

FA, Catella 4, 58

23 Sept 1974

My dear Rosa,

Your news about the women from the factory in Udine coming to you is really great and you must keep us informed about everything. We here are getting ready to have a stall in a market in London to begin propaganda for the wage, hopefully to spread to all parts of London and to other parts of the country. But it will be slow, and people are uncertain that at this point we must "cast our bread upon the water", that is, make propaganda as widely as we can so that women begin to take it up or come to us to help with what they are already doing. There are so many possibilities but forces are small. We shall be dependent on what Lotta Femminista does in terms of its mass activity. I know you are ambiguous about this, but it seems that the working class there has made the decision for you. Am I wrong? Perhaps I have misunderstood the Udine news.

I enclose a letter to Judith which you may find interesting if you have the time. The possibility of my making a whole lot of money in two weeks has fallen through completely and I'm very demoralised about it. Nor can I keep going away for weeks at a time and coming back. I always find some kind of a mess - almost three months in the spring of '73, 5 weeks in the spring of '74, and now Germany and then the meeting in NY on the 25th, and some speaking at least to pay my fare and ~~max~~ living expenses - the rent still has to be paid while I'm away. I am still wedded to this typewriter, which deeply depresses me.

The new printing of POW in English with the rise in price is now out. We've tried to see where we can make publicity here but unless we put time aside for that, it seems impossible. In any case it has begun to move in England as much as in the States and that is important. I want to change the biography for the cover. I think yours is a bit academic and mine too brief. It doesn't even mention the POW Collective. Can you shorten yours and take away at the same time the academic flavour? Then there would be a bit more room for Britain.

Love, in my usual haste,

Selma

P.S. The printing is 3000 copies but they have printed only 1000 covers that can be changed.

17 September 1974

My dear Judith,

I got your letter in Padova and Sallie's letter when I returned to England on the 8th Sept. I'll answer Sallie separately.

Your news is most encouraging. The Mother-Led Union is something we need more detailed information about - a report would be excellent for the next issue of the journal which becomes more popular with the second issue and will become even more popular with the third. We're even toying with the idea of cutting the size in half and coming out more regularly, but this is connected with having a stall in the market, wages for housework tea-cloths and perhaps mugs on sale, popular pamphlets, posters etc. To be there every week where women can get to know us and where we can get to know what's happening, we feel, is the next step for us. We're trying hard to maintain that delicate balance between getting involved with one particular set of women and throwing out general propaganda on the one hand and between acting on the streets and doing our theoretical work on the other. It is difficult. We sweat through meetings, but there is a very quiet elation/frustration after them.

Our collective has not grown in size but it's changed composition, and there is a good core of us now who are ready to slog our guts out and are getting clearer every day that what we do ~~must~~ must be unique to us, not only within the perspective. We also are losing that fear that if we do something and it doesn't succeed (I don't see how it can fail but there's a big difference between succeeding and not failing), that does not make us any less certain of our political perspective. Another problem is that we must continually rework our relation to the women's movement. We are less and less like anything there every day, and yet I feel strongly - and I think some women disagree - that we would be much weaker if that movement did not exist. I'm also anxious to be in touch with the women that movement attracts and anxious to influence that movement. That we have already done to a large degree. Everybody is discussing the housewife. Still, a good chunk of the movement is in something called the Women's Charter, which is about "equality" and making it easy for women to go out for waged work. We can't waste too much time attacking that but we have to say something. A continual living dilemma which we have to decide on tactically at every point.

There is no question that whatever you do there, is a great strength for us. By the way, you must immediately send us any information you have about the nurses. We are not involved with the nurses but are using their struggle to undermine the idea that service workers, housewives for example, can't strike.

Now to more practical matters. I agree that the newsletter is out for the time being. It will come up again, but we must use correspondence more. But we must also use the POW journal. The Canadian Women's Educational Press ordered 100 of each issue and sent back 50 of the first. The group you have been in touch with of Lesbian women - do they want copies of no.1? Not knowing that CUEP didn't want the 100 they ordered, we sent another 100 of no.2. WILL YOU PLEASE:- a. go to them and ask them for the money for the 50 of no. 1; b) take from them the 50 of no.2 unless they now want it. c) tell us what you want in addition to this. In any case I'm sending 50 with Bethx for you. I'm not worried if you don't sell them immediately, because I'm hoping to be in the States in the fall. More of this later.

~~Secondly~~ I want to make a general point about the journal. The tradition in Britain is not to spend money on politics and so we are having some difficulty selling the journal. There is also the fact that there isn't

much money around. We are publishing in English, and it seems to me that the journal can be useful to you there, and I'm absolutely certain that what you can sell there and how much propaganda you can make about it there is absolutely vital for our financial stability. To put a journal together with some regularity in terms of time and money is a big enterprise, and if it were not in English I doubt we would have launched it at all. If you and others feel that 40c wholesale and 60 retail (or whatever you want to sell it at) is too much, then you should say. I think we should put a N. American price on it for single issues next number and I'd like to hear what you think about this. This of course presumes that there will be news of other countries, and you can see by this second issue that international is very much mixed up with national. The editorial I think is too introverted, but that is a problem which we are aware we must overcome, and I think it will have a general appeal. If it does not, then please tell us so and why not, so we can begin to change its character if that is compatible with it being "British". But then if you look around at what else is published at this time in Britain it is not British. I get magazines and newspapers from the States which I've just stopped reading because I've heard it all before. (By the way, if there are other journals, etc., of which this is not true, please let us know!)

This moves me right into my trip to the States, because one of the things I would be coming to accomplish is to put the journal on the map so to speak. I want very much to come for the meeting on the 25th October, but there must be some way of getting a lot of money very fast from the Establishment. I've hardly earned any money in the last year. As it happens ~~wxy~~ for strange circumstances I'm still able to live. But capital doesn't work that way. Silvia is trying to get me some bread all in a lump and whatever else can be ~~pxk~~ picked up quickly and quietly without my coming back to Britain as a liability. If that comes off I shall get a 22-45 day excursion flight and ~~wxy~~ among other things a public meeting in Toronto is on the agenda.

It seems to me that you all can have a smacking good public meeting in Toronto before that, ~~fxm~~ going by your letter. A panel of women, three or four, directly related to what you are doing, or more general using that as an illustration of what you have to say.

I'm glad the posters found approval but, my dear, they were not for giving away but for selling! We were charging 10p. here - 25c - and you might be able to get more than that. Anything we send is for selling. We are completely capitalistic!

By the way, the group of Lesbian women may want to mimeograph the article on lesbianism in issue no. 1 as an advert for the journal and as good propaganda for themselves.

Another aside: if there is anyone coming this way, do please ask them to bring a pile of the Mother Led Union propaganda to circulate in the women's movement here and on our stall. At the Edinburgh national women's conference we were the only ones who had German, French and Italian material as well as our own. We were very proud of that and felt also that it expressed our uniqueness - and our power.

There is a sentence in your letter on p.2 "As to questions such as the differences between organisational and political autonomy, etc., I remain unclear..." that struck me. It is one of the questions that is ~~wxy~~ on the agenda everywhere and especially here for the Big Flame ^{on this} women. BF has grown considerably. They have just put out a pamphlet which begins by

distinguishing between working class and bourgeois reformism (presumably Allende was a working class reformist). The women in BF are looking at us not because of this but because we seem to have things to say about working class struggle which, being feminist, are more to the point even for men. Can these who are feminist among them afford to leave them men? This is not only a general political question but a highly personal one. As I look around, I see that even those of us who have not chosen to, have found ourselves outside of the male ~~xxx~~ dominated social milieu and in the process of pursuing our own politics. For those who ~~xx~~ are more far-seeing or more sensitive, I think the question of organisational vs. political autonomy is sometimes perceived for what it inevitably becomes - social autonomy. And in a man's world, social autonomy for women has at least strong overtones ~~xxxx~~ of social isolation from men. I think this is a question that should be publicly explored and one I hope the POW collective will discuss. (We'll be having a rap session every other week now for those and only for those who want to come. The sexual question is still wide open as far as I'm concerned, and Ruth also feels it's time we found some things out and broadened our politics in this vital direction.) I must here add that for the first time in the last few weeks I've discovered that breaking from men, making your own politics and not acknowledging their existence politically or rather not concentrating on it debating, discussing, exchanging information with them, is deeply frightening to them to the point where they call it sectarian. Not so far removed from the men in Rome who tried to beat us saying that since we met alone we were fascist.

One of the most important ways, it seems to me, that this can be dealt with politically is to spread our political perspective to sections of the working class who are not women so that we ~~xx~~ have more power. That sounds like a direct contradiction with what I said above, but it's not. RACE TODAY has been an enormous source of power for us here and I think has helped to get the Black Women's Group off the ground, another source of power for a largely white women's collective. We have a milieu, while each of us has complete political and organisational autonomy. What I'm really saying is that it's the white men who tend to resist because they don't have a movement outside of the factory to which they can relate. I think RT can help in other countries which are English-speaking. I still felt in Canada (and of course in NY) that the white men who "understand" our perspective see it really subsumed in theirs. It is not. This we have not made clear. As we clarify this, breaking organisationally and politically is not so difficult because we move not to less power, as it appears now, but to more power. The social implications, however, remain and I just don't know what the hell to do about it if we ~~xx~~ aren't prepared to be gay, for whatever reason. I have in the back of my mind that the pol and org. break on a massive scale will pave the way for the transcendence of this very fundamental problem and nothing else will.

I hope this letter is not too jumbled and unclear. In some parts I'm thinking out loud, and in any case I have at the back of my mind that I'll be seeing you soon and we can talk. My six weeks in Italy were not happy but they were restful and now that I'm ~~hope~~ I'm happy and rested and very enthusiastic about the coming months. I'll probably be going to Germany mid-October (Rosa was there in the spring but could not speak at every city. I was to be with her and am glad that we divided rather than duplicated the work). If Silvia and ~~the~~ Jane are able to arrange for me to make some bread I'll go almost immediately after to NY and have something more concrete to report about Europe. // I'm glad Silvia is close at hand to give you the support you'll need during a critical time, and I'm hoping very much that I'll be there to give you the support in person that I feel at a distance. Love and power, but that's a tauntingly, power is love.