 20 years are much more insensitive to radical and liberal politics. But the officers who serve for only three years are distinctively different than the older lifer officers.

This is manifest in a number of ways. Hair length, moustaches (unknown among the older lifer officers), attitude toward their men, political attitudes. The point is that younger, lower-ranking, non-lifer officers are affected by the radicalization. It should be enough to call to mind Navy Lt. (j.g.) Sue Schnal, Capt. Howard Levy, the Concerned Officers Movement, etc.

Officers, old or young, lifer or transitory, have to confront a growing number of militant, radical, antiwar and anti-militarist GI's. Even the bourgeois press grudgingly admits this.

An article in Life magazine shows how in Vietnam itself in one particular company the commanding officer has to ask and not order GI's to perform military duties. Another article tells of whole companies in Vietnam which are set up to accommodate GI's who refuse to fight, ambush or go out on patrol. This same article tells of companies where the lifers lock the men's weapons for fear that the men will shoot the wrong way.

These are of course extreme examples and we don't advocate that GI's operate in an illegal or terroristic way. But at the same time these articles point to one of imperialism's main dangers--the disintegration of its armies.

Revolutionary Perspective for a GI Antiwar Movement

The developing radicalization is having its effects on all sectors of society. New elements are taking a very critical look at American capitalism in action--in Vietnam, on the campus, in the ghetto, in the factory.

With the escalation of the Vietnam war into the Indochinese war more and more of these layers are entering the Armed Forces and having their political consciousness developed and sharpened. These layers are made up of youth and therefore as GI's and future workers hold the fate of American imperialism in their hands.

As leaders of the antiwar movement we should reach out to these GI's and bring them in. We should actively leaflet military installations on a regular basis. Conferences should be set up between GI's of different military bases and civilians to better acquaint GI's of one base of the political activities of another base and to forge strong organizational links with civilians. Conferences as these give GI's political confidence when they see the type of support they can get from other GI's and civilians. This then paves the way for effective mass antiwar demonstrations with large GI contingents.

GI work is an excellent way of involving newer members and sympathizers in antiwar work. From their work with GI's and the results which follow they can get a real feel for how our antiwar perspective is used in concrete practice and better understand its validity. It is also activity from which we can recruit new people.

GI's are one of the most important allies we have in the fight against the Indochinese war. Without them there is no war. GI's will also be a key element in the coming American socialist revolution. We must reach out to them in all ways possible.

Austin

December 3, 1970

A REPLY TO "THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ABORTION LAWS: REFORM OR REPEAL"

by

Caroline Lund

I feel that the discussion article by Pam Edwards called "The Struggle Against Abortion Laws: Reform or Repeal," contains some factual inaccuracies and also demonstrates a misunderstanding of the YSA's approach to the abortion struggle in New York.

As Pam Edwards notes, the experience the women's movement has gone through in New York is a very significant one, and can provide many lessons for the women's movement nationally. First of all, it shows that the demand for the right of women to control our own bodies has great potential for involving masses of women in struggle. Secondly, the sequence of events in New York demonstrated the power of a united, militant women's movement to force changes from the government. And thirdly, it exposed the true interests of the politicians and the ruling class in preventing women from controlling their own bodies. It demonstrated to the movement what reactionary forces we are up against, and that this struggle is not going to be easy or short.

One inaccurate formulation in Pam Edwards' article is her counterposition of reform or repeal as the only two possible approaches to abortion laws. Repeal of a law can only be done by a legislature. A third possibility is to sue the state, challenging the constitutionality of the abortion law. As we have projected in the past, we much prefer to initiate suits challenging the constitutionality of the laws rather than pressuring congressmen to introduce and support a repeal bill. Through a suit, the women's liberation movement can much more effectively bring to bear the weight of the movement as an independent force and not be forced to rely on politicians or get caught up in legislative compromises.

This third approach was the one we took in New York. The YSA joined with about 350 other women in bringing a suit against the New York abortion law. The demonstration March 28 was called to support this suit--not in support of any repeal bill--and also for free abortions on demand. Even though the present reformed abortion law had passed one house prior to March 28 and it looked certain that it would pass the other, the People to Abolish Abortion Laws coalition planned to go ahead with the demonstration anyway.

The basic position of the YSA, and of most of the women's liberation movement, has been to demand free abortions on demand, no forced sterilization, and the elimination of all laws relating to abortion. This is what we project as the goal of our struggle for the right of women to control their own bodies. But when the reform law was passed in New York, the women's movement had to relate to it, because it was a major political development affecting thousands of women.

At the women's liberation activists panel at the Oberlin conference last summer, Ruthann Miller explained the YSA's position on the various types of reform abortion laws. She said:

"All of these new laws have restrictions. The ones that stipulate only that abortions have to be done by doctors, or that have residency requirements, we see as a major step forward, because they support the right of a woman to make the decision. We can allow critical support for these laws because of their recognition of this right. Those which have been introduced which simply broaden the law to allow abortion for insanity or rape, etc., which totally do not recognize the woman's right in this area, we are completely opposed to."

The reformed New York abortion law which went into effect July 1 contains only two restrictions: first, that abortions must be performed by a licensed physician, and second, that abortions can only be performed up to the 24th week of pregnancy. Pam Edwards is incorrect when she writes that the law stipulates that abortions must be performed in a hospital.

On May 1 The Militant carried an article by Elizabeth Barnes which explained the attitude we took toward the New York reform abortion bill. The article explained why we felt that the reform law was a major victory for the women's liberation movement. It pointed out that Governor Rockefeller himself admitted when signing the reform bill into law that the women's movement was largely responsible for its passage.

The Militant pointed out that the new law, in addition to being a victory, would be a powerful impetus to carry further the struggle for the complete right of women to control our own bodies. This victory brought the whole struggle in

New York to a higher level by officially sanctioning the concept that a woman has the legal right to an abortion if she desires, and that no one else has the right to decide for her.

The new law had the effect of drawing even more women into the movement for free abortion on demand, because women now felt that abortions were their right, and they therefore became angrier than ever when it became clear that the lack of abortion facilities and exorbitant costs were preventing thousands of women from taking advantage of this newly-won right.

In this same May 1 article, The Militant states that our goal remains total elimination of abortion laws and free abortion on demand. It says "We must reject any concept that the struggle for abortions is over." And it calls for direct action by the movement, including demonstrations, rallies, suits, etc., to win facilities to be able to implement the new law. That is, we raised the concept that the state is now responsible for seeing that there are enough facilities to provide the abortions which were guaranteed to women as a right by the new law.

Ultralefts, on the other hand, wanted the movement to direct its energy to campaigning against the new law. This approach is wrong for two related reasons. One reason is that it would not be the best way to build the movement, because it does not recognize the fact that the reform law was a victory for the movement. The new law was certainly seen as a victory by masses of women who had in the past gone to back-street abortionists or who faced the prospect of doing so. The new law had very concrete meaning to millions of women in New York: it meant that it is no longer a criminal act to have an abortion, but rather it is a woman's right.

With a correct campaign--that is, of demanding facilities to implement the new law--the women's liberation movement has the opportunity to involve masses of new women in struggle. The approach of strictly opposing the new law does not relate to and speak to the thousands of women who believe that abortion is now their right and are trying to take advantage of that right. The only approach that will make sense to these women is an approach which recognizes that a new level has been reached--that the new law recognizes the right of a woman to an abortion--and projects building from there, to demand implementation of that law.

Secondly, the position of straight opposition to the new law takes the government off the hook to a certain extent. The reform law represents a significant

concession from the government. When the government retreats in the face of the demands of the women's movement, the movement must immediately step forward, building upon that victory and taking advantage of the concession in order to make it difficult for the government to take it back.

If the movement were to simply campaign for repeal of the reform law, it would take much of the heat off the government. Our job is to mobilize women, as the December 12 demonstration in New York attempts to do, demanding that the city and state take immediate steps to set up free abortion clinics so that women can exercise their right to have an abortion.

We must make clear that we support the new law insofar as it recognizes the right of the woman to choose whether she wants an abortion, and that at the same time we oppose the two restrictions contained in the law.

What has happened in New York since the passage of the reform law is that opponents of the right to abortion are trying every possible means to add new restrictions to the abortion law and further restrict the availability of abortions. In October a series of restrictions went into effect for New York City, the most serious of which limits abortions to hospitals or clinics with expensive hospital equipment. This restriction was passed by the City Board of Health, made up of five people appointed by Mayor Lindsay. The women's movement has pointed out that this restriction is illegal because it contravenes the spirit of the reform law passed by the legislature.

A new section has also been added to the State Hospital Code saying that hospitals are not obliged to perform abortions.

Furthermore, conservative state legislators have announced plans to introduce amendments to the abortion law, adding a 90-day residency requirement and a limitation on performing abortions after the 12th week of pregnancy.

At the same time, a congresswoman is planning to submit a bill for total repeal of the abortion law. Our position should be to support any repeal bill, and also to oppose any amendments adding further restrictions to the existing reform law. A mass demonstration of women at the state legislature in Albany around these two demands could be an extremely powerful next step for the New York movement.

New York

December 11, 1970

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