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# TOWARD a FEMALE

## LIBERATION MOVEMENT

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# Part I, by Beverly Jones

Woman's steady march onward, and her growing desire for a broader outlook, prove that she has not reached her normal condition, and that society has not yet conceded all that is necessary for its attainment.

(Introduction, A History of Woman Suffrage, 1889)

## THE MANIFESTO

For a middle-aged female accustomed to looking to militant youth for radical leadership it was a shock to read the Women's Manifesto which issued from the female caucus of the national SDS convention last summer (1967; Manifesto printed in New Left Notes of 10 July 1967). Here were a group of 'radical women' demanding respect and leadership in a radical organization and coming on with soft-minded NAACP logic and an Urban League list of grievances and demands. One need only substitute the words 'white' and 'black' for 'male' and 'female' respectively, replace references to SDS with the city council, and remember all the fruitless approaches black groups made and are still making to local white power groups to realize how ludicrous this manifesto is.

To paraphrase accordingly,

1. Therefore we demand that our brothers on the city council recognize that they must deal with their own problems of white chauvinism in their personal, social, and political relationships.
2. It is obvious from this meeting of the city council that full advantage is not being taken of the abilities and potential contributions of blacks. We call upon the black people to demand full participation in all aspects of local government from licking stamps to assuming leadership positions.
3. People in leadership positions must be aware of the dynamics of creating leadership and are responsible for cultivating all of the black resources available to the local government.
4. All University administrations must recognize that campus regulations discriminate against blacks in particular and must take positive action to protect the rights of black people.

And so on. The caucus goes on to charge New Left Notes with printing material on the subject, developing bibliographies, and asks the National Council to set up a committee to study the subject and report at a future date!

There is also a rather pathetic attempt on the part of the caucus to prove its credentials by mimicing the dominant group's rhetoric on power politics. Thus there ensues some verbiage about the capitalist world, the socialist world, and the third world in which it is implied that women are somehow better off under socialism.

It must have been disappointing indeed to the women who drew up the 'analysis of women's role' and insisted it be printed verbatim in New Left Notes to find Castro quoted the following month in the National Guardian to the effect that he is assuredly grateful to the women of Cuba for having fought in the hills and otherwise aided the revolution, but now all that is past and women's place is once again servant to husband and children, in the home.



In a plea to the Women's Federation to hold down its goals of female integration into the greater Cuban society, he said, 'But who will do the cooking for the child who still comes home for lunch? Who will nurse the babies or take care of the pre-school child? Who will cook for the man when he comes home from work? Who will wash and clean and take care of things?'

The Women's Manifesto ends, and again we will substitute 'white' for male and 'black' for female:

'We seek the liberation of all human beings. The struggle for the liberation of blacks must be part of the larger fight for freedom. (A line which could better have been uttered by the city commission.) We recognize the difficulty our brothers will have in dealing with white chauvinism and we assume our full responsibility (as blacks) in helping to resolve the contradiction.'

And lest the men get upset by all this wild talk, or even think of taking it seriously, the women add a reassuring note.

'Freedom now! We love you!'

What lessons are to be learned from this fantastic document, the discrimination which preceded it, and the unchanging scene which followed? I think the lessons are several and serious. I'd like to list them first and discuss each one separately.

1. People don't get radicalized (engaged with basic truths) fighting other people's battles.
2. The females in SDS (at least those who wrote the Manifesto) essentially reject an identification with their own sex and are using the language of female power in an attempt to advance themselves personally in the male power structure they are presently concerned with.
3. That for at least two reasons radical females do not understand the desperate condition of women in general. In the first place, as students they occupy some sexy, sexless, limbo area where they are treated by males in general with less discrimination than they will ever again face. And in the second place, few of them are married or if married have children.
4. For their own salvation and for the good of the movement, women must form their own group and work primarily for female liberation. 4377

## **1. PEOPLE DON'T GET RADICALIZED FIGHTING OTHER PEOPLE'S BATTLES**

No one can say that women in the movement lack courage. As a matter of fact they have been used, aside from their clerical role, primarily as bodies on the line. Many have been thrown out of school, disowned by their families, clubbed by the cops, raped by the nuts, and gone to jail with everyone else.

What happened to them throughout the movement is very much what happened to all whites in the early civil rights days. Whites acted out of moral principles, many acted courageously, and they became liberalized but never radicalized. Which is to say, they never quite came to grips with the reality of anybody's situation. It is interesting to speculate on why this should be the case. At least one reason, it seems to me, is that people who set about to help other people generally manage to maintain important illusions about our society, how it operates, and what is required to change it. It is not just that they somehow manage to maintain these illusions, they are compelled to maintain them by their refusal to recognize the full measure of their own individual oppression, the means by which it is brought about, and what it would take to alter their condition.

Any honest appraisal of their own condition in this society would presumably lead people out of logic, impulse, and desire for self preservation, to shoot at the guys who are shooting at them. Namely, first of all, to fight their own battles.



No one thinks that poor whites can learn about their own lives by befriending black people, however laudable that action may be. No one even thinks that poor whites can help black people much, assuming some might want to, until they first recognize their own oppression and oppressors. Intuitively we grasp the fact that until poor whites understand who their enemies are and combine to fight them they can not understand what it is going to take to secure their freedom or anyone else's. And no one seriously doubts that if and when the light dawns upon them collectively, it will be, in the first instance, their battle they will fight.

We understand this intuitively but white students in the early civil rights days would not have done so. They thought they were really getting a thorough education in the movement, that they were really helping, that they knew in what limited ways the society needed changing and what was necessary to obtain those limited changes, and they were thoroughly shaken by Black Power, which said in effect: you don't understand anything. They also thought in those dim days of the past, that they as white students had no particular problems. It was more or less noblesse oblige. Enlightenment soon followed, at least for some white male students.

One of the best things that ever happened to black militants happened when they got hounded out of the stars-and-stripes, white-controlled civil rights movement, when they started fighting for blacks instead of the American Dream. The best thing that ever happened to potential white radicals in civil rights happened when they got thrown out by SNCC and were forced to face their own oppression in their own world. When they started fighting for control of the universities, against the draft, the war, and the business order. And the best thing that may yet happen to potentially radical young women is that they will be driven out of both of these groups. That they will be forced to stop fighting for the 'movement' and start fighting primarily for the liberation and independence of women.

Only when they seriously undertake this struggle will they begin to understand that they aren't just ignored or exploited -- they are feared, despised, and enslaved.

If the females in SDS every really join the battle they will quickly realize that no sweet-talking list of grievances and demands, no appeal to male conscience, no behind-the-scenes or in-the-home maneuvering is going to get power for women. If they want freedom, equality, and respect, they are going to have to organize and fight for them realistically and radically.

## **2. RADICAL FEMALES ESSENTIALLY REJECT AN IDENTIFICATION WITH THEIR SEX AND USE THE LANGUAGE OF FEMALE LIBERATION IN AN ATTEMPT TO ADVANCE THEMSELVES IN THE MALE POWER STRUCTURE OF THE MOVEMENT**

It is hard to understand the women's manifesto in any other way. It reeks of the bourgeois black who can't quite identify with the lame and mutilated casualties of the racist system; who doesn't really see himself as an accidental oversight but as a genetic mutation; who takes it upon himself to explain problems he doesn't understand to a power structure that could care less; who wants to fight for blacks but not very hard and only as a member of the city council or perhaps one of its lesser boards.

If the women in SDS want study committees on the problems of women, why don't they form them? If they want bibliographies, why don't they gather them? If they want to protest University discrimination against women, why don't they do so? No one in SDS is going to stop them. They can even use SDS auspices and publish in New Left Notes, for a while anyway.

But that isn't what they want. They want to be treated like 'white people' and work on the problems important to white people like planning, zoning, and attracting industry, or in this case the war, the draft, and university reform.

The trouble with using the language of black or female liberation for this purpose - essentially demanding a nigger on every committee - is two-fold. In the first place it is immoral -- a Tom betrayal of a whole people. In the second place it won't work.



There is an almost exact parallel between the role of women and the role of black people in this society. Together they constitute the great maintenance force sustaining the white American male. They wipe his ass and breast feed him when he is little, they school him in his youthful years, do his clerical work and raise his and their replacements later, and all through his life in the factories, on the migrant farms, in the restaurants, hospitals, offices, and homes, they sew for him, stoop for him, cook for him, clean for him, sweep, run errands, haul away his garbage, and nurse him when his frail body falters.

Together they send him out into his own society, shining and healthy, his mind freed from all concern with the grimy details of living. And there in that unreal world of light and leisure he becomes bemused and confused with ideas of glory and omnipotence. He spends his time saving the world from dragons, or fighting evil knights, proscribing and enforcing laws and social systems, or just playing with the erector sets of manhood -- building better bridges, computers, and bombs.

Win or lose on that playground, he likes the games and wants to continue playing -- unimpeded. That means that the rest of the population, the blacks and females, who maintain this elite playboy force, must be kept at their job.

Oh, occasionally it occurs to one or another of the most self-conscious, self-confident, and generous white man that the system could be changed. That it might be based on something other than race or sex. But what? Who would decide? Might not the change affect the rules of the game or even the games themselves? And where would his place be in it all? It becomes too frightening to think about. It is less threatening and certainly less distracting simply to close ranks, hold fast, and keep things the way they are.

This is done by various techniques, some of which are: sprinkling the barest pinch of blacks and women over the playground to obscure the fact that it is an all white male facility; making a sacred cow out of home and family; supporting a racist and antifeminist church to befuddle the minds of the support force and to divert what little excess energy is available to it; and most importantly, developing among white men a consensus with regard to blacks and females and a loyalty to each other which supercedes that to either of the other groups or to individual members of them, thus turning each white man into an incorruptable guard of the common white male domain.

The gist of that consensus which is relevant to the point at issue here is,

1. Women and blacks are of inherently inferior and alien mentality. Their minds are vague, almost inchoate, and bound by their personal experiences (scatterbrained, or just dumb). They are incapable of truly abstract, incisive, logical, or tactical thinking.
2. Despite or perhaps because of this inferior mentality women and blacks are happy people. All they ask out of life is a little attention, somebody to screw them regularly, second-hand cadillacs, new hats, dresses, refrigerators, and other baubles.
3. They do not join mixed groups for the stated purposes of the groups but to be with whites or to find a man.

### **3. RADICAL WOMEN DO NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND THE DESPERATE CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN GENERAL - As students, they occupy some sexy, sexless limbo where they are treated by males with less discrimination than they will ever again face**

It may seem strange, but one of the main advantages of a female student, married or unmarried, with or without children, is that she is still public. She has in her classes, in her contacts on campus, the opportunity to express her ideas publicly to males and females of all rank. Indeed, she is expected to do so -- at least in good schools, or in good seminars. Anyway, she has this opportunity on an equal basis with men.



Moreover, her competition with men, at least scholastically, is condoned -- built into the system. This creates in the girl an illusion of equality and harmony between the sexes very much as a good integrated school (where students visit each other's homes even for week ends and are always polite) creates in the black the illusion of change and the faith in continued good relations upon graduation.

These female illusions are further nurtured by the social life of students. Since many live in dorms or other places where they can not entertain members of the opposite sex, most social intercourse of necessity takes place in public. I mean that people congregate in coffee houses, pubs, movies, or at parties of the privileged few with off-campus apartments or houses. And since most students are unmarried, unsure of themselves, and lonely, they are constantly on the make. Thus they dance with each other and talk with each other. The conversation between the sexes is not necessarily serious or profound but it takes place, and, as we have said, takes place, in the great main, publicly. Each tries to find out more about the other, attempts to discover what future relations might be possible between them, tries to impress the other in some way.

So that the female student feels like a citizen, like an individual among others in the body politic, in the civil society, in the world of the intellect. What she doesn't understand is that upon graduation she is stripped of her public life and relegated to the level of private property. Enslavement is her farewell present. As things stand now, she is doomed to become someone's secretary, or someone's nurse, or someone's wife, or someone's mistress. From now on if she has some contribution to make to society she is expected to make it privately through the man who owns some part of her.

If as a secretary she has a criticism of the firm she works for and a money-making idea of improvement for the company, she certainly doesn't express her view publicly at the board meeting of the firm, though she may be there taking minutes. Nor does she speak to her boss about it at an office party or in any other public place. She is expected rather to broach him in private, in a self-effacing manner, indicating that she probably doesn't really know what she is talking about but it seems to her...

He then proposes the idea to the board and receives both the credit and the raise or promotion. And the peculiar twist is that this holds equally true even if in passing he mentions that the idea was brought to him by his secretary. For in the eyes of the board, as in the eyes of all male society, the female employee has no independent identity. She belongs to the boss as a slave belongs to his master. If slaves are exceptionally productive, the slave holder is given credit for knowing how to pick them and how to work them. Slaves aren't promoted to free men and female secretaries aren't promoted to executive positions.

But slavery is an intricate system. As an institution it cannot be maintained by force alone. Somehow or other slaves must be made to conceive of themselves as inferior beings and slave holders must not be permitted to falter in the confidence of their superiority. That is why female secretaries are not permitted to offer public criticism. How long, after all, could the system survive if in open public exchange some women even in their present downtrodden position, turned out to be smarter than the men who employ them?

What is feared most is that women, looking out at their natural surroundings, will suffer a reversal of perspective like that one experiences looking at optically balanced drawings where background suddenly becomes subject. That one day looking at men and women in full blown stereotype a woman will suddenly perceive individuals of varying ability, honesty, warmth, and understanding. When that day comes her master stands before her stripped of his historical prerogative -- just another individual with individual attributes. That has ponderous implications for their relationship, for all of society.

In the world of the graduated and married, this situation is forestalled in perhaps the most expeditious way. Men simply refuse to talk to women publicly about anything but the most trivial affairs: home, cooking, the weather, her job, perhaps



a local school board election, etc. In these areas they are bound to be able to compete and if they fail -- well, men aren't supposed to know anything about those things anyway. They're really just trying to give the girls a little play.

But even that routine has its dangers. Women are liable to change the topic, to get to something of substance. So generally to be absolutely safe men just don't talk to women at all. At parties they congregate on one side of the room, standing up as befits their condition and position (desk workers in the main) and exhausted women (servants and mothers) are left propped up by girdles, pancake make-up, and hair spray, on the couch and surrounding chairs. If the place is big and informal enough, the men may actually go into another room, generally under the pretext of being closer to the liquor.

Of course, most women don't understand this game for what it is. The new-comer to it often thinks it is the women who withdraw and may seek out what she imagines to be the more stimulating company of the men. When she does, she is quickly disillusioned. As she approaches each group of men the conversation they were so engrossed in usually dies. The individual members begin to drift off -- to get a refill, to talk with someone they have just noticed across the room, etc. If she manages to ensnare a residual member of the group in conversation, he very soon develops a nervous and distressed look on his face as though he had to go to the bathroom; and he leaves as soon as possible, perhaps to make that trip.

There is another phenomenon not to be confused here. Namely, men being stimulated to show off in the presence of an attractive female, to display in verbal exchange what they imagine to be their monstrous cleverness. But the rules of this game require the women to stand by semi-mute, just gasping and giggling, awed, and somewhat sexually aroused. The verbal exchange is strictly between the men. Any attempt on the woman's part to become a participant instead of a prize breaks up the game and the group.

This kind of desperate attempt by men to defend their power by refusing to participate in open public discussion with women would be amusing if it were not so effective. And one sees the beginnings of it even now, while still students, in SDS meetings. You are allowed to participate and to speak, only the men stop listening when you do. How many times have you seen a woman enter the discussion only to have it resume at the exact point from which she made her departure, as though she had never said anything at all? How many times have you seen men get up and actually walk out of a room while a woman speaks, or begin to whisper to each other as she starts?

In that kind of a hostile, unresponsive atmosphere, it is difficult for anyone to speak in an organized, stringent manner. Being insulted, she becomes angry, in order to say what she wanted to say and not launch an attack upon the manners of her 'audience', she musters the energy to control her temper, and finally she wonders why she is bothering at all since no one is listening. Under the pressure of all this extraneous stimulation she speaks haltingly, and if she gets to the point at all hits it obliquely.

And thus the male purpose is accomplished. Someone may comment, 'Well, that is kind of interesting but it is sort of beside the main point here.' Or, whoever is in charge may just look at her blankly as if, 'What was that all about?' The conversation resumes and perhaps the woman feels angry, but she also feels stupid. In this manner the slave relationship is learned and reinforced.

Even if the exceptional case is involved - the woman who does sometimes get up front - the argument holds. I know whom you are thinking about. You are thinking about the girl who has thirty IQ points over almost anyone in the group and therefore can't be altogether put down. She is much too intelligent, much too valuable. So she is sometimes asked by the male leadership to explain a plan or chair a meeting and since it is obvious that she is exercising male-delegated authority and because she is so bright people will sometimes listen to her. But have you ever known the top dog in an SDS group to be a woman, or have you ever known a woman to be second in command? Have you ever seen one argue substance of tactics with one



of the top males in front of the full group? She may forget her place and do so, but if she does she receives the same treatment as all other females. The rules may and sometimes have to be stretched for the exceptional, but never at the price of male authority and male control.

Of course, being a student, having not as yet come under the full heel of male domination, and not identifying with women in general, you may view SDS group dynamics somewhat differently. You may grant the male domination but think it is a function of the particular males in command, or you may grant its existence but blame the women for not asserting themselves.

With regard to the first assumption, let me point out that almost all men are involved in the male mystique. No matter how unnecessary it may be, particularly for the bright and most able among them, each rests his ego in some measure on the basic common denominator, being a man. In the same way white people, consciously or unconsciously, derive ego support from being white and Americans from being American.

Allowing females to participate in some group on the basis of full equality presents a direct threat to each man in that group. And though an individual male leader may be able to rise above this personal threat he cannot deviate from the rules of the game without jeopardizing his own leadership and the group itself. If he permits the public disclosure in an irrefutable manner of the basic superiority of half of the women to half the men, of some of the women to some of the men, he breaks the covenant and the men will not follow him. Since they are not obliged to, they will not suffer this emasculation and the group will fall apart.

To think that women by asserting themselves individually in SDS, can democratize it, can remove the factor of sex, is equally silly. In the first place the men will not permit it and in the second place, as things stand now, the women are simply incapable of that kind of aggressive individual assertion. The socialization process has gone too far, they are already scrambled. Meeting after meeting their silence bears witness to their feelings of inferiority. Who knows what they get out of it? Are they listening, do they understand what is being said, do they accept it, do they have reservations? Would urging them to speak out have any effect other than to cut down their numbers at the next meeting?

## The limbo

Though female students objectively have more freedom than most older married women, their life is already a nightmare. Totally unaware they long ago accepted the miserable role male society assigned to them: help-mate and maintenance worker. Upon coming to college they eagerly and 'voluntarily' flood the great service schools -- the college of education, the college of nursing, the departments of social work, physical therapy, counseling, and clinical psychology. In some places they even major in home economics.

Denied most of them forever is the great discovery, the power and beauty of logic and mathematics, the sweeping syntheses, the perspective of history. The academic education in these service schools varies from thin to sick -- two semester courses in history of Western civilization, watered down one-quarter courses on statistics for nurses, and the mumbo-jumbo courses on psychoanalysis.

It is no wonder that women who may have come to college with perfect confidence in themselves begin to feel stupid. They are being systematically stupified. Trying to think without knowledge is just a cut above trying to think without language. The wheels go around but nothing much happens.

The position of these women in college is very much like the position of black kids in the black public schools. They start out with the same IQ and achievement scores as their white counterparts but after the third year they begin to lag further and further behind in both measurements. Those blacks still around to graduate from high school usually measure at least two years below graduating whites. Of course, black kids blame the discrepancy on the schools, on the environment, on all kinds



of legitimate things. But always there is the gnawing doubt. It is hard to believe the schools could be so different; white women, being at the same school and from the same families, understand that they are simply, though individually, inferior.

But that is not the only reason female students are scrambled. They are also in a panic, an absolute frenzy, to fulfill their destiny: to find a man and get married. It is not that they have all been brainwashed by the media to want a husband, split level house, three children, a dog, a cat, and a station wagon. Many just want out from under their parents. They just can't take the slow slaughter any more but they don't have the courage to break away. They fear the wrath of the explosion but even more they fear the ensuing loneliness and isolation.

Generally a single girl's best friend is still her family. They are the only people she can rely upon for conversation, for attention, for concern with her welfare, no matter how misdirected. And everyone needs some personal attention or they begin to experience a lack of identity. Thus the big push to find the prince charming who will replace the chains with a golden ring.

But that is not as simple as it may seem. It is not proper for women to ask men out. They are never permitted the direct approach to anything. So women must set traps and, depending upon their looks and brains, that can be terribly time-consuming, nerve-racking, and disappointing. Thus the great rash of nose jobs, the desperate dieting, the hours consumed in pursuit of the proper attire. There is skin care, putting up one's hair each night, visits to the hairdressers, keeping up with, buying, applying, and taking off make-up, etc. The average American woman spends two hours a day in personal grooming, not including shopping or sewing. That is one-twelfth of her whole life and one-eighth of the time she spends awake. If she lives to be eighty, a woman will have spent ten whole years of her time awake in this one facet of the complex business of making herself attractive to men. It is staggering to think what that figure would be if one were to include the endless hours spent looking through fashion magazines, shopping and window shopping, discussing and worrying about clothes, hair style, diet, and make-up. Surely one-fourth of a woman's waking time would be a conservative estimate here. Twenty years of wakeful life!

So, one-fourth of a female student's day goes down the drain in this manner, another one-fourth to one-half is spent getting brainwashed in school and studying for the same end. What does she do with the rest of the time? Often, she must work to support herself and she must eat, clean, wash clothes, date, etc. That leaves her just enough time to worry about her behaviour on her last date and her behavior on her next one. Did she say and do the right thing, should she change her approach? Does he love her or does he not? To screw or not to screw is often a serious question. It is taken for granted amongst the more sophisticated that it helps to nail a man if one sleeps with him. Still, it is no guarantee and there are only so many men with whom a woman can cohabit in the same circle and still expect a proposal. Movement men seem prone to marry the 'purer' non-movement types. And at that age and stage, when girls are worried about being used, about pregnancy and privacy, still ignorant of the potentials of their bodies, and hung-up by the old sexual code which classifies so much as perversion and then demands it, sex usually offers only minimal gratification anyway. Given the girls' hang-ups and the insecurity and ineptness of young men, even that gratification is more often psychological than sexual.

Sex becomes the vehicle for momentary exchanges of human warmth and affection. It provides periods in which anxiety is temporarily allayed and girls feel wanted and appreciated, periods in which they develop some identity as individuals. It is ironic indeed that a woman attains this sense of identity and individuality through performing an act common to all mankind and all mammals. It bespeaks her understanding that society as it is presently organized will not permit her to function at all except through some male. The church used to say that 'husband and wife are as one, and that one is the husband', or, 'The husband and wife are as one body and the husband is the head'. As though fulfilling a prophesy unmarried women go about like chickens with their heads cut off.

In this terrible delirium between adolescence and marriage the friendship of female



o female all but disappears. Girls, because they are growing duller, become less interesting to each other. As they slip into the role of submissiveness or respondent to male initiative, male intelligence, they also become increasingly uneasy with one another. To be the benefactor of female intelligence and to respond with warmth and affection brings with it anxieties of 'homosexual tendencies'. To initiate, direct, or dominate brings with it the same apprehensions. To insure a female for every male (if he wants one), to insure his freedom and his power through the enslavement of our sex, males have made of homosexuality the abomination. Everyone knows what happens to them: they go crazy and get buried at some inter-  
ection. It is too terrible to think about; it can only be feared.

nd that fear, initiated by men, is reinforced by both men and women. Perform a simple spontaneous act like lighting another woman's cigarette with the same match you've just lit your own and there is panic on all sides. Women have to learn to inhibit these natural, asexual gestures. And any close and prolonged friendship between women is always suspect.

So women use each other as best they can under the circumstances, to keep out the old. And the blood-pacts of childhood where one swore not to reveal a secret on penalty of death turn into bargains about not leaving each other until both are lined up for marriage. Only these later pacts are never believed or fulfilled. So a woman trusts another because she understands the desperation. The older a woman becomes the more oppressive the syndrome. As one by one her contemporaries marry she begins to feel the way old people must when one by one their friends and relatives die. Though an individual in the latter condition is not necessarily burdened with a sense of failure and shame.

So there you have the typical coed -- ignorant, suffering from a sense of inferiority, barely perceiving other women except as mindless, lonely, and terrified. Hardly in any condition to aggressively and individually fight for her rights in SDS. It seems, in a way, the least of her problems. To solve them all she is fixated on marriage. Which brings us to the second arm of this discussion, the point we raised earlier.

### **3. RADICAL WOMEN DO NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND THE DESPERATE CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN GENERAL - Because so few are married, or if married have no children**

No one would think to judge a marriage by its first hundred days. To be sure there are cases of sexual trauma, of sudden and violent misunderstandings, but in general all is happiness; the girl has finally made it, the past is but a bad dream. All good things are about to come to her. And then reality sets in. It can be held off a little as long as they are both students and particularly if they have money, but sooner or later it becomes entrenched. The man moves to insure his position of power and dominance.

There are several more or less standard pieces of armament used in this assault upon wives, but the biggest gun is generally the threat of divorce or abandonment. With a plucky woman a man may actually feel it necessary to openly and repeatedly toy with this weapon, but usually it is sufficient simply to keep it in the house under cover somewhere. We all know the bit, we have heard it and all the others. I am about to mention on television marital comedies and in night club jokes; it is supposed to be funny.

The husband says to the wife who is about to go somewhere that doesn't meet with his approval, 'If you do, you need never come back.' Or later, when the process is more complete and she is reduced to frequent outbreaks of begging, he slams his way out of the house claiming that she is trying to destroy him, that he can no longer take these endless, senseless scenes; that 'this isn't a marriage, it's a meat grinder'. Or he may simply lay down the law that God damn it, her first responsibility is to her family and he will not permit or tolerate something or other. Or if she wants to maintain the marriage she is simply going to have to accommodate herself.

There are thousands of variations on this theme and it is really very clever the



way male society creates for women this pre-marital hell so that some man can save her from it and control her ever after by the threat of throwing her back. De-gradating her further, the final crisis is usually averted or postponed by a tearful reconciliation in which the wife apologizes for her shortcomings, namely the sparks of initiative still left to her.

The other crude and often open weapon that a man uses to control his wife is the threat of force or force itself. Though this weapon is not necessarily used in conjunction with the one described above, it presupposes that a woman is more frightened of returning to an unmarried state than she is of being beaten about one way or another. How can one elaborate on such a threat? At a minimum it begins by a man's paling or flushing, clenching his fists at his sides or gritting his teeth, perhaps making lurching but controlled motions or wild threatening ones while he states his case. In this circumstance it is difficult for a woman to pursue the argument which is bringing about the reaction, usually an argument for more freedom, respect, or equality in the marital situation. And of course, the conciliation of this scene, even if he has beat her, may require his apology, but also hers, for provoking him. After a while the conditioning sets in also hers, for provoking him. After a while the conditioning becomes so strong that a slight change of color on his part, or a slight stiffening of stance, nothing observable to an outsider, suffices to quiet her or keep her in line. She turns off or detours mechanically, like a robot, not even herself aware of the change, or only momentarily and almost subliminally.

But these are gross and vulgar techniques. There are many more subtle and intricate which in the long run are even more devastating. Take for instance the ploy of keeping women from recognizing their intelligence by not talking to them in public, which we mentioned earlier. After marriage this technique is extended and used on a woman in her own home.

At breakfast a woman speaks to her husband over or through the morning paper, which he clutches firmly in his hands. Incidentally, he reserves the right to see the paper first and to read the sections in order of his preference. The assumption is, of course, that he has a more vested interest in world affairs and a superior intelligence with which to grasp the relevance of daily news. The Women's Section of the paper is called that, not only because it contains the totality of what men want women to be concerned with, but also because it is the only section permitted to women at certain times of the day.

I can almost hear you demur. Now she has gone too far. What super-sensitivity to interpret the morning paper routine as a deliberate put-down. After all, a woman has the whole day to read the paper and a man must get to work. I put it to you that this same situation exists when they both work or when the wife works and the husband is still a student, assuming he gets up for breakfast, and on Sundays. What we are describing here is pure self-indulgence. A minor and common, though none the less enjoyable, exercise in power. A flexing of the male prerogative.

Perhaps the best tip-off to the real meaning of the daily paper act comes when a housewife attempts to solve the problem by subscribing to two papers. This is almost invariably met with resistance on the part of the man as being an unnecessary and frivolous expense, never mind whether they can afford it. And if his resistance doesn't actually forestall the second subscription he attempts to monopolize the front sections of both papers! This is quite a complicated routine, but, assuming the papers are not identical, it can be done and justified.

However, we were talking about conversation and noted that it was replaced by the paper in the morning. In the evening men attempt to escape through more papers, returning to work, working at home, reading, watching television, going to meetings, etc. But eventually they have to handle the problem some other way because their wives are desperate for conversation, for verbal interchange. To understand this desperation you have to remember that women before marriage have on the whole only superficial, competitive, and selfish relationships with each other. Should one of them have a genuine relationship it is more likely with a male than a female. After marriage a woman stops courting her old unmarried or married female



side-kicks. They have served their purpose, to tide her over. And there is the fear, often well founded, that these females will view her marriage less as a sacrament than a challenge, that they will stalk her husband as fair game, that they will outshine her, or in some other way lead to the disruption of her marriage.

Her husband will not tolerate the hanging around of any past male friends, and that leaves the woman isolated. When, as so often happens, after a few years husband and wife move because he has graduated, entered service, or changed jobs, her isolation is complete. Now all ties are broken. Her husband is her only contact with the outside world, aside, of course, from those more or less perfunctory contacts she has at work, if she works.

So she is desperate to talk with her husband because she must talk with someone and he is all she has. To tell the truth a woman doesn't really understand the almost biologic substructure to her desperation. She sees it in psychological terms. She thinks that if her husband doesn't talk to her he doesn't love her or doesn't respect her. She may even feel that this disrespect on his part is causing her to lose her own self-respect (a fair assumption since he is her only referant). She may also feel cheated and trapped because she understood that in return for all she did for him in marriage she was to be allowed to live vicariously, and she cannot do that if he will not share his life.

What she does not understand is that she cannot go on thinking coherently without expressing those thoughts and having them accepted, rejected, or qualified in some manner. This kind of feed-back is essential to the healthy functioning of the human mind. That is why solitary confinement is so devastating. It is society's third-rung 'legal deterrent', ranking just below capital punishment and forced wakefulness, or other forms of torture that lead to death.

This kind of verbal isolation, this refusal to hear a women, causes her thought process to turn in upon itself, to deteriorate, degenerate, to become disassociated from reality. Never intellectually or emotionally secure in the first place, she feels herself slipping beyond the pale. She keeps pounding at the door.

And what is her husband's response. He understands in some crude way what is happening to her, what he is doing to her, but he is so power-oriented that he cannot stop. Above all, men must remain in control; it's either him or her. The worse she becomes the more convinced he is the coin must not be turned. And from thence springs anew his fear of women, like his fear of blacks.

We tend to forget that witches were burned in our own country not too long ago, in those heroic days before the founding fathers. That each day somewhere in our country women are raped or killed just for kicks or out of some perverted sense of retribution. And we never even consider the ten thousand innocent women annually murdered by men who refuse to legalize abortion. The fear and hatred must be deep indeed to take such vengeance.

But back to the husband. We all know that marriage is far from solitary confinement for a woman. Of course, the husband talks to her. The questions are, how often, what does he say, and how does he say it? He parries this plea for conversation, which he understands thoroughly, until bedtime or near it and then exhausted and exasperated he slaps down his book or papers, or snaps off the TV, or flings his shoe to the floor if he is undressing and turns to his wife, saying, 'Oh, for Christ sake, what is it you want to talk about?'

Now he has just used all of his big guns. He has showed temper which threatens violence. He has showed an exasperated patience which threatens eventual divorce. He has been insulting and purposely misunderstanding. Since she is not burning with any specific comments, since she is now frightened, hurt, angry, and thoroughly miserable, what is she to say? I'll tell you what she does say: 'Forget it. Just forget it. If that's the way you are going to respond I don't want to talk with you anyway.'

This may bring on another explosion from him, frightening her still further. He



may say something stupid like, 'You're crazy, just crazy. All day long you keep telling me you've got to talk to me. O.K., you want to talk to me, talk. I'm listening. I'm not reading. I'm not working. I'm not watching TV. I'm listening.'

He waits sixty silent seconds while the wife struggles for composure and then he stands up and announces that he is going to bed. To rub salt in the wound, he falls to sleep blissfully and instantly.

Or, playing the part of both cops in the jailhouse interrogation scene he may, after the first explosion, switch roles. In this double-take he becomes the calm and considerate husband, remorseful, apologizing, and imploring her to continue, assuring her he is interested in anything she has to say, knowing full well the limitations of what she can say under the circumstances. Predictably, done in by the tender tone, she falls in with the plot and confesses. She confesses her loneliness, her dependence, her mental agony, and they discuss her problem. Her problem, as though it were some genetic defect, some personal shortcoming, some inscrutable psychosis. Now he can comfort her, avowing how he understands how she must feel, he only wished there were something he could do to help.

This kind of situation if continued in unrelieved manner has extreme consequences. Generally the marriage partners sense this and stop short of the brink. The husband, after all, is trying to protect and bolster his frail ego, not drive his wife insane or force her suicide. He wants in the home to be able to hide from his own inner doubts, his own sense of shame, failure, and meaninglessness. He wants to shed the endless humiliation of endless days parading as a man in the male world. Pretending a power, control, and understanding he does not have.

All he asks of his wife, aside from hours of menial work, is that she not see him as he sees himself. That she not challenge him but admire and desire him, soothe and distract him. In short, make him feel like the kind of guy he'd like to be in the kind of world he thinks exists.

And by this time the wife asks little more really than the opportunity to play that role. She probably never aspired to more, to an equalitarian or reality-oriented relationship. It is just that she cannot do her thing if it is laid out so baldly; if she is to be denied all self-respect, all self-development, all help and encouragement from her husband.

So generally the couple stops short of the brink. Sometimes, paradoxically enough, by escalating the conflict so that it ends in divorce, but generally by some accommodation. The husband encourages the wife to make some girl friends, take night courses, or have children. And sooner or later, if she can, she has children. Assuming the husband has agreed to the event, the wife's pregnancy does abate or deflect the drift of their marriage, for a while anyway.

The pregnancy presents to the world visible proof of the husband's masculinity, potency. This visible proof shores up the basic substructure of his ego, the floor beyond which he cannot now fall. Pathetically his stock goes up in society, in his own eyes. He is a man. He is grateful to his wife and treats her, at least during the first pregnancy, with increased tenderness and respect. He pats her tummy and makes noises about mystic occurrences. And since pregnancy is not a male thing and he is a man, since this is cooperation, not competition, he can even make out that he feels her role is pretty special.

The wife is grateful. Her husband loves her. She is suffused with happiness and pride. There is at last something on her side of the division of labor which her husband views with respect, and delight of delights, with perhaps a twinge of jealousy.

Of course, it can't last. After nine months the child is bound to be born. And there we are back at the starting gate. Generally speaking, giving birth must be like a bad trip with the added feature of prolonged physical exhaustion.

Sometimes it takes a year to regain one's full strength after a messy caesarian. Sometimes women develop post-parturational psychosis in the hospital. More commonly, after they have been home awhile they develop a transient but recurring state called the 'Tired Mother Syndrome'. In its severe form it is, or resembles, a psychosis. Women with this syndrome complain of being utterly exhausted, irritable, unable to



concentrate. They may wander about somewhat aimlessly, they may have physical pains. They are depressed, anxious, sometimes paranoid, and they cry a lot.

Sound familiar? Despite the name one doesn't have to be a mother to experience the ailment. Many young wives without children do experience it, particularly those who, without an education themselves, are working their husband's way through college. That is to say, wives who hold down a dull eight or nine hour a day job, then come home, straighten, cook, clean, run down to the laundry, dash to the grocery store, iron their own clothes plus their husband's shirts and jeans, sew for themselves, put up their hair, and more often than not type their husband's papers, correct his spelling and grammar, pay the bills, screw on command, and write the in-laws. I've even known wives who on top of this load do term papers or laboratory work for their husbands. Of course, it's insanity. What else could such self-denial be called? Love?

Is it any wonder that a woman in this circumstance is tired? Is it any wonder that she responds with irritability when she returns home at night to find her student husband, after a day or half day at home, drinking beer and shooting the bull with his cronies, the ring still in the bathtub, his dishes undone, his clothes where he dropped them the night before, even his specific little chores like taking out the garbage unaccomplished?

Is it any wonder that she is tempted to scream when at the very moment she has gotten rid of the company, plowed through some of the mess, and is standing in a tiny kitchen over a hot stove, her husband begins to make sexual advances? He naively expects that these advances will fill her with passion, melting all anger, and result not only in her forgetting and forgiving but in gratitude and renewed love. Ever hear the expression, 'A woman loves the man who satisfies her'? Some men find that delusion comforting. A couple of screws and the slate is wiped clean. Who needs to pay for servants or buy his wife a washing machine when he has a cock?

And even the most self-deluded woman begins to feel depressed, anxious, and used, when she finds that her husband is embarrassed by her in the company of his educated, intellectual, or movement friends. When he openly shuts her up saying she doesn't know what she is talking about or emphasizes a point by saying it is so clear or so simple even his wife can understand it.

He begins to confuse knowledge with a personal attribute like height or a personal virtue like honesty. He becomes disdainful of and impatient with ignorance, equating it with stupidity, obstinacy, laziness, and in some strange way, immorality. He forgets that his cultivation took place at his wife's expense. He will not admit that in stealing from his wife her time, energy, leisure, and money he also steals the possibility of her intellectual development, her present, and her future.

But the working wife sending her husband through school has no monopoly on this plight. It also comes to those who only stand and wait -- in the home, having kiddy after kiddy while their husbands, if they are able, learn something, grow somewhere.

In any case, we began this diversion by saying that women who are not mothers can also suffer from the 'Tired Mother Syndrome'. Once a mother, however, it takes on a new dimension. There is a difference of opinion in the medical and sociological literature with regard to the genesis of this ailment. Betty Friedan, in the sociological vein, argues that these symptoms are the natural outgrowth of restricting the mind and body of these women to the narrow confines of the home. She discusses the destructive role of monotonous, repetitive work which never issues in any lasting, let alone important, achievement. Dishes which are done only to be dirtied the same day; beds which are made only to be unmade the same day. Her theory also lays great emphasis on the isolation of these women from the larger problems of society and even from contact with those concerned with things not domestic, other than their husbands. In other words, the mind no more than the body can function in a straitjacket and the effort to keep it going under these circumstances is indeed tiring and depressing.

Dr. Spock somewhat sides with this theory. The main line medical approach is better represented by Dr. Lovshin who says that mothers develop the 'Tired Mother Syndrome' because they are tired. They work a 16-hour day, 7 days a week. Automation and unions have led to a continuously shortened day for men but the work day



of housewives with children has remained constant. The literature bears him out. Oh, it is undoubtedly true that women have today many time-saving devices their mothers did not have. This advantage is offset, however, by the fact that fewer members of the family help with housework and the task of child care, as it is organized in our society, is continuous. Now the woman puts the wash in a machine and spends her time reading to the children, breaking up their fights, taking them to the playground, or otherwise looking after them. If, as is often said, women are being automated out of the home, it is only to be shoved into the car chauffeuring children to innumerable lessons and activities, and that dubious advantage holds only for middle and upper class women who generally can afford not only gadgets but full or part-time help.

One of the definitions of automation is a human being acting mechanically in a monotonous routine. Now as always the most automated appliance in a household is the mother. Because of the speed at which it's played, her routine has not only a nightmarish but farcical quality to it. Some time ago the Ladies Home Journal conducted and published a forum on the plight of young mothers. Ashley Montague and some other professionals plus members of the Journal staff interviewed four young mothers. Two of them described their morning breakfast routine.

One woman indicated that she made the breakfast, got it out, left the children to eat it, and then ran to the washing machine. She filled that up and ran back to the kitchen, shoved a little food in the baby's mouth and tried to keep the others eating. Then she ran back to the machine, put the clothes in a wringer and started the rinse water.

The other woman stated they had bacon every morning, so the first thing she did was to put the bacon on and the water for coffee. Then she went back to her room and made the bed. 'Generally, I find myself almost running back and forth. I don't usually walk. I run to make the bed.' By that time the pan is hot and she runs back to turn the bacon. She finishes making the children's breakfast and if she is lucky she gets to serve it before she is forced to dash off to attend to the baby, changing him and sitting him up. She rushes back, plops him in a little canvas chair, serves the children if she has not already done so, and makes her husband's breakfast. And so it goes through the day. As the woman who runs from bed to bacon explains, 'My problem is that sometimes I feel there aren't enough hours in the day. I don't know whether I can get everything done.'

It's like watching an old time movie where for technical reasons everyone seems to be moving at three times normal speed. In this case it is not so funny. With the first child it is not as severe.

What hits a new mother the hardest is not so much the increased work load as the lack of sleep. However unhappy she may have been in her childless state, however desperate, she could escape by sleep. She could be refreshed by sleep. And if she wasn't a nurse or airline stewardess she generally slept fairly regular hours in a seven to nine hour stretch. But almost all babies returning from the hospital are on something like a four-hour food schedule, and they usually demand some attention in between feedings. Now children differ, some cry more, some cry less, some cry almost all of the time. If you have never, in some period of your life, been awakened and required to function at one in the morning and again at three, then maybe at seven, or some such schedule, you can't imagine the agony of it.

All of a woman's muscles ache and they respond with further pain when touched. She is generally cold and unable to get warm. Her reflexes are off. She startles easily, ducks moving shadows, and bumps into stationary objects. Her reading rate takes a precipitous drop. She stutters and stammers, groping for words to express her thoughts, sounding barely coherent -- somewhat drunk. She can't bring her mind to focus. She is in a fog. In response to all the aforementioned symptoms she is always close to tears.

What I have described here is the severe case. Some mothers aren't hit as hard but almost all new mothers suffer these symptoms in some degree and what's more, will continue to suffer them a good part of their lives. The woman who has several



children in close succession really gets it. One child wakes the other, it's like a merry-go-round, intensified with each new birth, each childhood illness.

This lack of sleep is rarely mentioned in the literature relating to the Tired Mother Syndrome. Doctors recommend to women with new born children that they attempt to partially compensate for this loss of sleep by napping during the day. With one child that may be possible; with several small ones it's sort of a sick joke. This period of months or years of forced wakefulness and 'material' responsibility seems to have a long-range if not permanent effect on a woman's sleeping habits. She is so used to listening for the children she is awakened by dogs, cats, garbage men, neighbors' alarm clocks, her husband's snoring. Long after her last child gives up night feedings she is still waking to check on him. She is worried about his suffocating, choking, falling out of bed, etc. Long after that she wanders about opening and closing windows, adjusting the heat or air conditioning, locking the doors, or going to the bathroom.

If enforced wakefulness is the handmaiden and necessary precursor to serious brain-washing, a mother - after her first child - is ready for her final demise. Too tired to comprehend or fight, she only staggers and eventually submits. She is embarrassed by her halting speech, painfully aware of her lessened ability to cope with things, of her diminished intellectual prowess. She relies more heavily than ever on her husband's support, helping hand, love. And he in turn gently guides her into the further recesses of second class citizenship.

After an extended tour in that never-never land, most women lose all capacity for independent thought, independent action. If the anxiety and depression grow, if they panic, analysis and solution elude them.

### **The return from the never-never land**

Women who would avoid or extricate themselves from the common plight I've described, and would begin new lives, new movements, and new worlds, must first learn to acknowledge the reality of their present condition. They have got to reject the blind and faulty categories of thought foisted on them by a male order for its own benefit. They must stop thinking in terms of 'the grand affair', of the love which over-comes, or substitutes for, everything else, of the perfect moment, the perfect relationship, the perfect marriage. In other words, they must reject romanticism. Romance, like the rabbit of the dog track, is the illusive, fake, and never-attained reward which for the benefit and amusement of our masters keeps us running and thinking in safe circles.

A relationship between a man and a woman is no more or less personal a relationship than is the relationship between a woman and her maid, a master and his slave, a teacher and his student. Of course, there are personal, individual qualities to a particular relationship in any of these categories but they are so overshadowed by the class nature of the relationship, by the volume of class response as to be almost insignificant.

There is something horribly repugnant in the picture of women performing the same menial chores all day, having almost interchangeable conversations with their children, engaging in standard television arguments with their husbands, and then in the late hours of the night, each agonizing over what is considered her personal lot, her personal relationship, her personal problem. If women lack self-confidence, there seems no limit to their egotism. And unmarried women cannot in all honesty say their lives are in much greater measure distinct from each other's. We are a class, we are oppressed as a class, and we each respond within the limits allowed us as members of that oppressed class. Purposely divided from each other, each of us is ruled by one or more men for the benefit of all men. There is no personal escape, no personal salvation, no personal solution.

The first step, then, is to accept our plight as a common plight, to see other women as reflections of ourselves, without obscuring, of course, the very real differences intelligence, temperament, age, education, and background create. I'm not saying let's now create new castes or classes among our own. I just don't



want women to feel that the movement requires them to identify totally with and moreover love every other woman. For the general relationship, understanding and compassion should suffice.

We who have been raised on pap must develop a passion for honest appraisal. The real differences between women and between men and women are the guideposts within and around which we must dream and work.

Having accepted our common identity the next thing we must do is to get in touch with each other. I mean that absolutely literally. Women see each other all the time, open their mouths and make noises, but communicate on only the most superficial level. We don't talk to each other about what we consider our real problems because we are afraid to look insecure, because we don't trust or respect each other, and because we are afraid to look or be disloyal to our husbands and benefactors.

Each married woman carries around in her a strange and almost identical little bundle of secrets. To take, as an example, perhaps the most insignificant, she may be tired of and feel insulted by her husband's belching or farting at the table. Can you imagine her husband's fury if it got back to him that she told someone he farted at the table? Because women don't tell these things to each other the events are considered personal, the woman may fantasize remarriage to mythical men who don't fart, the man feels he has a personal but minor idiosyncrasy, and maledom comes out clean.

And that, my dear, is what this bit of loyalty is all about. If a man made that kind of comment about his wife, he might be considered crude or indiscreet; she's considered disloyal -- because she's subject, he's king, women are dominated and men are the instruments of their domination. The true objective nature of men must never become common knowledge lest it undermine in the minds of some males -- but most particularly in ours -- the male right-to-rule. And so we daily participate in the process of our own domination. For God's sake, let's stop!

I cannot make it too clear that I am not talking about group therapy or individual catharsis (we aren't sick, we are oppressed). I'm talking about movement. Let's get together to decide in groups of women how to get out of this bind, to discover and fight the techniques of domination in and out of the home. To change our physical and social surroundings to free our time, our energy, and our minds -- to start to build for ourselves, for all mankind, a world without horrors.

Women involved in this struggle together will come to respect, love, and develop deep and abiding friendships with each other. If these do not thoroughly compensate for losses that may be ours, they will carry us through. For different ages and different stages there are different projects. Young married or unmarried women without children are sympathetic to the problems of mothers but do not pretend to fully understand them. In all honesty, as a middle-aged mother I cannot really grasp the special quality of life of an unmarried young woman in this generation. Her circumstance is too distinct from mine, and my memories of youth are by this time too faded to bridge the gap. Youth has available to it perspectives and paths not destined to be shared by many in the older generation. We must work together but not presuppose for each other. It is, then, the younger author who will speak to the young. Before this part of the paper is ended, however, I would like to mention briefly projects I think women my age must undertake as part of the overall movement. If they have any relevancy for young women, so much the better.

1. Women must resist pressure to enter into movement activities other than their own. There cannot be real restructuring of this society until the relationships between the sexes are restructured. The inequalitarian relationship in the home is perhaps the basis of all evil. Men can commit any horror, or cowardly suffer any mutilation of their souls and retire to the home to be treated there with awe, respect, and perhaps love. Men will never face their true identity or their real problems under these circumstances, nor will we.

If movement men were not attempting to preserve their prerogative as men while fighting 'the system', they would welcome an attack launched upon that system from another front. That they do not shows how trapped they are in the meshes of the very sys-



tem they oppose. Our vision must not be limited by theirs. We must urge in speech and in print that women go their own way.

2. Since women in great measure are ruled by the fear of physical force, they must learn to protect themselves. Women who are able ought to take jujitsu or karate until they are proficient in the art. Certainly they ought to organize and enroll their daughters in such courses. Compare the benefits young girls would derive from such courses with those they attain from endless years of ballet. As an extra added goodie, we could spare ourselves the agony of those totally untalented recitals, and later, the sleepless night worrying about our daughter's safety.

3. We must force the media to a position of realism. Ninety percent of the women in this country have an inferiority complex because they do not have turned-up noses, wear a size ten or under dress, have 'good legs', flat stomachs, and fall within a certain age bracket. According to television no man is hot for a middle-aged woman. If she is his wife he may screw her but only because he is stuck with her. More important than that, women are constantly portrayed as stupid. The advertisements are the worst offenders. Blacks used to be left out of TV altogether except for occasional Tom roles. Women are cast on every show and always Tom. From such stuff is our self-image created, the public and accepted image of women. The only time my daughter saw a woman on TV who gave her pride in being a woman was when she saw Coretta King speak to the poor people's march. And as my son said, 'It was almost like he had to die before anyone could know she existed.' Let's not simply boycott selected products; let's break up those television shows and refuse to let them go on until female heroines are portrayed in their total spectrum. And let's make sure that every brilliant heroine doesn't have a husband who is just an eentsy teentsy bit more brilliant than she is.

4. Women must share their experiences with each other until they understand, identify, and explicitly state the many psychological techniques of domination in and out of the home. These should be published and distributed widely until they are common knowledge. No woman should feel befuddled and helpless in an argument with her husband. She ought to be able to identify his stratagems and to protect herself against them, to say, you're using the two-cop routine, and premature apology, the purposeful misunderstanding, etc.

5. Somebody has got to start designing communities in which women can be freed from their burdens long enough for them to experience humanity. Houses might be built around schools to be rented only to people with children enrolled in the particular school, and only as long as they were enrolled. This geographically confined community could contain cheap or cooperative cafeterias and a restaurant so that mothers would not have to cook. This not only would free the woman's time but would put her in more of a position of equality with Daddy when he comes home from work. The parents could both sit down and eat at the same time in front of and with the children, a far different scene from that of a conversing family being served by a harassed mother who rarely gets to sit down and is usually two courses behind. These geographic school complexes could also contain full-time nurseries. They could offer space for instrument, dance, and self-defense lessons. In other words, a woman could live in them and be relieved of cooking, childcare for the greater part of the day, and chauffeuring. The center might even have nighttime or overnight babysitting quarters. Many women will be totally lost to us and to themselves if projects like this are not begun. And the projects themselves, by freeing a woman's time and placing her in innumerable little ways into more of a position of equality, will go a long way toward restructuring the basic marital and parental relationships.

6. Women must learn their own history because they have a history to be proud of and a history which will give pride to their daughters. In all the furor over the Ramparts article, I have heard women complain of the photographs and offer unlikely stories of trickery. I've heard them voice resentment toward coalitions like the Jeanette Rankin Brigade and toward Ramparts for pushing them. But I have yet to hear a cry of outrage to the real crime of that article. It purposely, maliciously, and slanderously rewrote, perverted, and belittled our history -- and most of us weren't even aware of it. What defense is there for a people so ignorant they will



believe anything said about their past? To keep us from our history is to keep us from each other. To keep us from our history is to deny to us the group pride from which individual pride is born. To deny to us the possibility of revolt. Our rulers, consciously, unconsciously, perhaps intuitively, know these truths. That's why there is no black or female history in high school texts, Ramparts' reference to its location there notwithstanding. Courageous women brought us out of total bondage to our present improved position. We must not foresake them but learn from them and allow them to join the cause once more. The market is ripe for feminist literature, historic and otherwise. We must provide it.

7. Women who have any scientific competency at all ought to begin to investigate the real temperamental and cognitive differences between the sexes. This area has been hexed with a sort of liberal taboo like the study of race differences. Presumably, we and blacks were being saved from humiliation by a liberal establishment which was at least in pretense willing to grant that aside from color and sexual anatomy we differed from white men in no significant aspect. But suppose we do? Are we to be kept ignorant of those differences? Who is being saved from what?

8. Equal pay for equal work has been a project poo-pooed by the radicals but it should not be because it is an instrument of bondage. If women, particularly women with children, cannot leave their husbands and support themselves decently, they are bound to remain under all sorts of degrading circumstances. In this same line college entrance discrimination against females, and job discrimination in general, must be fought, no matter what we think about the striving to become professional. A guaranteed annual income would also be of direct relevance to women.

9. In what is hardly an exhaustive list, I must mention abortion laws. All laws relating to abortion must be stricken from the books. Abortion, like contraceptives, must be legal and available if women are to have control of their bodies, their lives, and their destiny.



## Part II, by Judith Brown

We are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound to obey any laws in which we have no voice or representation.

(Abigail Adams, to her husband, John Adams, then in the Continental Congress, 1776)

### 4. FOR THEIR OWN SALVATION, AND FOR THE GOOD OF THE MOVEMENT, WOMEN MUST FORM THEIR OWN GROUPS AND WORK FOR FEMALE LIBERATION

In the previous sections we have attempted to refute the erroneous assumptions of the female caucus at the 1967 SDS Convention. We have emphasized the plight of the married woman in her relationship with a power-oriented representative of the master caste. Here, we will take up the situation in which the younger, typical radical female finds herself, and talk about some of the hassles in the emerging liberation movement.

We do not wish to belabor the classic statements in the literature which affirm the slave status of women in Western culture. There is sufficient evidence of our economic, political, psychological, and physiological subjugation. For radical women we will propose radical solutions; let the fainthearted cling to the 'desegregation' model.

First, it requires only a cursory glance at history to recall that men have played the games of war, racial taboo, mastery, and conspicuous production and consumption for thousands of years. While we do not question the courage of radical men who now confront most of the manifestations of imperialism, we do recognize that like their brave predecessors in other eras, they expect and require that women - their women - continue to function as black troops - kitchen soldiers\* - in their present struggle. Radical men are not fighting for female liberation, and in fact, become accountably queasy when the topic is broached. Regrettably the best - radical men and their black counterparts - do not even have a political interest in female liberation.\*\*

And indeed, this is not peculiar. We cannot expect them to relinquish, by our gentle persuasion, the power their sex knows and takes for granted. They do not even know how. Few can say, 'The only honorable course, when confronted with a just revolt against yourself or political territory in which you have a vested interest, is to yield gracefully.' Yet we, like radical men, have only one life we know of. It is a serious question whether we should live it as slaves to the rhetoric, the analysis, and the discipline of the movement we have come to be a part of, if that movement, that analysis, and that discipline systematically deprive us of our pride, genuine relationships with free women, equal relationships with men, and a sense that we are using our talents and dedication to a committed life as fully and as freely as possible.

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\*'It was in Fayerweather that a male leader asked for girls to volunteer for cooking duty and was laughed down...' "The Siege of Columbia", Ramparts, 15 June 68.

\*\* In response to what is hopefully the last stand of women in SDS, at the 1968 National Convention, June 13: 'The feeling in the room was, well, those Women have done their silly little thing again.' Guardian, 28 June 68.



## The SDS experience - a female view

For a moment it will be helpful to review the experience of a young woman who enters a radical movement, unmarried, in order to appreciate her position against the backdrop of male movement behavior. For we should recognize clearly the conditions under which we live as oppressive in order to identify ourselves with other women in a common struggle.

The typical 'radical' woman goes to college and is well-endowed intellectually, physically, and sexually. She has most likely excelled somewhere in high school, whether as a scholar, politico, or artist. She is fully capable of competing with men in college work, and simultaneously, she has already learned that it pays to restrain those overt displays of her competency which men feel no shame in exercising. In exclusively female circles she has held leadership positions and felt bored there, and she has remarked, at least once in her life, that she 'prefers the more stimulating company of men'. She is not a homosexual, and she usually echos the fraternity brand of contempt for 'fags' and 'dikes'. She thinks she is turned off to women and is secretly relieved that she passed through the 'stage' of homosexuality without 'becoming one'. Yet, she may quietly recognize that she has loved at least one woman somewhere along the way.

At the same time, she is unusually adroit at the sophisticated forms of putting down men, and more than once she watched a movement male explaining tactics or leading a demonstration with personal knowledge that he is a bad screw or privately panders to his parents. Her nearly subliminal review of these failings would stop at mere insight were it not also true that she has, on occasions she can recall, savored her knowledge and derived malicious pleasure from it. It is this idle malicious pleasure, which in adult life finds fuller expression in a petty, indirect, consistent, and fruitless attack on men, which should be the litmus for why the woman ought to concern herself with female liberation first.

Because she knows that equality between the sexes in the movement is nonexistent. She knows, as we have said, that women are silent at meetings, or if they speak, it is slightly hysterical and of little consequence to all the others. Men formally or informally chair the meeting. Women, like all good secretaries, take notes, circulate lists, provide ashtrays, or prepare and serve refreshments. They implement plans made by men through telephoning, compiling mailing lists, painting picket signs, etc. In some quarters, now that written analysis seems to have supplanted organizing as the status movement work, women are promoted to fill that void. More often than not, however, radical women sit through meetings in a stupor, occasionally patting or plucking at 'their' men and receiving, in return, a patronizing smile, or as the case may be, a glare. In demonstrations they are conspicuously protected, which does not always mean, however, that they are spared the club or the jailhouse, but they are spared responsibility for having made the direct confrontation.

In the jailhouse, they experience perhaps the only taste of independent radical female expression given them. There, they are segregated by sex, and the someone who always assumes leadership is this time a woman. They find out about each other, probably for the first time. They learn that the others, like themselves, are generally brave, resourceful, and militant. If they stay in jail long enough, they begin to organize themselves and others in the cell-block for prison reform, etc. They get up petitions, smuggle out protest letters and leaflets, mount hunger strikes, and other forms of resistance. They manage very adequately to sustain the abuses, self-imposed disciplines, the loss of status, and the fear, which their brothers face. Outside, of course, jailhouse reminiscence is dominated by the men. And the women desegregate themselves, recalling only rarely a faint affection for their former cell-mates. It is little wonder then that for some women, jail may be the first time that they know their sisters and work with them in radical organizing where they're at. A very militant white woman remarked to me that after 34 years, a husband, and three children, an earlier two-month stint in jail was the first time she felt at home in organizing.

The radical woman lives off-campus, away from her parents, and often openly with one man or another. She thinks this is 'freedom'. But if she shares a place with



a man, she 'plays marriage', which means that she cooks, cleans, does the laundry, and generally serves and waits. Hassles with parents or fear of the Dean of Women help to sustain the excitement -- the romantic illusions about marriage she brought to the domicile.

If she shares an apartment with other women, it is arranged so that each may entertain men for extended visits with maximum privacy. Often, for the women, these apartments become a kind of bordello; for the men, in addition to that, a good place to meet for political discussion, to put up campus travelers, to grab a free meal, or sack out. These homes are not centers for female political activity; and rather than being judged for their interior qualities - physical or political - they are evaluated by other women in terms of the variety and status of the radical men who frequent them.

But women in general are becoming healthier, better educated, more independent, and as the years go by, more experienced movement personnel. The movement itself is growing up. The one-time single female organizer marries, and her younger sisters are beginning to see that movement participation will not save them from essentially the same sexual and marital styles they reject in their parents. The older, now married radical woman goes on trips -- to visit the parents; may live in a larger, less free apartment; or may even live in a home she and her husband buy. She is 'protected' by her husband, and generally she stays at home when he goes out to move the world. The marital pattern sets in, and he lapses from a sloppy courtship to ordering her to get the drinks, cut the grass, etc. The tremendous political investments made by the older radical women (now 25-30) didn't make a way for the younger; newcomer female radicals have fewer illusions these days about what is in store for them anyway, and the life-styles of their predecessors offer little inspiration. Is it surprising then that we read in radical journals that they are dropping out of the movement in droves?

The female radical, or old-timey civil rights activist, is soon 'cooled out' of the movement in one of several ways and for several reasons: (1) if she is too competent and threatens male dominance (perhaps her credentials are too impeccable), she is given a high-level secretarial post (forceably ejected), or she is co-opted and perhaps even impregnated by a male honcho; (2) if she has suffered for several years, consistently being handed menial tasks, she may find, since she has been around so long, that she is one of the 'old guard', and she wonders why she isn't invited to steering committee meetings -- she quietly drops out; (3) some men are more direct; in squelching a paper questioning the role of black women, Stokely Carmichael said, 'The only position for women in SNCC is prone'. Most women are not long-suffering for the movement; they never really get in, and their brief passing is hardly noted. The radical female is cooled out, very simply, because she is not wanted politically, and she cannot proffer her secretarial skills as payment for inclusion in traditionally male activity -- political decision-making.

More sophisticated male leadership, a year or two ago, began to sense the rumblings of discontent. An effort was made to buy off female militants. They were included in some photographs of the 'leadership', given titles in the organization, or consistently laid by the second in command. Those who were married were advised by their husbands to take a year off and do research into the problems of women (meaning take off), or urged to enter one of the new, female 'coalition' groups. The last resort, winningly argued, is the We Need You; and, of course, everybody knows that those who fight for peace are the best, anyway. It parallels the Johnsonian whine to blacks, and it goes like this: there is a war; radical men are being cut down on all sides; we know there must be merit in what you say, but for the good of the movement, we ask you to wait, to defer to the higher aim of draft resistance; besides, if you will fight along with us in our battles, you will receive equality when we return from the serious front.

The weak position paper of the 1967 female caucus brought an anonymous response (New Left Notes, 4 December 67) from a male, a response we are still hearing and from both sexes. He suggested (and see how this would sound if the word 'black' were substituted) that: (1) there is danger in placing an underdeveloped woman in a position of leadership because her certain failure would only reinforce her sense of innate inferiority; (2) it is not possible for females to separate them-



selves from the oppressor class; (3) women must be more accepting and understanding than men; (4) women must first educate themselves and develop their capabilities; and finally, (5) when they marry, they should keep their maiden names. Translation: Nigger, you can't be an officer in our white civil rights group until you are properly educated; if you intend to challenge white racists, best do it lovingly, you have no identity of your own, so forget combinations in your own interests; but, we do think an Afro would be advisable.

On Southern plantations in the 'days of slavery', each member of a wealthy white family had attached to him, often for life, at least one black person who 'did for him'. In turn, the black derived from the master a commensurate status. Our analysis should be that it is the destiny of most women - no less the radical - to become, finally, some man's nigger. If these be harsh words they only bespeak a desperate future for the young radical female.

She is dehumanized and politically turned off and turned out. The Ramparts issue on Woman Power featured exceptional niggers who had attained positions of power formerly held by men. If one imagines a substitution of that article for one in Ebony on successes of black businessmen, our objection is clear. Ramparts on female liberation is Urban League logic.

Marilyn Webb's article in New Left Notes ('Women: We Have a Common Enemy', 10 June 68) deserves more space. It is dangerous because in its description of the female's lot in the movement it hits the mark perfectly, which only makes its damaged conclusion the more tempting. Marilyn tells it like it is with respect to women in the movement but she refuses to name the representatives of the sexual domination system, refuses to acknowledge that for a time at least, men are the enemy, and that radical men hold the nearest battle position. Instead, she emphasizes that 'In building a woman's movement, we clearly see that we have to be active within other, co-ed (if you will) movement organizations and action.' She attacks the mini-culture correctly because 'We are forced to view ourselves as commodities to be "sold" sexually', but she hastens to add that we aren't masculine, but instead we are attired in the 'colorful dress of a turned-on generation' -- the movement has baubles too. She is dismayed that movement marriages rarely last more than two years, but cannot elucidate the obvious reason. Lots of marriages last less than two years, and we assume that radical women catch on a little more quickly to the game, just at that crucial juncture when it's time to 'begin raising a family'; they want out before it's too late.

Finally, she invokes the experience of Vietnamese women as her only real programmatic suggestion -- the Third World Hang-up, with which we will deal later; to paraphrase: they have their 'freedom' because they took up arms to support an ideology they never developed, a political framework in which they never participated, and - get this - because they 'could not but identify (their struggle) with the common struggle for liberation.' Remember Fidel!

A movement of women which speaks to their needs, and which can mobilize their full political energies, may very well, as we shall propose, look quite different from SDS, SNCC, or the NLF. Any thorough radical analysis would, of course, incorporate a stance vis-a-vis the war, racism, and the Savage Society. But it may be a long and dark passage before ours should risk co-educational alliances or actions.

So the young radical woman does her secretarial tour of duty for the movement, drops out, or, finding that she is getting older, marries. If she marries out of the movement, she's in a position similar to that described in Part I. If she marries within the movement, she is faced with a comparable life style except that (1) she thinks she is already liberated by virtue of marriage to a movement guy, and (2) the movement man has, in addition to the standard male ploys, some extra, even more oblique, confusing, and 'convincing'. Since they married, in good part, on the basis of a shared and serious commitment, the movement itself then becomes reason for male domination. A radical woman, after all, is more likely to give in when the issue is draft resistance than when it is impressing the boss, although some of that goes on too. It may take two years before she ceases to hand out rhetoric about a 'liberated marriage which began several years before the license' and



recognizes that the style of her days is more nearly like that of her non-removal sisters than like her husband's. And female liberation literature, so far, offers her no alternative way to go.

## Women must work for female liberation first, and now

A respectable canon of new left philosophy to which we turn is that central theme that human beings, by combining in organizations, by seeking to participate in decision-making which affects their lives, can achieve a democratic society, and hence a life-experience perhaps approximating their potentiality.

Social life imposes on the consanguineous stocks of mankind an incessant traveling back and forth, and family life is little else than the expression of the need to slacken the pace at the crossroads and to take a chance to rest.

(Levi-Strauss)

We want to make a few tentative comments about the form of the marriage institution, for we hope that radical women will begin to turn from psychiatry to anthropology for insight about their oppressive sexual relationships. Family arrangements, as we all know, vary from culture to culture. While the female has a biological requirement for some support immediately after child-birth, anthropology suggests that the form of this support is not always that which we find institutionalized in the West -- namely, one man providing economic aid so that one female can be a full-time mother, with this relationship extended then, perhaps for a lifetime.

The institution of marriage, given us in the United States, was the pawn of other, more powerful, institutions. It is a potent instrument for maintaining the status quo in American Society. It is in the family that children learn so well the dominance-submission game, by observation and participation. Each family, reflecting the perversities of the larger order and split off from the others, is powerless to force change on other institutions, let alone attack or transform its own. And this serves the Savage Society well.

The family owes its characteristic features to the economic necessities of frontier America (nation building), its monogamous form to a statistical and cultural happenstance (monogamy seems to prevail where the sex ratio is about 50/50 and there is a pretense to democracy), and the monogamy is sustained by the Puritan ethic. The particular division of labor was designed to contribute to the industrial revolution, a requirement of the most powerful national institution. Levi-Strauss suggests that 'like the form of the family, the division stems more from social and cultural considerations than from natural ones'. He recalls the 'Nambikwara father nursing his baby and cleaning it when it soils itself' as a contrast to the European nobleman who rarely sees his children. And he notes that the 'young concubines of the Nambikwara chieftain disdain domestic activities and prefer to share in their husband's adventurous expeditions'. In the absence of household servants, most American émigré men first subdued one woman, and with her aid produced a family of servants sufficient at least to manage the homestead and offer him the leisure to participate in town politics and even revolutions.

Now, with birth control, higher education for women, and the movement itself, it is becoming clear to some women that the marriage institution, like so many others, is an anachronism. For unmarried women it offers only a sanctional security and the promise of love. The married woman knows that love is, at its best, an inadequate reward for her unnecessary and bizarre heritage of oppression. The marriage institution does not free women; it does not provide for emotional and intellectual growth; and it offers no political resources. Were it not for male-legislated discrimination in employment, it would show little economic advantage.

Instead, she is locked into a relationship which is oppressive politically, exhausting physically, stereotyped emotionally and sexually, and atrophying intellectually. She teams up with an individual groomed from birth to rule, and she is equipped for revolt only with the foot-shuffling, head-scratching gestures of 'feminine



guile'. We conceptualize the significance of the marriage institution this way:

<u>Marriage</u>	<u>Women</u>
Integration	Blacks

Marriage, as we know it, is for women as integration is for blacks. It is the atomization of a sex so as to render it politically powerless. The anachronism remains because women won't fight it, because men derive valuable benefits from it and will not give them up, and because, even given a willingness among men and women to transform the institution, it is at the mercy of the more powerful institutions which use it and which give it its form.

We would return to our relational model and suggest that some women will have to remove themselves totally from the marriage arrangement which insists that they love, in a predetermined style, their own personal masters. And married women will have to do this periodically to revitalize their commitment to their sex and to the liberation movement.

### **All-female communes for radical women**

Many younger, unmarried women live in all-female groups now. The problem, as we have mentioned earlier, is that these domiciles are not self-consciously arranged to serve political as well as personal needs. They are not a temporary stopping off place for women who need to re-evaluate their lives. They are no sanctuary from destructive male-female encounters. They are no base for female liberation work.

Some radical women, in deciding to live together, ought to fashion homes which have definite political goals. A woman, married or unmarried, could move into such a center for a period of time and be relieved of the terrible compulsion to one-up her sisters in dating, grooming, etc. The commune should decide on house rules, experiment with sexual relationships on an equal basis with men (that is, remove the bordello element from the place). The commune should be a center for women to live during decision periods in their lives. We all know about these crisis periods; most of the time we manage to suffer through them while at the same time carrying all the burdens of 'keeping face', maintaining some sexual life, etc. The commune would define itself as a female place. Innumerable experiments in living, political forays and serious and uninterrupted thinking could center in the commune.

While sexual and emotional alliances with men may continue to be of some benefit, the peculiar domestic institution is not. Only women can define what 'womanhood' might best be, and likewise men might better redefine themselves in the absence of a daily reminder of their unwarranted experience of masterdom. Theoretically, such women and men might, in the future, liberated from this master-slave hang-up, meet and work out a new domestic institution which better serves the interest of free men and free women. We do not feel compelled to offer any Utopian model for that institution, but we are certain that it will be designed most rapidly, and most reasonably, by liberated souls. Some women, then, and perhaps some men, will have to reject the present domestic model given us, destroy it, and build another.

And we consider this operation worthy of the time of radical women. Let us review briefly why this program at least parallels in importance the anti-draft, anti-imperialistic movements we all know. (1) People Get Radicalized Fighting Their Own Battles. For women, these are her chains, and she will ultimately invest more energy and in the process become radicalized, breaking them than attacking the other forms of colonialism men urge us to fight. (2) Pace of History Making. Men have accelerated their rate of history-making beyond humane proportions. With their slaves secure at home, they have the time to play abstractly and inhumanly with their technology and to make history more rapidly than they can effectively comprehend or control. Robbed of a faithful custodial class (women, blacks, etc.), they will be less effective, and time may finally overtake them so that where, they're at is also where it's at. Women who organize other women to slow male history-making are functioning, in this country, at their political best. (3) Benefits Accrue to the Movement. The goal of the new left is to dismantle out-



worn institutions and replace them with better arrangements. Presently, the energies of radical women are not wholeheartedly with this effort because it has no program which speaks to their needs. Women mobilized where they stand against the nearest oppressor, will make their most effective contribution to this process.

We cannot cover all the bases in such a paper. A few, perhaps the most pressing, deserve attention here.

## **Long-term goals vs. short-term tactics**

One of the serious flaws in most radical male thinking is the substitution of goals for tactics. The Columbia sit-ins, with all of their attendant anti-feminism, were guerrilla plays. It was a good show, and we all applauded from in front of our television sets. It lacked a tone, however, an important tone and thrust, which should accompany any such further operations. Women make the same mistake when they perform guerrilla theater at SDS conventions, and so it is important to look for a moment at the Columbia scene.

Everybody inside the buildings knew that they remained there only because the administration hesitated, foolishly, to mount its police attack. Nobody thought the students would actually hold Columbia, and subsequently administrators have dropped the guise of dialogue and moved in immediately with their troops. The action was groovy, but the retrospective analysis is misleading. That operation at Columbia cannot be cast parallel with sieges on Saigon, etc. But most movement men are unable to see it as merely a 'royal finger' given the establishment. Instead, they talk about occupation and sieges. And because they up the ante on their behavior, attempt to make it look like something it was not, women are pulled along as support troops, taken in by the rhetoric. A play is a play however you cut it. And if the men cannot admit that the movement cannot take tangible territory, women shouldn't fall into the trap. In radical journals, the tone of analysis should be: 'Well, we really shook them up for a while -- they fell for our revolutionary language and provided a good forum. The next operation, however, can't take the same form because they're on to our game.' A lot of movement men would prefer a Columbia 'siege' to telling their parents when to shove it. And I imagine that most of the women who perform guerrilla theater protests against male chauvinism would find it far more scary to, let us say, refuse to perform their traditional domestic tasks for movement men. Demonstrations in this country are still limited to two functions: (1) radicalizing the participants, and (2) getting a point across to the media or a constituency. As long as we remember this, men in the movement won't claim the prerogatives of participation in a real 'third world' battle, and women won't feel obligated, by falling into the analogy, to limit themselves to loading the metaphorical guns.

From looking around these days, it becomes obvious that the radicals of the early '60s do grow older. Most of them are still alive, much to their own surprise. And the wiser men among them are beginning to talk about programs which will keep the older troops in touch and in action. Women must do the same. When we begin to go about organizing, we will have to recognize that we are dealing with a number of constituencies and design our tactics accordingly. A radical confrontation for one group would be an unavailable option to another. I would like to cover briefly some topics which may serve in the overall strategy for female liberation.

## **Integration: the central problem**

Most women are integrated with men in an ongoing institutionalized setup. One or two all female meetings, or even one a month, will not begin to solve our problems or guide our programming intelligently. The particular need to get together is shared by the youngest and the older, married women who have children. We are all separated from each other. This does not mean that the constituency should meet together -- there is no little hostility among older women toward what they imagine to be their more liberated younger sisters, and the problems differ. The tactics will differ. But both groups need to plan programs in which women can meet for extended periods to talk about the political issues of female liberation. And this meeting, this talking, in itself, is more difficult than we had imagined.



pull us back into tow. It has been our past error to repress the political attraction we have for our own kind. It would be equally wrong to turn female communes into anything less than a tentative experiment with a new domestic arrangement; political content will not suffice to fill the need every human has for that place where one 'slackens the pace at the crossroads, and takes a chance to rest'. It will be in these communes, or their less rigorous counterparts in female rediscovery, that we may learn to design new living arrangements which will make our coexistence with men in the future all the more equal and all the more humane. And exploring the possibilities of non-elitist, non-colonial love may teach us forms of political strength far more valuable than guerrilla theater.

We have got to stop throwing around terms like 'fag', 'pimp', 'queer', and 'dike' to reassure men of our absolute loyalty to them. This is the language which helps to insure that each man has his female slave, and that each woman eventually becomes one.

Indirect male sniping, insinuating homosexuality is a horror which is bound to attend female liberation activity, has some interesting analogies in our movement experience. It's like the signals southern whites put out: 'If you leave a white and a black alone for five minutes, there's no telling what might happen.' And it's a lot like red-baiting. Our answers to red-baiting will serve us well here. The charge of homosexuality - which will be more openly voiced by non-movement males - stands for a fear of something greater, as did the charge of communism against southern blacks and whites getting together: that they might get together. An indigenous movement of any people determined to gain their liberation is a more serious threat than 'communism' or 'homosexuality', and the charge is merely a de-laying tactic to obstruct organization.

We should begin to talk about homosexuality; be prepared to defend against male sniping on the issue. Most importantly, we should not couch the issue in the language of 'affection' until we can define affection through the experience of our liberation and then stand by our knowledge, whatever that may come to be.

## **5. SOME CURRENT HASSLES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOVEMENT**

### **The co-ed model**

Several thoughtful writers have recently suggested that all-female groups be organized to fight corporate liberalism on the early Black Power model. That is, these new groups formed to attack the draft, racism, etc., would be distinguishable from traditional movement groups only in their all-female composition. Presumably, these groups would negotiate with others on a coalition, or as Marilyn Webb puts it, a co-ed basis. If there is any need at all for solely female political groups, this purposeful segregation by sex must then mean that some women consider themselves - if not an oppressed class - at least different from men in a politically relevant way. If men are to be permitted to continue defining the movement for us while we operate in these co-ed arrangements, why segregate at all, since we all agree that they do their thing better than we do, for now, anyway. I suspect that even the formation of such groups as Coretta King's implies something about the female condition other than anatomy.

Women should combine politically and define for themselves their enemy and describe the machinery of their oppression. We should not promise in advance that we will join any specific issue. We think that well organized women, supportive of each other, will carry their share.

### **The third world analogy**

The third world analogy has caused plenty of trouble in the radical male left. Looking to revolutionary movements in underdeveloped countries has encouraged a sort of one-upmanship desperation to act; and, much to its detriment, the left usually only mimics in what are essentially theatrical performances, the real life blood



and guts scene of revolutionary movements in action.

What is so important for women is that we not become trapped in this frenzied, often irrational behavior. The Third World Analogy is inappropriate to us. First, the conditions under which people live in ongoing revolutions are simply different from ours and call for different activity. Second, radical women who invoke the Third World Analogy are unaware of the role women have actually played in the Cuban, Vietnamese, and Algerian struggles; or, if they describe these roles accurately, they then romanticize, misquote, and generally push them off as something desirable, when in fact these roles are pawns of a historical circumstance - Imperialism - not chosen by those in revolt.

In female liberation literature we hear about three groups of women who allegedly 'won their freedom' or are winning equality by picking up guns and fighting for the national liberation of one or another country. Cuba, the most often cited case, did use women as troops, much as they are used in SDS. In the war, women had much the same status as the female in SDS, and now that the Cuban revolution has moved into its cultural phase, we know what Castro wants them to do: go home, cook, take care of the kids. It is true that many women are becoming doctors (Russia has more female physicians than male; this is the highest rank in the 'caring for' professions). Certainly a few are executives in the nationalized Ford Motors to the South. But the largest female group, the Women's Federation, 'does not crusade for the emancipation of women'. Of course, 'its main function is to implement government work policies' ('Cuban Women', by Mary Nelson, Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement, June 1968). Mary Nelson, who has just returned, tells us that nothing basic has changed in patterns of dominance between the sexes. OEO may provide public nurseries for working women before Castro gets hep. What's the big hangup with Cuba? Men still run it their own way, for their own ends.

Socialism, or even a commitment to socialism, is viewed by many American women as the panacea for their problems. Why doesn't anybody ever talk about the plight of women in the socialized Mid-Eastern or African nations?

Now Marilyn Webb is cool. She can strain the analogy between the US left and the NLF just enough to make it look reasonable for the American women, who can't be in the black thing, and want to do something, to think of themselves as Vietnamese. What we have got to recognize is that women living in Viet Nam face very different circumstances than our own. Their children, and they themselves, are being murdered daily, and a third of the population goes about missing a limb. Under constant military attack, it is necessary to defer designing new institutions in order to preserve life itself; Vietnamese women have no choice. We should admit that we are not in the same position. We who support draft resistance are not being literally shelled out of existence. And more to the point, women who merely support draft resistance are not doing all they can in what is an essentially devolutionary movement. In the United States, women ought to be organizing women, as their proper constituency, to add to the growing number of disaffected quarters. In a country which is on the offensive in the world, our job is to reorganize our institutions so that they are no longer viable instruments of colonialism and war. Marilyn tells us that Vietnamese women found out that the only way they can get equality is to participate in the national political struggle. The strict analogy between Viet Nam and the United States is more realistically phrased: American women would get a lot more equality if they gave militant support to our national struggle: to colonize, to murder, to enslave. The most proper third world analogy I have heard is the 'eerie, high pitched wail of the Algerian women'. That is already our own.

## Male chauvinism

Somebody very courageously put this phrase into the female manifesto at last year's SDS Convention, and ever since, women have been taking it back or redefining it to spare the male ego. There is great value in naming your enemy. The definition of the phrase goes: Surname of Nicolas Chauvin, soldier of Napoleon I, notorious for his bellicose attachment to the lost imperial cause: militant, unreasoning devotion to one's race, sex, etc., with contempt for other races, the opposite



sex, etc.: as, male chauvinism. The phrase makes some sense, and if you apply it to men in general, rather than to the nice guy you're living with (this comes later), that's more or less where it's at.

The argument over terminology really stands for a much more important proposition, one to which Carl Oglesby addressed himself some time ago. He presented a very significant speech in which he kept repeating to this effect: Let's stop talking about General Motors, the Poverty Program, or the Justice Department; let's call it by its name; it has a name, and that name is the System. We're not going to solve the problem by attacking General Motors; the system is the enemy, let's call it by its name. The drive for domination, be it genetic or learned, which so aptly characterizes the male sex, finds larger expression in our national posture. We may decide later, as the female liberation movement matures, that our real job is to dethrone the king - an entire sex bred for mastery - and replace it with an order which more closely corresponds with the traditional female approach: attention to personal needs, caring for others, making decisions on the basis of a multitude of human data. If this be our goal, we must, as must all oppressed people, assume for a time an adversary stance (unaccustomed for women) toward our oppressors. Since such a stance places a premium on winning, we are going to have to name what it is that we want to win, and against whom; that requires naming goals and the enemy.

In the life of each woman, the most immediate oppressor, however unwilling he may be in theory to play that role, is 'the man'. Even if we prefer to view him as merely a pawn in the game, he's still the foreman on the big plantation of maleville. And that plantation has a name. While 'male chauvinism' isn't sacred, if we're searching for a better name for the enemy, let's not de-escalate.

### **So-called female elitism and male liberation groups**

It turns out that men at the SDS convention this summer got hacked off having to drink beer waiting for the women to return from political discussion. They started talking about the oppressive aspects of the male roles given them. Like when a white person first realizes that racism hurts him too. Well, fine, if men want to form male liberation groups, they should go ahead. But what we must understand is that in the area of sex, a male liberation group could be to female liberation what 'SPONGE' is to the black revolution. That is, I wonder if these male groups will focus on supporting us, when we want them, in our attacks on the male order; or, will they attempt to liberate themselves at our further expense. From Susan Sutheim's report ('Women Shake Up SDS Session', Guardian, 28 June 68), the impulse for male liberation groups sounds reactionary, and in our community, when the term is used, it is often accompanied by a particularly vengeful smirk.

However, as we have already suggested, with a separation of the sexes, real or political, some men might come to a more humane understanding of what it means to be a man. And if this is the program the men intend to pursue, let them go it alone. We must remember that there is a great difference between an organization of the dominant and an organization of the oppressed, whatever sweet language attempts to fuse the two (as, for example, Johnson's grunting out 'We Shall Overcome').

Susan Sutheim, who wants to invite men to female liberation meetings, and who supports the idea of male liberation groups, assumes that the problem is limited to psychological flaws in sexual roles; in fact, the problem is political and does not call for desegregated soul searching. We don't need T-groups. And as one of the Canadian women has observed, men will not participate democratically in decision-making that disrupts their lives.

The hysterical and reactionary responses of men at the SDS convention this summer - the charges of female elitism and the call for male liberation groups - will serve their function with women who insist upon an NAACP approach to their condition: half-assed attempts to recapture some half-assed female territory.

## **6. SOME URGENT PRIORITIES**

As we begin talking to women about female liberation, most of them accept our des-



cription of our lot with little argument. But they do come on with honest fears about engaging in the movement, and they tell us how incompetent (inferior) they feel, how they lack self-confidence (have been brainwashed), how they don't have much time (got a lot of custodial tasks on the home front), and most important how they're scared.

Being afraid has been a genuine response of oppressed people to their initial encounter with a vision of liberation. As is always the case, discipline and organization are the antidote, the means by which the exploited are drawn out of the routine of their ghettos. We cannot meet fear with rhetoric or statistics. We must become ready to organize, support, and act.

As radical women, we must set the tone, and there are several things we can begin doing now. We can discuss the problems of organizing uncommitted women and designing for them support facilities which will free them up for political behavior. We can get clear about our own history. We should elevate our own, and there really are some groovy women in the movement. We can begin to think about our proper relationships to our derivative movements, to the men we know and to men as a class. The professionals among us can look into legal discrimination and the lies about our history. We can support the newsletter and the journal and write out and exchange our thoughts in these media. And, we can begin to think about organizing projects, pacing and fashioning them, so that they speak to American women about their condition and encourage them to join the movement.

A good US newsletter, **Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement**, has already started. It serves well the functions of rapid communication, morale-building, and reporting of organizational activity. Dee Ann Pappas has begun a journal which offers a forum for larger organizational issues, studies on women, the history of women, and female art. Marilyn Webb and others have already initiated some fascinating organizing projects.



# a personal summary

June 17, 1968

I had saved this particular evening for reviewing our paper, perhaps to add and change a word or two. But I cannot approach the task properly, because today I witnessed once more that sort of oppression which drives one back into the thick of the movement. And as I sit here in poorly controlled rage, I realize that there is one thing we have omitted from our paper which I must try to fill in now.

The media warn us daily of a national and even international Apocalypse. We who have experienced the movement - even as troops in the battles of others - know so well that for many people the Day of Doom has been the measure of their years and the only Revelation of their lives. Political and emotional devastation are the weird bread and wine - the vinegared communion - of the Damned. Our experience attunes us to these people, their lives, but they move among us, except when we know rage, only as metaphors for our understanding of the social order.

And in our paper we have not yet spoken of that indignation, that rage - perhaps the essence of militancy - which almost never finds its way into movement writing but which surely must be the impetus of our commitment. Tonight I am with the rage, an old friend now. And since for me, at any rate, that rage has always been the maelstrom in which I come to recall again my own alienation, my own political powerlessness, the peculiar prison of my female days, as well as my passion for my comrades, I want to share it in this context.

The occasion is one we all have known. I was writing earlier of a friend who had spent several months in jail. This morning I watched while a southern judge racked her again on another charge, and this one carrying a big penalty. No bail, no appeal -- off to the prisonhouse with one of the best and most beautiful of my generation and my sex. Can we allow this to be our Coda?

We gathered up her children and sent them to safety, out of reach of the greedy juvenile officers. My husband and I reordered her now silent house, locked the doors again. Because this rare, rare, white woman had become a sort of Che in another land than her own, the black community will pop off tonight. But we worry very little about our safety now, for this kind of rage makes one brave and negligent of the usual curious defenses. Carol Thomas felt it so often, herself moving with the doomed, was brave so often, was enraged so often, and now is racked by the Savage Society, as she so often had been before. Carol, my sister, they have got you again in that ugly place they build as a refuge from themselves.

We have not conned ourselves into political paralysis as an excuse for inaction -- we are a subjugated caste. We need to develop a female movement, most importantly, because we must fight this social order with all of the faculties we have got, and those in full gear. And we must be liberated so that we can turn from our separate domestic desperation - our own Apocalypse of the Damned - toward an exercise of social rage against each dying of the light. We must get our stuff together, begin to dismantle this system's deadly social and military toys, and stop the mad dogs who rule us every place we're at.

'I am my brother's keeper' is the cautious altruism of those who are themselves enchained. Rather: 'I Am My Brother's Brother, My Sister's Sister.' Women together, sustaining each other politically, restored to an affection for each other, and unburdening themselves of their struggle with men, must move to take that Savage Society apart.

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cover photo: socialist women marching in the early 1900's

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