

Imperialism Highest Stage of Women's Oppression

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EDITORIAL

It is easy for the adherents of Mao Tse-tung or whichever variant of his “thought” to declare that “women hold up half the sky” and feel proud of their understanding of the important role which women have played in the weather. Unfortunately, a line of poetry is no substitute for scientific investigation, and the followers or conciliators with Mao have little else to say on the matter. (Do bourgeois women hold up half the sky, too?) Engels is tossed aside with the same vigour as the other classics of Marxism-Leninism. Women are urged to take jobs in the factories and join in the “revolutionary,” i.e., trade union, struggle. The followers and conciliators of Mao ignore the double character of the oppression of women:

a) the oppression of women as workers is treated with the same disdain as the economists treat all political questions as they feast their eyes on the tail of the spontaneous movement of the working class and petty bourgeoisie. The economists pay lip service to a few revolutionary slogans, declare a party, and cover their rancid work with “*mere eyewash*” as Stalin put it. Their desire for reforms at the cost of making revolution places them squarely in the camp of reaction, which, as history has repeatedly shown, is in the business of dispensing this or that reform to buy off the workers’ movement when it threatened to go beyond the scope of the defensive struggle. By painting the revolution as the successive accumulation of the fruits of a series of reformist struggles, the economists paint socialism as capitalism with more frills, more pay, more pensions and less “Trudeau measures.” They refuse to prepare the proletariat for revolutionary work, for the hard struggle and the sacrifices which will have to be made, for a struggle which produces reforms as by-products and not the goal, out of the bourgeoisie’s fear and not “good will.” The economists are working to reinforce the capitalist system by concentrating the attention of the proletariat upon reforms.

By working to reinforce wage slavery, the economists will never aid in the abolition of the wages system. They will never aid in the liberation of women as workers.

b) the oppression of women as women, their sexual and domestic oppression, is ignored by the followers and conciliators of Mao Tse-tung in an even more blatant fashion. The economists are in mortal fear of simply raising this question, as it has links with the oppression of women as workers which they are incapable of understanding. For

the economists, to raise the question of the specific oppression of women is to capitulate to feminism, just as raising the right to self-determination for the Native people (in the economists' eyes this means granting the Native people the right to wage a struggle other than "the economic struggle against the employers and the government," and the right to lead this struggle themselves and not under the hegemony of the opportunists, is capitulating to "bourgeois nationalism."

The economists have only one thing to say to women, "get a job." As the texts in this issue demonstrate, this plays into the hands of the feminists. The economists' ignoring of the specific oppression of women has left this area to the exclusive domain of the female ideologues of the imperialists, who delight in attacking the proletariat and the proletarian revolution in countless forms. They declare that "women are the revolutionary class" and do not need the aid of proletarian men in their struggle. Some declare the women's struggle must be waged against men. But whatever their strategy, all are clearly aimed at preventing the proletariat from accomplishing its historic role.

This issue of *Lines of Demarcation* deals with these, and other, questions. The texts published here are taken from material which will appear in book form later this year. Although these texts are not in final form, we want to submit them for study and discussion because these questions, as so many others, have not been seriously raised for many, many years. Capitalism's highest stage, imperialism, has changed the character of the working class, as it changed the character of capital, merging industrial and financial into finance capital. These changes have implications for women workers. The great apparatus which finance capital requires to keep track of its investments and the fierce competition among them for the division of the surplus-value extracted from the productive workers has created a large stratum of workers to fulfill these tasks. This stratum is largely women.

The decaying and parasitic character of imperialism has produced decaying and parasitic theories on the composition of the working class under imperialism. These theories seek to dilute the proletariat with various petty bourgeois. The time is ripe for the Marxist-Leninist line to be affirmed in Canada.

The major section which is not included here investigates Engels' classic work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in the light of the 100 years of anthropological work which has

been done since Engels wrote. Readers who will wait, hoping for us to present findings which are at variance from those of Engels, will wait a long time indeed. No matter how the bourgeoisie may try and twist the facts, no matter how many expeditions they have sent out in search of tribes where everyone is homosexual, or where the oppression of women is “natural,” they have failed in disproving the work of the great comrade of Marx. The works of Frederick Engels will stand long after the economists have lost their last strike and the radical feminists have died off leaving no heirs. The work of Engels will last long after the plastic covers of 1 billion little red books have disintegrated.

Working Women, on International Women’s Day:

Struggle for the party!

Expose the chauvinist character of Mao Tse-tung thought!

Workers of all countries, unite!

8 March 1979,
Bolshevik Union

WORKING WOMEN

Women Under Competitive Capitalism

A. Women in Europe Enter Capitalist Production

The history of the peasant woman in Europe is a history of toil, drudgery, and oppression. As the feudal system gave way to the epoch of the bourgeoisie, peasant women continued in the tradition of providing an extraordinary amount of labour to support themselves, their families, and in fact the entire society. And their labour was performed within the context of the narrow and crushing heritage of patriarchy, which was the final and absolute dominance of the elder man within the family.

Agriculture was the chief form of livelihood of the masses of people in Western Europe, and the women were indispensable in their work as agriculturalists. and remained so up until the peasant masses themselves migrated away from their farms and into the young cities of the industrial revolution.¹ In both England and France, the women produced the bulk of the country's food supply, because they were responsible for the entire operation of dairy products (milking the cows, churning butter, and making cheese); for the growing of flax and hemp, for milling corn, for caring for the chickens and turkeys, for raising pigs. and for doing the gardening.²

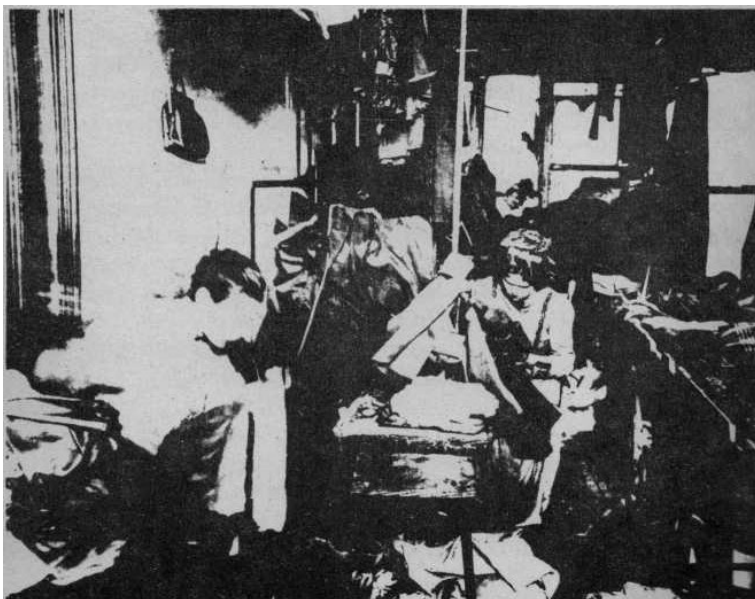
With the growing impoverishment of the peasant economy, textiles became the first capitalist enterprise to intrude upon the lives of the peasants.³ As in the case of agriculture, women's productive role was indispensable in the home industry of textile manufacture, where the roots of capitalist accumulation can be found. Merchants would travel among the rural communities providing raw materials and tools and then purchasing finished cloth at a profit. The division of labour within the home, to create the finished product, was quite standard throughout Europe: the man did the weaving and the woman did the spinning, and each apprenticed the children of his/her own sex in the craft. The children also did the picking, cleaning, drying and carding of the cotton.⁴ The man, however, was always the head of the production unit.⁵ Wool spinning was much less lucrative than cotton spinning, but both were engaged in both for domestic use and for the market.⁶ Women who were not married often relied entirely on spinning for their living — in England they were called “spinners.”⁷

The textile industry, like agriculture, was a family industry. Each family eked out its own existence on its own plot of land, and labour was divided within each family but the division of labour was reduplicated from family to family. The ownership of the property rested with the elder man, the patriarch, and his property rights gave him undisputed authority within the family. Thus, although the masses of women engaged in daily backbreaking toil, including not only the essential production of goods for survival but also all of the childcare, the cooking, the cleaning and so forth, they were chained to the home in silence and subjugation, their lives were lives of domestic slavery.

The crushing weight of the patriarchal family is found throughout the world where the peasant economy has emerged from a feudal heritage, varying only in degree from one country to another. In most European countries ownership of land and property was forbidden to married women; in tsarist Russia, no woman could own land, whether or not she was married.⁸ When women worked for wages, the wages were much lower than those of men — this was often formally fixed by law.⁹ Outside of agriculture and textiles, the most common way for a woman to earn money was to become a domestic servant or a charwoman.¹⁰ When women did earn money, the wages became a part of the household and the man was the ultimate authority in the household.¹¹ The powerful impact of religious superstition reinforced the position of the patriarch in this regard. Young married women were subjected to the authority not only of their husbands but also of their fathers-in-law, because European custom generally dictated that a young bride went to live in the household of her husband. Therefore, whereas the man experienced a certain sense of acceptance and continuity throughout his productive life, the woman was often displaced into an atmosphere of domination by hostile in-laws.¹²

An old English folk ballad summed up the lot of the woman: “A slave to her father until she’s a wife, a slave to her husband the rest of her life.”

The “putting-out system,” which was the first penetration of capitalism into the European countryside, touched the most removed pockets of peasant society. Although it touched peasant life at a generally later historical period in France than it did in England, in France it was the basis of production by the end of the eighteenth century.¹³ The effect of this historical transformation was to increase the productive role of women in the society as a whole, and to lay the basis for the general introduction of the female sex into the brutal and



The putting out system in the clothing industry

miserable sweatshops of the industrial revolution. The basis was also laid for the extremely poor rates of pay which women were to receive in the factories. Records show that women's textile products made on the peasant homestead commanded about half the price of those of the men.¹⁴

With the introduction of the spinning jenny and other machines into textile manufacture, the manufacturing period — as was called the period during which the textiles were made by hand — gave way to "domestic industry," or the operation of machines by rural workers scattered throughout the countryside.¹⁵ Precisely because machinery had been introduced into the picture, the exploitation of women and children was intensified.¹⁶ It must be stated here that child labour in capitalist industry was a logical outgrowth of the historical role of peasant children in participating in production with their parents. Bringing their children into the workplace situation was the only thinkable solution, at first, for the women who had always worked side by side with their children as part and parcel of rearing them.¹⁷ It was only later that the untelling abuses of child labour were called to public attention and then outlawed.

Marx explains:

Along with the development of the factory system

and of the revolution in agriculture that accompanies it, production in all the other branches of industry not only extends, but alters its character. In contrast with the manufacturing period, the division of labour is thenceforth based, wherever possible, on the employment of women, of children of all ages, and of unskilled labourers, in one word, on cheap labour, as it is characteristically called in England. This is the case not only with all production on a large scale, whether employing machinery or not, but also with the so-called domestic industry, whether carried on in the houses of the workpeople or in small workshops. This modern so-called domestic industry has nothing, except the name, in common with the old-fashioned domestic industry, the existence of which pre-supposes independent urban handicrafts, independent peasant farming, and above all, a dwelling-house for the labourer and his family. That old-fashioned industry has now been converted into an outside department of the factory, the manufactory, or the warehouse.

...The exploitation of cheap and immature labour-power is carried out in a more shameless manner in modern Manufacture than in the factory proper. This is because the technical foundation of the factory system, namely, the substitution of machines for muscular power, and the light character of the labour, is almost entirely absent in Manufacture, and at the same time women and over-young children are subjected, in a most unconscionable way, to the influence of poisonous or injurious substances. (*Capital*, vol. 1, Moscow 1967, pp. 434-5)

To the degree that the revolutionary new machinery replaced manufacture, the exploitation of women was increasingly intensified. This is because the effect of the introduction of machinery was to lighten the physical muscle-power demanded of the worker, such that it was no longer imperative that men be hired to perform certain specific tasks and women were easily substituted for them. And, of course, women could be hired at a far lower price; and because their economic situation was more desperate, since women even more so than men felt responsible for the survival and support of their children, they were considered to be more malleable. Marx quotes Lord Ashley as having said:

Mr. E., a manufacturer... informed me that he employed females exclusively at his power looms... gives a decided preference to married females, especially those who have families at home dependent on them for support; they are attentive, docile, more so than unmarried females, and are compelled to use their utmost exertions to procure the necessities of life. Thus are the virtues, the peculiar virtues of the female character to be perverted to her injury — thus all that is most dutiful and tender in her nature is made a means of her bondage and suffering. (As quoted in *Capital*, vol. 1, Moscow 1967, pp. 379-80)

Marx explains that not only did the introduction of machinery encourage the employment of women, but it also increased the degree of exploitation of the working class because now the capitalist was able to hire the whole family and pay each labourer less than the price which it would cost to support the entire family through hiring only one labourer.

In so far as machinery dispenses with muscular power, it becomes a means of employing labourers of slight muscular strength, and those whose bodily development is incomplete, but whose limbs are all the more supple. The labour of women and children was, therefore, the first thing sought for by capitalists who used machinery. That mighty substitute for labour and labourers was forthwith changed into a means for increasing the number of wage-labourers by enrolling, under the direct sway of capital, every member of the workman's family, without distinction of age or sex. Compulsory work for the capitalist usurped the place, not only of the children's play, but also of free labour at home within moderate limits for the support of the family.

The value of labour-power was determined, not only by the labour-time necessary to maintain the individual adult labourer, but also by that necessary to maintain his family. Machinery, by throwing every member of that family on to the labour-market, spreads the value of the man's labour-power over his whole family. It thus depreciates his labour-power. To purchase the labour-power of a family of four workers may, perhaps, cost more than it formerly did to purchase the labour-power of the head of

the family, but, in return, four days' labour takes the place of one, and their price falls in proportion to the excess of the surplus-labour of four over the surplus-labour of one. In order that the family may live, four people must now, not only labour, but expend surplus-labour for the capitalist. Thus we see, that machinery, while augmenting the human material that forms the principal object of capital's exploiting power, at the same time raises the degree of exploitation. (*Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, pp. 372-3)

Marx explains with brilliance and clarity that the bourgeoisie exploited women in the textile industry to the absolute limit that could be achieved. It was only then that the bourgeoisie drove the textile workers into the cities, centralizing them and creating a large-scale urban proletariat. Men and women were dumped indiscriminately into the factories, in filthy and dangerous conditions which left little room for accepted standards of social morality.

The cheapening of labour-power, by sheer abuse of the labour of women and children, by sheer robbery of every normal condition requisite for working and living, and by the sheer brutality of over-work and night-work, meets at last with natural obstacles that cannot be overstepped. So also, when based on these methods, do the cheapening of commodities and capitalist exploitation in general. So soon as this point is at last reached — and it takes many years — the hour has struck for the introduction of machinery, and for the henceforth rapid conversion of the scattered domestic industries and also of manufactures into factory industries.

An example, on the most colossal scale, of this movement is afforded by the production of wearing apparel.

...At last the critical point was reached. The basis of the old method, sheer brutality in the exploitation of the workpeople, accompanied more or less by a systematic division of labour, no longer sufficed for the extending markets and for the still more rapidly extending competition of the capitalists. The hour struck for the advent of machinery. The decisively revolutionary machine, the machine which attacks in an equal degree the whole of the numberless branches of this sphere of production,

dressmaking, tailoring, shoemaking, sewing, hat-making, and many others, is the sewing-machine. (*Capital*, vol. I, Progress, pp. 442-43)

And the advent of the sewing machine was to revolutionize the living conditions of the working class.

The new machine hands are exclusively girls and young women. With the help of mechanical force, they destroy the monopoly that male labour had of the heavier work, and they drive off from the lighter work numbers of old women and very young children. The overpowering competition crushes the weakest of the manual labourers. The fearful increase in death from starvation during the last 10 years in London runs parallel with the extension of machine sewing. (*Ibid.*, p. 444)

“By the excessive addition of women and children to the ranks of the workers,” Marx continued, “machinery at last breaks down the resistance which the male operatives in the manufacturing period continued to oppose to the despotism of capital.” (*Ibid.*, p. 379)

The despotism of capital seized upon the productive role of women, their indispensable role in using their muscles and energies towards the survival and support of their families, towards the end of primitive capital accumulation. Women, being in a weaker and more vulnerable bargaining position in terms of the sale of their labour power, were squeezed for every last dollar of surplus value which they could provide for the bourgeoisie. They were more hesitant to organize their resistance because they were more desperate for their jobs.¹⁸ The history of the capitalist system cannot be written without writing of the history of women workers in it. It is no wonder, then, that Marx and Engels wrote so extensively about the plight of women workers when they wrote their masterpieces on the birth and the laws of the capitalist system.

Let us examine somewhat more closely the fact that machinery more and more supersedes the work of men. The human labour, involved in both spinning and weaving, consists chiefly in piecing broken threads, as the machine does all the rest. This work requires no muscular strength, but only flexibility of finger. Men are, therefore, not only not needed for it, but actually, by reason of the greater muscular development of the hand, less fit for it

than women and children, and are, therefore, naturally almost superseded by them. Hence, the more the use of the arms, the expenditure of strength, can be transferred to steam or water-power, the fewer men need be employed; and as women and children work more cheaply, and in these branches better than men, they take their places. In the spinning-mills women and girls are to be found in almost exclusive possession of the throstles; among the mules one man, an adult spinner (with self-actors, he, too, becomes superfluous), and several piecers for tying the threads, usually children or women, sometimes young men of from eighteen to twenty years, here and there an old spinner thrown out of other employment. At the power-looms women, from fifteen to twenty years, are chiefly employed, and a few men; these, however, rarely remain at this trade after their twenty-first year. Among the preparatory machinery, too, women alone are to be found, with here and there a man to clean and sharpen the carding-frames. Besides all these, the factories employ numbers of children — doffers — for mounting and taking down bobbins, and a few men as overlookers, a mechanic and an engineer for the steam-engines, carpenters, porters, etc.; but the actual work of the mills is done by women and children. This the manufacturers deny....

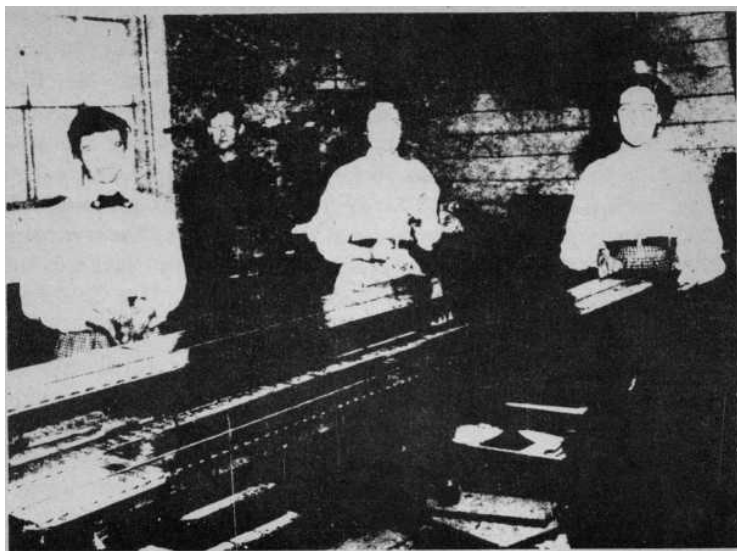
Of 419,590 factory operatives of the British Empire in 1839, 192,887, or nearly half, were under eighteen years of age, and 242,296 of the female sex, of whom 112,192 were less than eighteen years old. There remain, therefore, 80,695 male operatives under eighteen years, and 96,599 adult male operatives, *or not one full quarter* of the whole number. In the cotton factories, 56 1/4 per cent; in the woollen mills, 69 1/2 per cent; in the silk mills, 70 1/2 per cent; in the flax-spinning mills, 70 1/2 per cent of all operatives are of the female sex. These numbers suffice to prove the crowding out of adult males. But you have only to go into the nearest mill to see the fact confirmed. (Engels, "The Condition of the Working-Class in England," MECW 4:434-6)

Women poured into the textile mills everywhere in the industri-

alizing world. In tsarist Russia, one of the most backward of the industrializing countries, 38% of the textile workers in 1887 were women, and of the 192,000 female factory workers, 84% were in the textile industry.¹⁹ In France, the textile industry towards the mid-nineteenth century was the most important aspect of industrial production and the vast majority of women who worked in industry were working in textiles.²⁰ In 1866, 30% of the total industrial labour force in France was female²¹ — a percentage of the workforce not reached in the twentieth century until the 1950's. In the textile industry in that year, women represented 45% of the total labour force.²²

The sewing-machine was invented in 1846, and the foot treadle in 1851.²³ At first women tried to own sewing machines in their own homes in order to continue to earn their livings by making clothes, as they had been doing for so long, as their families had counted on for so many generations. But these individual women, engaged in petty domestic production, could not compete with the young bourgeoisie, which was buying the sewing machines and sending the home producers into impoverishment. Aside from renting a sewing machine and bringing cloth home to make garments on a piece-work basis — a form of exploitation which has been widely used from that time since in periods of hardship — women had only one choice: to follow the sewing machine into the factory. This was a great historical journey, one which Marx described as a turning point in the industrial revolution itself.

Although by far the largest number of women were employed in the textile and garment industries, the industrial revolution drew many women into other industries, such as shoe and hat manufacturing.²⁴ These are further cases to prove that women followed the newly invented machines into the factories themselves, to do the kind of work in industry which they had been doing at home for centuries. Where women used to sew shoes and make hats before the advent of



machinery, now they sought their survival by slaving from morning till night in the shoe and hat factories which had usurped their older forms of labour. In the early days of the twentieth century, the canning factories were likewise to replace home canning, and the labour in these factories was very heavily female.²⁵

Although these industries employed by far the most women, there were other industries which employed 10%, 20%, or even a higher percentage of women as well: chemical factories, metallurgy, lime, brick, and glass.²⁶ In fact, women went to work wherever they would be hired, and capitalists hired them wherever wages were pitiful, hours were long, and working conditions were filthy. The bourgeoisie had not yet decided that it was “unfeminine” to slave behind a machine for sixteen hours at a stretch while children were left untended. The laws of capitalism operated everywhere: England, France, Germany, tsarist Russia, and the newer industrializing countries in North America. The pattern was the same everywhere: whole families employed in the mills and the factories from morning till late at night, dangerous and filthy working conditions, and the threat of starvation as the family farm was no longer able to secure the survival of the masses.

B. Women Migrate to Canada

Canada, of course, did not have the history of feudalism from

which capitalism in Europe emerged. The colonizing farmers in Canada whose settlement pushed the Native people further west and north played a very different historical role from that of the peasant families of eighteenth-century England and France. And women who settled in Canada were not victims of the ancient feudal patriarchal traditions to the same extent as were European women. Their extremely important productive role therefore had more impact in terms of giving them a higher status within the family and even within the society at large. But this did not negate the fact of their oppression within the family; it was still a patriarchal family, and the elder man still had final authority.

In New France, a large *habitant* family usually occupied a small one-room dwelling, together with some pets and chickens.²⁷ The room included a table, some benches, a bed and a fireplace. Women spent day and night cooking, sewing, doing the laundry, tending the garden — this took most of the daylight hours in the summer — taking care of the livestock, nursing and teaching. Their principal duty, however, was to have many children in order to people the colony. Men outnumbered women by a large majority, and economic penalties against men were serious if they did not marry. Widows were rare (because they remarried so quickly) and spinsters were even rarer. Large families were expected. Women married at twelve and thirteen years old and kept on bearing children throughout their lives.²⁸ Married women whose husbands were businessmen usually became permanent partners in the business.²⁹ For those women who were not married, there were two choices: domestic service (until marriage) and the nunnery. The nunnery, which offered opportunities for varied productive work and protection in case of illness and old age, was an attractive opportunity for many women who sought to avoid the hardships and travails of married life in New France.³⁰ But although much has been written about the nuns of New France, nuns actually remained a very small proportion of the population.³¹ And as for domestic service, employers of servants complained bitterly because the pull of marriage was so strong that servants were hard to keep.³²

In Upper Canada, as in New France, the basic economic unit was the toiling family engaged in autonomous production. Every member of the large extended family worked from sunrise to sundown towards the survival of the family and, in general, these families produced enough to ensure their own self-sufficiency. The survival of this family unit, as in New France, was unthinkable without the work

of women. Women worked together with their children doing the cooking, the laundry, the spinning, the sewing, the gardening, tending the livestock, the harvesting and preservation of food, and the baby care.³³ As well, they sought to escape isolation through being active in their churches, through quilting bees, or simply through meeting each other and chatting in the course of drawing water, washing their clothes in the river, and tending livestock.³⁴ Single women were often employed as domestic servants for the Upper Canadian aristocracy, and as such they lacked the smallest degree of freedom in their personal lives. And they were often expected to be the sexual playthings of their employers. If this was discovered, there was only one more place for the woman to go: the gutter, and prostitution.³⁵

Despite the vanguard historical importance of factory work for women in the nineteenth century, domestic service remained by far the largest occupational category of women until the beginning of the twentieth century.³⁶ Second to that was dressmaking and seam-stressing, which continued to be so until the garment industry had taken firm hold in the streets of Toronto, Hamilton and Montreal.³⁷

New France combined a feudal heritage with a pioneer heritage, and Upper Canada escaped the feudal heritage entirely. Yet when we begin to describe the history of the industrialization of Canada, it becomes clear that the similarities with the European experience are far more significant than the differences. Women and men were drawn off the farm as they followed the sewing machine into the factories. Textiles and garments were the most important industries to form the basis of the industrialization of Canada, and both hired a very large number of women. In fact, in Canada and the United States women often left the farm for the factory earlier than men did, because there were more opportunities for agricultural wage labour for men on the farm.³⁸ Capitalists in the infant textile industry sought to recruit labour into the textile mills by reassuring the agricultural interests that the hiring of such labour would not interfere with men's wage labour in agriculture but that women and children could enter the mills instead. Aside from that, many men were needed to push on further west and pioneer the new land.³⁹ Thus, in the very beginnings of industrial manufacture in North America, it was the women and children who were the first wage-workers whereas the men were still engaging in pettier forms of production on the farms.

In addition, the textile mills often attracted single women who looked to factory work as an opportunity to leave home and be on

their own. They stayed in boarding houses and sent a part of their wages back home. This was a respectable way for single women to pass their time while waiting for marriage.⁴⁰ In some textile mills in Quebec and Ontario, 90% of the employees were women. The new social independence of these women gave rise to a new sense of collectivity and militancy; some of the first union organization in North America took place among mill-working women who lived in boarding houses.⁴¹

Working conditions in the mills were filthy and dangerous. Pregnant women worked right up until the moment of childbirth, sometimes giving birth right on the factory floor. Yet despite the terrible risks involved in demanding their basic rights, strikes were frequent in this primitive industry, and they were often supported by unions in other cities. Women of that era were not yet conditioned to think that a woman does not belong in the thick of the process of production. Working women were productive, and working women were militant; they held out in many desperate defensive struggles even though striking meant starvation and unemployment.

Thousands of women chose this form of work in preference to domestic service, which long remained the largest occupational category for women in Canada. Dangerous and unpleasant as conditions in the textile factories were, factory work offered women freedom and independence after the factory bell sounded; they were not sold entirely to the whims of a domestic employer, they were free to conduct their social life in their free hours, and so forth. Domestic work was often left to women who were not fortunate enough to find work in the textile factories.⁴²

Just as women followed the spinning trade out of the home and into the textile mills, so they followed other aspects of the clothing trade into the factory as well. Women had long done hand-sewing, stitching, and tailoring at home as part of their contribution to the livelihood of their families. The concept of a woman at home cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children but making no productive contribution to the livelihood of the family, was a concept unknown to the labouring masses during that period. When these needlework tasks moved out of the home and into the factory, the women followed them: tailoresses, milliners, seamstresses, vest makers, dress-makers, hat trimmers, flower makers, and shoe makers.⁴³ And when the women entered the factory to do this work, wages dropped; often men (tailors, for example) protested bitterly against the entry of

women into “their” trades because it was causing a crisis in their own wages.⁴⁴ But this was not the fault of the women, who at a very early date began to organize for higher wages for what they were doing.⁴⁵

Wages were low, hours were long, and employers used the cheapest available labour — immigrant women. Wages were constantly depressed, so that women had to keep on increasing the hours that they worked in order to keep their incomes at a constant level. Some women were kept at such a starvation level that they had to turn to prostitution to stay alive; next to domestic workers, factory workers were the ones who most commonly turned to prostitution.⁴⁶

The garment factories were not only the site of 13-hour days and \$.50-per-day wages, but also extremely dangerous work. Machines rarely had safety guards. Fingers, skirts, and hair got caught in the machines and many women were killed or injured.⁴⁷ More often than not, work was done on a piece-work basis: workers were paid by the number of items they produced rather than by the hour. This meant that they had to work at breakneck pace all day long in order to earn enough for their families to survive. All workers were expected to keep up with the production rates of the fastest-working employee; aside from making conditions even more miserable, this fostered division and competition among the workers in each factory.⁴⁸

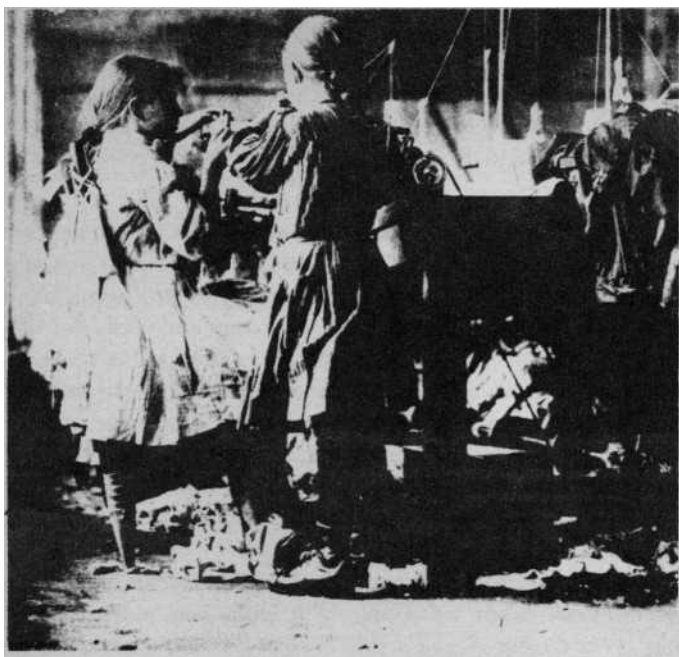
Women Workers and the Family

Marx and Engels, in describing the history of the capitalist system and hence the history of the role of women in it, never separated the question of women as workers from the question of women’s role within the family. Both saw immediately that the industrial revolution was shaking the lives of women by shaking the basis of the patriarchal family. Engels saw it this way:

The employment of women at once breaks up the family; for when the wife spends twelve or thirteen hours every day in the mill, and the husband works the same length of time there or elsewhere, what becomes of the children? They grow up like wild weeds; they are put out to nurse for a shilling or eighteen pence a week, and how they are treated may be imagined. Hence the accidents to which little children fall victims multiply in the factory districts to a terrible extent....

The employment of the wife dissolves the family utterly and of necessity, and this dissolution, in our present

society, which is based upon the family brings the most demoralising consequences for parents as well as children. A mother who has no time to trouble herself about her child, to perform the most ordinary loving services for it during its first year, who scarcely indeed sees it, can be no real mother to the child, must inevitably grow indifferent to it, treat it unlovingly like a stranger. The children who grow up under such conditions are utterly ruined for later family life, can never feel at home in the family which they themselves found, because they have always been accustomed to isolation, and they contribute therefore to the already general undermining of the family in the working-class. A similar dissolution of the family is brought about by the employment of the children. When they get on far enough to earn more than they cost their parents from week to week, they begin to pay the parents a fixed sum for board and lodging, and keep the rest for themselves. This often happens from the fourteenth or fifteenth year. In a word, the children emancipate themselves, and regard the paternal dwelling as a



lodging-house, which they often exchange for another, as suits them. ("The Condition of the Working-Class in England," MECW 4:436-8)

Engels observed clearly that competitive capitalism, by drawing women into factory employment, was breaking up the old patriarchal family and leaving nothing to replace it. But, with the perceptive insight of a genius, Engels understood that what was actually being broken up in the old family was the historical anachronism of male supremacy.

If the reign of the wife over the husband, as inevitably brought about by the factory system, is inhuman, the pristine rule of the husband over the wife must have been inhuman too. If the wife can now base her supremacy upon the fact that she supplies the greater part, nay, the whole of the common possession, the necessary inference is that this community of possession is no true and rational one, since one member of the family boasts offensively of contributing the greater share. If the family of our present society is being thus dissolved, this dissolution merely shows that, at bottom, the binding tie of this family was not family affection, but private interest lurking under the cloak of a pretended community of possessions. (*Ibid.*, p. 439)

Like Engels, Marx realized that the conditions under which women and children were now forced to labour were breaking up the old patriarchal family, and that moral standards were being thrown to the wind in the indiscriminate environment of the sweatshop. But, like Engels, Marx saw that the destruction of the old patriarchal family, based on economic ties and the supremacy of the man in the home, was necessary for the re-emergence of the family in a higher form, based on the equality of the sexes.

...Modern industry, in overturning the economic foundation on which was based the traditional family, and the family labour corresponding to it, had also unloosened all traditional family ties.... It was the capitalist mode of exploitation which, by sweeping away the economic basis of parental authority, made its exercise degenerate into a mischievous misuse of power. However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless,

modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes. (*Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, pp. 459-60)

In his discussions of the origin of the oppression of women — that is, that women were free and equal beings under primitive communism but became degraded and enslaved within the home as a result of the private ownership of the means of production — Engels predicted that the key to the emancipation of women was to be found in the introduction of women into public industry on a mass scale.

...The first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry, and... this in turn demands that the characteristic of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society be abolished.... To emancipate woman and make her the equal of the man is and remains an impossibility so long as the woman is shut out from social productive labour and restricted to private domestic labour. The emancipation of woman will only be possible when woman can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time. And only now has that become possible through modern large-scale industry, which does not merely permit the employment of female labor over a wide range, but positively demands it, while it also tends toward ending private domestic labor by changing it more and more into a public industry. (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, ed. E. Leacock, NY: International Publishers, 1975, pp. 137-138, 221)

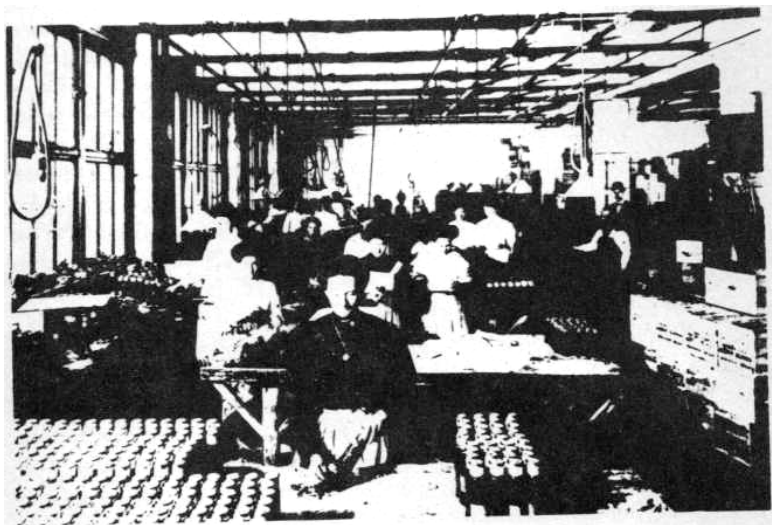
Thus Engels made clear from the start that the liberation of women takes on two aspects: on the one hand, the drawing of women into large-scale social production; and, on the other hand, the socialization of domestic work itself. The capitalist system lays the foundation for the accomplishment of both tasks. But until the private ownership of the means of production is abolished, the introduction of women into public industry is still a tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie to intensify the exploitation of women and to visit a double burden upon the female masses.

The drawing of women into the workplace, as Marx and Engels saw with brilliant clarity, posed a very difficult contradiction for masses of women who were dependent upon work to survive. Engels specified very clearly in *The Origin of the Family* that within the ruling classes, where property ownership fell to the hands of the man, the woman was divorced from all social production and instead became a private servant. But these rules did not obtain among the oppressed classes, **“who did not count,”** says Engels. (Ibid., p. 142) The masses of women in the toiling classes were never exempted from social labour. Such was a luxury which only the wealthy could afford. Under slavery, in feudal times, and during early capitalism, the masses of women continued to engage in backbreaking toil in order to survive, burdened not only with giving up their unpaid labour to the ruling classes but also with domestic slavery. And for these masses of women, their productive tasks were generally reconciled with their tasks of childbearing and childrearing. On the farm, for example, under the domestic system, childrearing tasks and economically productive tasks were unseparated and inseparable. It was impossible to pit the productive, active role of woman in the economic and social life of the society against her sexuality and her role within the family, for these were complementary. Children were raised to assist their parents on the farm and in the making of cloth and garments. The mother worked as the children hovered around her, learning from her and learning to respect her material contributions to the family. Now, as Engels clearly stated, women went to work early in the morning and the children roamed the streets, without social guidance and without familial love. They lacked not only emotional nourishment but also physical nourishment. The mothers who gave birth to their children on the floor of the factory and who had to leave them behind with elderly neighbours during the day were unable to suckle their children. **“The mothers,”** said Marx, have been **“confiscated by capital.”** (*Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, p. 373)

Thus the industrial revolution created a very serious contradiction between the use of women and children for labour, on the one hand, and the survival of the family on the other hand. In certain cases day care services were available; as in nineteenth century Montreal where the Catholic Church set up *salles d’asile* explicitly so that both parents could work.⁴⁹ But these *salles d’asile* generally serviced only French-Canadian families; the Protestant and Irish Catholic mothers of Montreal had no such services available; and neither did most

women in English Canada.⁵⁰ The removal of productive labour from the locus of the home created a crisis in the lives of masses of women as their duties in their families were now pitted against their role as productive workers and providers.

In what did this contradiction consist? The original population of agriculturalists who moved into the cities and became proletarians, and the original immigrant population, had no choice in the matter. Women had to leave their children behind in the streets and work. But the objective situation laid the groundwork for another alternative. As productive work moved outside of the home, it left behind a private space, a void, which was to be reserved only for child tending and for barbarously repetitive, menial, stultifying, isolating, and nerve-racking drudgery. Whereas before, women could lead a productive life within the framework of the home, now the possibility was opened up for women to stay home all day and lead a life completely devoid of productive meaning. So these were the two historical “choices” left to women with the industrial revolution: productive work, with family duties left behind, or the private space, the nerve-torturing void: modern housework. It was a contradiction which the bourgeoisie has seized upon and used with glee, milking every last dollar of profit out of it. But under competitive capitalism the bourgeoisie did not yet use the vast financial potential of this dilemma in which women were left by the industrial revolution. For the bourgeoisie to make use of this situation to the maximum, a certain transformation in the epoch had to take place. That transformation was the transition from competitive capitalism to its opposite, the capitalism of monopolies, imperialism.



To Women Workers —

Are you working for love
Or for Money?

Are you holding a job you do not need?

Perhaps you have a husband well able to support you and a comfortable home?

You took a job during the war to help meet the shortage of labour.

You have «made good» and you want to go on working.

But the war is over and conditions have changed.

There is no longer a shortage of labour. On the contrary Ontario is faced by a serious situation due to the number of men unemployed.

This number is being increased daily by returning soldiers. They must have work. The pains and dangers they have endured in our defence give them the right to expect it.

Do you feel justified in holding a job which could be filled by a man who has not only himself to support, but a wife and family as well?

Think it over.

(Propaganda issued after World War I. Source: Department of Labour Archives of the Ontario Government.)

Women Under Imperialism

A. Imperialism Transforms the Lives of Women

Lenin describes the transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism as follows:

As we have seen, the deepest economic foundation of imperialism is monopoly. This is capitalist monopoly, i.e., monopoly which has grown out of capitalism and which exists in the general environment of capitalism, commodity production and competition, in permanent and insoluble contradiction to this general environment. Nevertheless, like all monopoly, it inevitably engenders a tendency to stagnation and decay. Since monopoly prices are established, even temporarily, the motive cause of technical and, consequently, of all other progress disappears to a certain extent and, further, the *economic* possibility arises of deliberately retarding technical progress.... Certainly, the possibility of reducing the cost of production and increasing profits by introducing technical improvements operates in the direction of change. But the *tendency* to stagnation and decay, which is characteristic of monopoly, continues to operate, and in some branches of industry, in some countries, it gains the upper hand.

...Imperialism is an immense accumulation of money capital in a few countries.... Hence the extraordinary growth of a class, or rather, of a stratum of rentiers, i.e., people who live by “clipping coupons,” who take no part in any enterprise whatever, whose profession is idleness. The export of capital, one of the most essential economic bases of imperialism, still more completely isolates the rentiers from production and sets the seal of parasitism on the whole country that lives by exploiting the labour of several overseas countries and colonies. (“Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” LCW 22:276-77)

Imperialism has transformed the lives of women. Everywhere in imperialist countries, including the supposedly socialist Soviet Union, the pattern is duplicated. Women are in the same boat, they are used for the same kinds of work, they are prescribed into the same kinds of roles; they are manipulated, exploited and oppressed by the

imperialist bourgeoisie in the same ways, inside and outside the home, for the purpose of maximum profit. And wherever there is an imperialist bourgeoisie, it plays upon this same basic dilemma in the lives of women: the contradiction between participation in social labour and family life, a contradiction which cannot possibly be resolved within the confines of the capitalist system. And it plays upon this contradiction because of its needs in terms of a reserve army of labour and a cheap, manipulable stratum of the labour force.

Marx demonstrated that the development of a relative surplus-population, that is, a reserve army of labour, was an inevitable consequence of the capitalist system. It consists of those labourers who are rendered superfluous by the development of the means of production.

That portion of the working-class, thus by machinery rendered superfluous, *i.e.*, no longer immediately necessary for the self-expansion of capital, either goes to the wall in the unequal contest of the old handicrafts and manufactures with machinery, or else floods all the more easily accessible branches of industry, swamps the labour-market, and sinks the price of labour-power below its value. (*Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, p. 406)

This surplus-population of labourers is swelled by the growth of capital, by capital accumulation.

Since the demand for labour is determined not by the amount of capital as a whole, but by its variable constituent alone, that demand falls progressively with the increase of the total capital, instead of, as previously assumed, rising in proportion to it. It falls relatively to the magnitude of the total capital, and at an accelerated rate, as this magnitude increases. With the growth of the total capital, its variable constituent or the labour incorporated in it, also does increase, but in a constantly diminishing proportion.... This accelerated relative diminution of the variable constituent, that goes along with the accelerated increase of the total capital, and moves more rapidly than this increase, takes the inverse form, at the other pole, of an apparently absolute increase of the labouring population, an increase always moving more rapidly than that of the variable capital or the means of employment. But in fact, it is capitalistic accumulation

itself that constantly produces, and produces in the direct ratio of its own energy and extent, a relatively redundant population of labourers, *i.e.*, a population of greater extent than suffices for the average needs of self-expansion of capital, and therefore a surplus-population. (Ibid., p. 590)

But this accumulation of capital leads to the concentration of production, which itself is much more intense than the concentration of workers.

The enormous growth of industry and the remarkably rapid process of concentration of production in ever-larger enterprises are one of the most characteristic features of capitalism.... Concentration of production, however, is much more intense than the concentration of workers, since labour in the large enterprises is much more productive. (Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, FLP, p. 12)

And this increase in the concentration of production, which Marx perceived as inevitable under capitalism, is not merely a quantitative increase; at a certain point it takes a qualitative leap, and that point is the point where competitive capitalism is transformed into its opposite, monopoly capitalism, imperialism.

...At a certain stage of its development, concentration itself, as it were, leads right up to monopoly;... a very important feature of capitalism in its highest stage of development is so-called *combination* of production, that is to say, the grouping in a single enterprise of different branches of industry....

Official science tried, by a conspiracy of silence, to kill the works of Marx, who by a theoretical and historical analysis of capitalism proved that free competition gives rise to the concentration of production, which, in turn, at a certain stage of development, leads to monopoly. Today, monopoly has become a fact.... The rise of monopolies, as the result of the concentration of production, is a general and fundamental law of the present stage of development of capitalism. (Ibid., pp. 14-15, 17-18)

It follows, then, that the sudden leap to monopoly capitalism will create a sudden leap in the surplus-population of labour; that is, that the huge accumulation of capital which drives the transformation of

competition to monopoly will render superfluous a very large number of workers, who will then flood the labour market and create some very serious political problems for the bourgeoisie.

It was by using the specific position of women within the family, as one means, that the bourgeoisie sought to bring this very serious problem under control.

In the period of competitive capitalism, the bourgeoisie had freely employed female labour in the factories, because female labour-power could be purchased at half the price of male labour-power, and because the vulnerable position of women in the family led to a decreased tendency on their part to organized resistance in the factory. In 1871, in Montreal and Hochelaga (Quebec), approximately 33% of the workforce were women and girls.⁵¹ Many factories employed more women than men, and, when child labour is counted, it can be readily seen why many families under competitive capitalism consisted of a breadwinning wife and an unemployed husband, a situation which Engels vividly described.

Yet it must be remembered that, although the growth of the urban proletariat was of vanguard historical importance, only a very small percentage of the entire population of England, Canada, or any other country was employed in factories under competitive capitalism. Even by 1911, when the epoch of imperialism was well under way, the Canadian population was still rural in its majority.⁵² This meant that, although the earliest female migrants to urban life were drawn right into the factories, most women were still on the farm, toiling from sunrise to sunset and beyond, not officially counted as part of the labour force but contributing with backbreaking toil towards the survival of their families and towards the productivity of the overall economy.

As competition turned into monopoly, the masses were continually being drawn away from the farm and into the city. The rural economy was in crisis; increasingly farmers simply had to abandon their homesteads and move. But the relative population pressure of the toiling masses was far greater than it had been previously. We have already shown that imperialism itself brings the unemployment problem to a new level. The ranks of the working class in Europe were swelling far beyond what the European bourgeoisies could cope with in terms of their economy, and the mood in the ranks of the workers was one of revolution. The European bourgeoisies therefore happily exported teams of starving workers who were hoping for a better life

in Canada or the United States. These were accepted in North America, because the European workers who would immigrate brought from the “old country” a solid experience of proletarianization and a good degree of technical skill as workers as well. And immigrants would do jobs that Native-born Canadians refused to do, such as domestic service. Also, the immigrants from the British Isles, Scandinavia, and Northern Europe were used to colonize the Canadian west, in order to strengthen the west against the possibilities of American annexation.⁵⁴ Immigrants were therefore perceived as being of great value in the building of the economies of Canada and the United States — and of course at a good price, since there is hardly anything cheaper than immigrant labour.

So the Canadian and American cities were flooded with huge numbers of immigrants from both Europe and the rural areas of their own countries. Between 1901 and 1911 there was a 52.8% rise in the Canadian labour force.⁵⁵ But the percentage of *women* in the labour force, which had peaked around 1881, began to fall.⁵⁶ The imperialist economy could not cope with the massive influx of toilers into the cities the way it had once been able to. Thus, whereas before it had drawn men and women from a life of toil on the farm and dumped them indiscriminately into the factory, now it started to draw men and women from a life of toil onto the farm, dump the men into the factory, and dump the women into the kitchen, holding them in reserve.

In doing so, the bourgeoisie was taking away the opportunities which these masses of women had to contribute to the livelihoods of their families and lead productive lives. In 1891 —just before imperialism dawned — the ten most common occupations of women (not counting farm labour) were: servants, dressmakers, teachers, seamstresses, tailoresses, housekeepers, laundresses, milliners, and saleswomen.⁵⁷ But capitalism was more and more destroying and sweeping away the various petty forms of production. Garment factories and hat factories were displacing the seamstress; large department stores were wiping out the small general store whose proprietor was frequently a woman. The textile factories and the department stores hired women for their labour, but these women were single (or widowed, etc.).⁵⁸ The married woman in the city was left without anything productive to do. Although many women who stayed at home continued to make ends meet by taking in boarders, doing occasional domestic work, or marketing home-made goods, particularly during periods of hardship,⁵⁹ a certain broad social pattern was emerging.

Women who stayed home became “merely” housewives: cleaning up, servicing, cooking, and preparing articles of petty use-value for home consumption, caring for children on a privatized basis but not engaging in any productive social labour or producing anything of marketable worth.⁶⁰ No words could surpass the denunciations which Lenin makes of the petty housework which was left to women: **“barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery.”** (“A Great Beginning,” LCW 29:429)

In most cases housework is the most unproductive, the most savage and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the woman. (“The Tasks of the Working Woman’s Movement in the Soviet Republic,” LCW 30:43)

In Canada in the 1920’s, only 3% of all married women were in the labour force;⁶¹ by 1941 the figure was still lower than 5%.⁶² Of course, there were limits to this general pattern, and more than a few women hid the fact that they were married and took off their wedding bands when they went to look for work. But a definite social trend was perceptible: at the turn of the century, for most urban women, marriage meant the end of regular full-time employment outside the home and the beginning of a nightmare of stultifying, petty drudgery and domestic isolation.

The factories still teemed with women. But these women were now mostly either single or “unfortunates” — widows, separated women, or wives of unemployed men. The married women became a huge surplus population of labour, a reserve army, to be tapped at a later historical point when they were needed to depress wages and increase the rate of exploitation of the entire working class.

Marx refers to the agricultural population itself as the latent reserve army of labour, because over the long term of the development of capitalism it is drawn into the cities.

As soon as capitalist production takes possession of agriculture, and in proportion to the extent to which it does so, the demand for an agricultural labouring population falls absolutely, while the accumulation of the capital employed in agriculture advances, without this repulsion being, as in non-agricultural industries, compensated by a greater attraction. Part of the agricultural population is therefore constantly on the point of passing

over into an urban or manufacturing proletariat, and on the look-out for circumstances favourable to this transformation. (Manufacture is used here in the sense of all non-agricultural industries.) This source of relative surplus-population is thus constantly flowing. But the constant flow towards the towns presupposes, in the country itself, a constant latent surplus-population, the extent of which becomes evident only when its channels of outlet open to exceptional width. (*Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, pp. 601-2)

This latent agricultural reserve army of labour is half female. However, as it migrated into the cities over the decades, the men became part of the active urban labour force more quickly than did the married women. The married women were still held in reserve, in the home, as were married women of the immigrant population. The nature of their reserve was both floating and latent; floating, in that they were drawn in and out of the home as the cyclical demands of capitalism determined (as, for example, the demand for female labour during wartime), and latent, in that they have been drawn in steadily increasing numbers into the workplace over the long term of the twentieth century.

Why was it the married women who were kept in reserve in the home, even though the bourgeoisie knew well that their labour could have been bought for a pitifully low price? Because with married women driven into the home, the bourgeoisie was able to ensure that the factories, the banks, the railways and the trusts would be supplied with future generations of labour-power. We have already seen the serious damage to health, to the family, and to childrearing which was done when married women were driven into the factories under appalling physical conditions and forced to leave behind their infant children, sometimes not even being permitted to suckle them for a week after childbirth. The young industrial bourgeoisie could extract more immediate dollars from working women by demanding these kinds of sacrifices to the female health and the health of the children, but the health and physical formation of future generations of workers were being threatened. By dealing with the problem of the reserve army of labour through driving married women into the home, the bourgeoisie was staving off a political crisis which would have been brought about by huge numbers of hungry workers roaming the streets in an atmosphere of a brewing international revolutionary fer-

ment; in fact, it was turning a potential crisis into an advantage, because it was using these women as free labour to secure the health and welfare of the next generation of workers. Its needs for cheap labour were being filled by single women and immigrants; the super-profits gleaned from the plunder of the colonies allowed a situation where real wages were high enough for many a male worker to support his family on his salary alone. And the presence of women in the home could be explained with apparent ideological justification, the justification that this was where the woman, after all, belonged. Whereas teams of unemployed men and single women would only have contributed to revolutionary ferment, the bourgeoisie could use teams of unemployed married women as a brake on mass revolutionary ferment. And this is what the bourgeoisies in all of the imperialist countries set out to do as the epoch of imperialism dawned.

B. The Bourgeoisie Imposes the Model of the Ruling-Class Family

This social pattern, to drive married women home into a life of barren unproductivity and hold them in reserve for the times their labour was needed, was not accomplished without much work on the part of the young imperialist bourgeoisie. The working class in Canada and other imperialist countries was the victim of a conscious, premeditated and organized plot by the imperialist bourgeoisie to reshape the working-class family in its own image. That image was one in which the man went out into the world to provide for the wife and the children, and the woman led a life of idleness and leisure. To understand what the bourgeoisie set out to do, it is necessary first to take a look at the family in the privileged classes.

In the eighteenth century, as competitive capitalism was growing, idleness itself was the ideal for women of privilege. It was seen as “unfeminine” to toil not for the masses, of course, whose labour was an absolute necessity to prop up the privileges of this tiny stratum — but for the aristocratic and upper bourgeois women who could afford servants. Servants, dressmakers, and wetnurses freed a very tiny stratum of women from the necessity to weave, spin, sew, cook, clean, launder, raise children and even suckle infants.

It was the industrial revolution and the rise of the urban proletariat which enabled this model upper class family to trickle down into a certain middle stratum. This was the Victorian family, with its malicious moral hypocrisy and its worship of “femininity,” i.e., idleness,

docility and weakness, for the woman.⁶³ The literature of the time sings the praises of the Victorian woman whose husband was sufficiently able to ensure the class interests of the family that the wife could be exempted from domestic duties. The industrial revolution allowed the spread of such a family because many goods which had to be made by women in the home before were now available in the marketplace and could be afforded by a certain middle stratum of women. Candles, cloth, soap, butter, buttons, needles, and even ready-made clothes could now be purchased in the city.⁶⁴ These women could purchase laundry service and even the education of their children.

The idle, docile Victorian woman of the nineteenth century stood in sharp contrast to the women who were pouring into the factories to make the candles, the cloth and the ready-made clothes, as well as to the many women who still laboured from sunrise to sunset on the farms of Canada, the United States, England, France and elsewhere.⁶⁵ The masses of women everywhere were continuing to contribute to the productive life of the family and the society. The idea that it was “unfeminine” for a woman to do so was as yet unknown to the toiling masses.

But the small stratum of “Victorian women” was left more and more idle by the growing socialization of labour in capitalist society. On top of that, as competitive capitalism was transformed into imperialism, the super-profits from the exploitation of the colonies were able to create a temporary swelling in the ranks of this stratum. These women now needed to occupy themselves with other things to convince themselves of their own social importance, now that the era of their fancy handiwork was drawing to a close. Many took up a college education, but the teaching and nursing professions could not absorb enough of them. Thus an entire ideological structure was developed to hallow the role of the middle-class woman at home. This began with the “domestic science” industry, an elaborate plot to hallow the home, extol the virtues of the scientific management of housekeeping, embark on a crusade against germs, insist on the virtues of the spic-and-span household, and raise to an art in itself the private rearing of children in isolation from productive labour.⁶⁶ Progressive education — Deweyism — raised the individual child to a veritable icon. Drinking was disdained as the bane of the existence of the hallowed home. The married woman who worked outside the home was represented as a scourge on humanity. Through “domestic science,”

household management was transformed from a petty routine robbed of all social importance into the epitome of supreme social accomplishment for the educated woman. People were encouraged to buy their own homes because “it ties them down so they have a stake in our prosperity,” as the director of a large company explained.⁶⁷ Bourgeois propaganda poured forth to the effect that such work as housework was as socially meaningful as any accomplishment in the “male” realm, and indeed demanded the highest degree of skill and education in order to be accomplished properly.

So, too, the creation of a body of graduates of Household Science and Art would lift the pursuit into appreciation and honor. Certainly it deserves to be as highly esteemed as medicine, law, or theology. What is so valuable as a good home?⁶⁸

The housewife of today is to her home what her husband is to his office. She is a house manager. To be successful in that sphere she must apply the same principles of management to her work that her husband does to his.⁶⁹

And motherhood, we were told, was “a science for which some intelligent preparation is required, just as it is for any other skilled occupation.”⁷⁰

But it was not enough for these bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women to convince themselves of their own social importance as idle and unproductive housewives. The bourgeoisie had an even more important use for them than that: as fighters in its class struggle to smash proletarian revolution, to quiet the anger and the festering revolutionary ferment of the working class. Long ago Marx stated flatly, **“Anyone with any knowledge of history also knows that no great social upheavals are possible without female ferment.”** And Lenin was clear too that **“there can be no socialist revolution unless very many working women take a big part in it.”** (“Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women, November 19, 1918,” LCW 28:180) Stalin endorsed this line with full fervor when he said:

Since our country has earnestly set to work to build the new, Soviet life, is it not obvious that the women, who constitute half its population, will be like a weight on its feet every time a step forward is taken if they remain downtrodden, unenlightened and ignorant? (“The Fifth Anniversary of the First Congress of Working Women and Peasant Women,” SCW 5:356-7)

It was clear to all of the great leaders of scientific socialism that no destruction of the old society was possible without the destruction of the traditional position of the woman in it, because unless women were drawn into participation into active political life, traditional domesticity would act as a brake on all attempts to build a new order.

To prevent socialist revolution, therefore, the bourgeoisie had to break the backs of the working women.

This is not just the epoch of imperialism. It is the epoch of imperialism *and proletarian revolution*. The immigrants who were pouring into Canada's urban slums, filling the factories with cheap labour and overflowing the tenement houses into the streets, were but a detachment of the international proletariat. The impact of the October Revolution, the existence of socialism in the world where the bourgeoisie had been overthrown and the end of capitalist exploitation was a reality being worked for, was enormous upon workers throughout the world. Thus, as the epoch of Leninism entered the world stage, it was clear that something had to be done about the spread of socialist ideas among the working class. Said one bourgeois ideologue, "A communistic habitation (by which he meant a tenement house — BU) forces the members of a family to conform insensibly to communistic modes of thought."⁷¹ The bourgeoisie perceived that crowded slum living conditions posed a danger to it as a class, "especially since the immigrant population was believed to be infested with Bolsheviks and anarchists."⁷²

Thus the well-to-do woman had work to do. It was her role to graft the form and the ideal of the bourgeois family onto the working class. This could not really succeed, of course, because the proletarian family had a fundamentally different social basis. The burden of survival weighs great upon all proletarian families and the woman's productive labour was drawn upon during times of hardship, as a floating reserve army of labour, depending on the cycles of capitalism. And women were also a long-term reserve army of labour, entering the labour force in greater and greater numbers as the imperialist system advanced. Moreover, domestic burdens themselves are far greater in the proletarian family because workers cannot afford the appliances, household help, etc. which permit the idleness of the bourgeois and the petty-bourgeois woman. Thus it is obvious that the bourgeois family could not really take hold among the working class. But for imperialism, the important thing was to rivet the mind of the working-class woman in the home, and to perceive her home-making

“career” as her most important task and destiny. Stated *Ladies Home Journal*: “As a matter of fact, what a certain type of woman needs today more than anything else is some task that ‘would tie her down.’ Our whole social fabric would be the better for it. Too many women are dangerously idle.”⁷³ In other words, to try to undo revolutionary fervor among the oppressed masses of workers, the imperialist bourgeoisie had to undermine the revolutionary fervor of the working-class woman, because there can be no revolution without the women.

To this end, the idle and non-productive bourgeois women strutted into the slums to teach the working class “domestic science.”

We did find, however, in most cases untidy homes, filled with unhygienic furnishings, and the food which was good never served in an appetizing manner. So we decided that for us the serving of the food, housekeeping, house furnishing, and decoration, and last but not least, manners were the most important, for, as Thomas Davidson says... “It is, to a large extent, the lack of refinement of manners that unfits the uncultured man for mingling with cultivated people. There is no reason in the world why men and women who have to earn their bread by manual labor should not be as refined in manners and bearing as any other class of people.”⁷⁴

The antiseptic home became the model; a new market for home appliances was invented; housekeeping was taught in the public schools as a “science.”

Children were urged in the schools to divest themselves of their “dirty” immigrant heritage and “modernize” themselves. Out of the home were thrown lodgers, chickens, wine, and the production of marketable products.⁷⁵ The individual working class home was to become a private space, as isolated as possible from the social reality of direct capitalist exploitation, and women were placed in charge of keeping the home that way for the alleged sake of the husband and children. An entire network of settlement houses was founded to accomplish this do-good social work, with the Jane Addams settlement house in the United States an international model.⁷⁶ The Salvation Army was founded to preach religion, morality, and the home; its staff was peopled with women of these upper strata. Temperance became an integral part of the women’s crusade, along with the right to vote. Poverty, of course, was blamed on the mismanagement of the household, i.e., on the woman, rather than on the bourgeoisie.⁷⁷ Social services were founded to reform prostitutes, taking the point of

view that the source of prostitution was moral deprivation rather than wage slavery.⁷⁸ The Toronto Industrial Refuge was founded “...to give women, who through infirmity of nature or evil environments have fallen into evil ways, a shelter where they will not be beset by temptations, and where they may be led to live honest, Christian lives.”⁷⁹ These various social work establishments assigned themselves the duty not only of guarding the moral purity of Canadian women, but also of importing domestic servants from the British Isles and elsewhere since these bourgeois ladies were always undersupplied with domestic help.⁸⁰ Such large-scale social-work movements began at the dawn of imperialism and flowered by the time the Bolshevik Revolution was having its international impact.

As part of its efforts in this regard, the bourgeoisie began to propagate elaborate theories which blamed the suffering and misery of the masses upon individual proletarians and especially the women. The most malicious and widespread of these ideological conspiracies has been Freudianism, which was born as a weapon of anti-communism and which was consistently given an extra push by the bourgeoisie whenever the threat of communism loomed large, such as after the Second World War. Its purpose was to deny the class nature of oppression, exploitation and human suffering and to cultivate the most backward, introverted and narrow forms of individualism to replace scientific consciousness. To visit such an anti-communist tenor as Freudianism on the masses, the bourgeoisie heaped the blame for all evils on the family and particularly on the mother. Milking every drop of benefit from the isolated and unproductive position of married women in the home, the bourgeoisie sought to create anxiety, individualist sentiments, suffering and guilt upon mothers, who were made to assume unique responsibility for the personal adjustment of their children. Related ideas such as Deweyism were also spread with equal vigour in popular magazines and newspapers. Marx and Engels are clear that **“the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force.”** (“The German Ideology,” MECW 5:59) Although Freudianism, Deweyism and other brands of bourgeois psychology have had nothing to offer to the masses of proletarians, their impact as weapons to weaken proletarian solidarity should not be dismissed.

Imperialism is the era of monopolies. No less than the trusts and the combines, the various do-good social work organizations began

to take on an international character and combine in order to consolidate their reign of terror upon the angry international working class.⁸¹ International religion did its best to be the backbone of this movement. Petty-bourgeois women poured into the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Girls' Friendly Society and the Dominion Order of King's Daughters to spread the moral hypocrisy of international imperialism into the working class.⁸² The WCTU, perhaps the largest and most influential of these, carefully linked Protestant evangelism, prohibition, domestic science instruction, social purity, and women's suffrage.⁸³ But it was the concern for the bourgeois family, for establishing a model of it throughout the whole of society, which was the strongest ideological bond of all of these women's organizations.⁸⁴ Said the first Superintendent of the Ontario Department of the WCTU:

It is not the clamor of ambition, ignorance, or frivolity trying to gain position. It is the prayer of earnest, thoughtful Christian women on behalf of their children and their children's children. It is in the interest of our homes, our divinely appointed place, to protect the home against the licensed evil which is the enemy of the home, and also to aid in our efforts to advance God's Kingdom beyond the bounds of our homes.⁸⁵

Religion played the same role in the oppressed nation of Quebec, although the situation was a bit more complicated because of the interplay between Catholic and Protestant forces. The National Council of Women of Canada, set up in 1893 to serve the interest of the bourgeoisie in English Canada, set up its Montreal extension as the Montreal Local Council of Women.⁸⁶ Ostensibly the purpose of this action was to break down the religious barriers between the two nations by forming a "secular" women's organization, but the MLCW lost no time in propagating the same stream of Protestant ideas as the other women's organizations of the time and in fact functioned as an agent of the oppressor nation within Quebec.⁸⁷ The Catholic Church was very hostile to these federalist and supposedly secular organizations and soon began to exercise its own influence through setting up its own groups of bourgeois women. The most important of these was the Federation Nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, founded in 1907, a group which came out of the section of the Dames patronnesses de l'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste.⁸⁸ The FNSJB was a staunch guardian of the link, between French nationalism, the Catholic reli-

gion and the feudal-bourgeois conception of the family.⁸⁹ It took it upon itself to be the guardian of the Quebecois nation through the reinforcement of the Catholic family wherein the woman stays home and bears the greatest possible number of children. Great emphasis was placed on the “proper” division of labour within the home, and the FNSJB took it upon itself to propagate a “Christian feminism” whose purpose was to keep the minds of masses of Quebecois women steeped in fog and backwardness.⁹⁰

Of course, as we cannot emphasize too much, this concentrated and conscious campaign by the imperialist bourgeoisie against the working class and against socialist revolution could be temporarily and marginally successful at best. At the same time as it was teaching that the woman’s place was in the home, it was also drawing women in steadily increasing numbers into the workplace. The long-term trend of the twentieth century is that a larger and larger percentage of the labour force is female; that more and more women workers are married; and that more and more married women workers have young children.⁹¹ But therein lay the whole dual nature of the bourgeoisie’s plot. It played upon the dual oppression of women, the dual role of women; it combined these in a way peculiarly fitted to its own advantage during this epoch. Women were taught from birth that their rightful destiny was in the home, a servant to the husband and children, removed from social production, much as the ruling class wife had been for centuries. But women were also being drawn into the workplace. But now, the specific domestic situation of women became an ideal pretext for the bourgeoisie to split the ranks of the pro-



letariat and create a deep chasm of division along the lines of sex. Women, so went the bourgeois line, could not possibly be in the workplace as angry and organized militants, as a massive and consistent labour force struggling for dignity and for socialism side by side with men. Now they were in the workplace only for “pin money.” Their work outside the home was “secondary” to what they would do in their homes as servants to their husbands and children. Any self-respecting family, so the working class was told, did not need the work of the married woman to survive; a working married woman had to hide her marital status or she would usually lose her job. Single women who worked, were working only because they were not yet married; they worked for the day that they could quit working. When women were fortunate enough to educate themselves, the purpose of their education was to be better wives and mothers. The home became the ultimate fulfillment of all women, no matter what other fortunes life brought them. The Ontario Commission on Unemployment came out in favour of universal domestic education for all women because “home occupations are the *ultimate* employment of all but a comparatively small percentage of women.”⁹² The purpose of the technical education of women was seen to be homemaking: “It is desirable that girls and women should be taught, so that they may realize that if a girl is an unsatisfactory, indifferent saleswoman, factory worker, teacher, nurse or other worker, the probability is that she will be an unsatisfactory wife and mother.”⁹³ The wife of the chairman of this Commission wrote a book, *The Canadian Girl at Work*, in which she made it clear that learning to be a good homemaker is the most important preparation for the future which a “girl” can acquire because of what lies ahead of her, and she concludes: “Technical training and skill are not more helpful to a girl at work than specialized knowledge in matters of food, clothing, health and failing regimen. Lack of training in homemaking is probably the greatest drawback which a girl in paid employment can have.”⁹⁴ The purpose of the book was to guide *single* women (“girls”) into jobs while they awaited marriage. Elsewhere she states (in a line very reminiscent of the line peddled by today’s “wages for housework” feminists) that in the area of homemaking and childcare “contributions made by women to the state are out of all comparison more valuable than any other.”⁹⁵

Militant defense organization at the workplace, aside from being unworthwhile (why put one’s life on the line for “pin money?”), was now seen as supremely “unfeminine.” Women worked outside the

home but their work was to be the expression of their housewifely role, of their passivity, of their nonproductivity, of their “femininity.” Their work was to be no threat to the men who worked at jobs which were “important” and “manly.”

C. The Male Aristocracy of Labour Joins the Campaign

The aristocracy of labour was enlisted to work overtime to ensure that the reformist trade-union movement carried these politics. The trade-union hacks demanded that women be excluded from many trades because they supposedly “lowered wages.” Stated one labour organization: “We think that women should not be allowed to work in the foundries, as it has a tendency to degrade them, to lower the wages of the men and to keep a number of young men out of work.”⁹⁶ The *Toronto Labour Souvenir Book* for 1907 made it clear how women could best contribute to the strength of the organized labour movement:

...Women... spend at least eighty-five percent of the total earnings of their husbands, fathers, and brothers and by a careful and discrete use of this money create such a force that it would of itself do more for organized labour than all craft organization has been able to accomplish in the last fifty years.⁹⁷

In other words, the task of men is to labour for the bourgeoisie and the task of women is to be prudent housewives so as to make the pitiful wages of the working class stretch to the maximum, and so as to make it appear the fault of the woman if the wages did not go far enough. What is clear is that the aristocracy of labour, which was bribed by the super-profits of imperialism in all the imperialist countries, sought one particular privilege among its many privileges as the bribed stratum of the working class. That privilege was to have a full-time servant at home, just as the bourgeois could have.

The Lance, a labour newspaper issuing out of Toronto, posed the basic question of the necessity of female employment: “It’s good for trade no doubt. It enables manufacturers to produce more cheaply and so extend their markets. Good for trade: but is it as certainly good for humanity?”⁹⁸ *The Lance* repeatedly carried articles on husband management, the old-fashioned wife, and proper dress for the “working girl.”⁹⁹ Conveniently, *The Lance* found that the question of a minimum wage for working women was very unimportant. Why? “Give the male workers a decent living wage and a minimum wage for

women will be unnecessary.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, the trade-union hacks made the model of the ideal bourgeois family, wherein the man is the one truly responsible for the breadwinning, an excuse to keep women’s wages at rock bottom. Columns in labour newspapers which had been created in the interest of discussing the specific problems of women workers would degenerate within months into recipe columns.”¹⁰¹ During the Great Depression, when the bourgeoisie was going on a full-scale campaign to blame the crisis on employed married women “taking the jobs away from men,” the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labour took this position: “Married women whose husbands have permanent positions... should be discriminated against in the hiring of employees.”¹⁰²

The hopes of the trade union leadership to break the determination of working women stood in sharp contrast to the actual history of women workers in Canada. At the beginning of the 20th century 29.1% of all women employed by the bourgeoisie worked in factories.¹⁰³ According to the 1911 census, 40.1% of the female work force in Montreal was in manufacturing, and the majority of them worked in garments and textiles.¹⁰⁴ There was no shortage of spontaneous militancy among these women at all. Between 1901 and 1915, in Quebec, these industries were the most affected by strikes and lock-outs, after transportation.¹⁰⁵ During that period, women constituted 58% of the textile workers in Montreal and 60% in the garment industry:¹⁰⁶ this alone indicates a very high level of spontaneous militancy among working women at the turn of the century. *La Presse* reported that women took the front lines in public meetings and were a great majority of the audience during the 1908 strike at Dominion Textile in Hochelaga, then a suburb of Montreal.¹⁰⁷ Dominion Textile was the largest textile manufacturer in Canada.¹⁰⁸ The press reports indicated that the women participating in the strike exhibited a strong degree of courage and solidarity.¹⁰⁹ The union which led this strike, the Federation des Ouvriers du Textile du Canada, had a membership which was 2/3 female.¹¹⁰

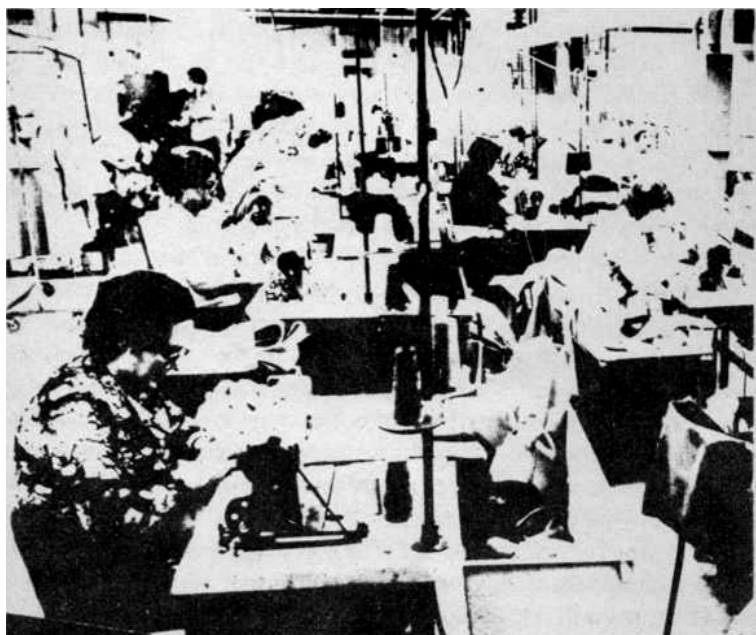
The annals of the history of Canadian workers are rich with examples of women walking out in solidarity with men, for the same demands, or in support of men who were unjustly fired. Furriers, weavers, shoemakers, cigar makers, tobacco strippers, tailors, railroad workers and telephone operators all set examples during the first decades of the twentieth century of the determination of women to ally with men in striking.¹¹¹ There are also numerous examples of

women refusing to scab during strikes, and in one firm sixty women refused to work if the firm received its deliveries from people who were scabbing on the Teamster's strike in 1900.¹¹²

But as the twentieth century unfolded it became clear that the trade-union bosses were plotting to exclude women even from the relative militancy which the union bosses were allowing the male sectors of the proletariat. Very few women were allowed to strike, and they had to resort to wildcat strikes. When they did strike their strikes were quickly broken by plotted sell-outs.¹¹³ The whole thing was justified by the idea that women really belonged in the home, not at work or on the picket line.

One of the favorite ploys of the aristocracy of labour was to manipulate the very correct desires of the masses for protective legislation. In view of the filthy, dangerous and permanently damaging working conditions, the working class as a whole justly clamoured for legislation limiting hours and cleaning up the factories. But both the female reformer movement and the labour hacks took particular interest in protective legislation for women, specifically, as a substitute for higher wages and militant union organization. Their principal concern was that the working women were losing their purity and therefore undermining the moral fabric of the family which was their only future.¹¹⁴ For example, they were far more obsessed with the question of separate lavatories and separate exits and entrances for women than they were with demands for higher wages or for an improvement in the working conditions of the entire factory, for both sexes.¹¹⁵ The annual report of the Evangelical and Social Service crusaded against the fact that working women might be going to the theatre, to dance halls, to Chinese restaurants, participating in night life, and leaving the home of their parents too early; it mentioned the question of wages but only as a very low priority, and the question of the hours of working women was not mentioned.¹¹⁶ Reformers founded boarding houses to protect the purity of working women, to save them from the dangers of the streets, but they never mentioned the fact that low wages in industry contributed to the necessity for many women to sell themselves into prostitution.¹¹⁷ Prostitution was posed as a problem of moral virtue rather than wage slavery. The crusade to limit hours of work in industry was never linked to the fact that many industries where women worked, such as the garment industry, offered jobs which were seasonal and that women could not survive unless

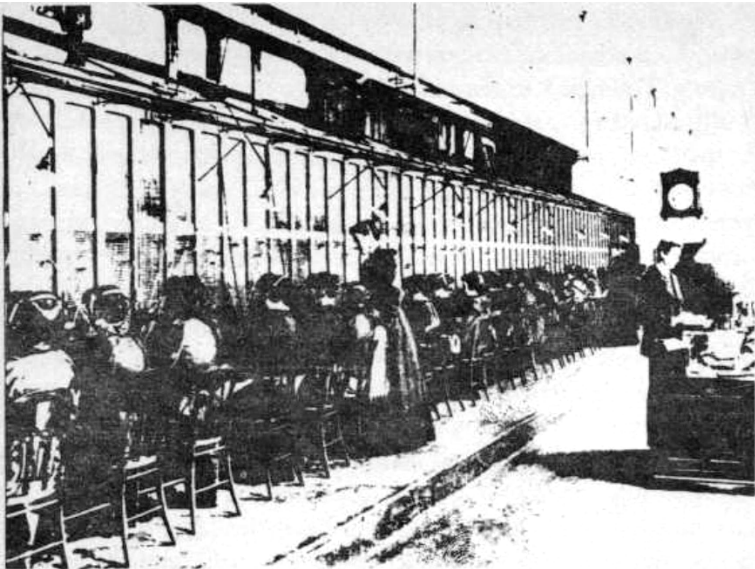
their wages tided them over in periods of unemployment.¹¹⁸ The restrictions on hours for female workers were often separated from the just demands of the entire working class for shorter hours, thus making women's labour less competitive in certain industries. Moreover, protective legislation in Canada explicitly excluded farm workers, domestic servants, and garment piece workers (homeworkers) who after World War I comprised a third of the paid female working population.¹¹⁹ During the Great Depression, for the masses of women who came even more to rely upon garment home work for their survival, protective legislation was an irrelevant joke.¹²⁰ Without putting into question the vital necessity for protective legislation in capitalist society, or the justness of the bitter struggles which the working class has fought for such protection, it is not without value to point out that the bourgeoisie is much more concerned about limiting dangerous jobs for women in high-paying, well-organized industries (such as the lead industry) than in low-paying, poorly organized jobs such as hospital work and laundry work.¹²¹ Most telling is that the efforts of the reformers towards specific forms of physical and moral protection for working women were very much in contrast with the actual demands of striking women during that period. Striking women, such as at Eaton's, Bell Canada, and many other places, put forward de-



mands which were usually the same as those of the men, and there was a strong absence of grievances around the questions of moral purity and virtue.¹²²

Women in Canada were victims of a twin strategy. While the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women were trying to persuade women to assume their “feminine” role in the home, and to subordinate their just demands in the workplace as part of a unified working class to their needs to prepare for domestic life in the future, the sold-out trade-union leaders were also using the call for the “virtuous family” towards the same ends. Those ends were: keeping women’s wages low, keeping women out of job competition with men, keeping women from long-term perspectives and class consciousness because they are only working for “pin money” and the best thing they can do is to spend the husband’s income properly. The goal of the strategy: keeping women available as cheap labour, but keeping their minds and values rooted back in the home so that they will not demand too much when they have to work. Keeping working women “feminine” was the way to break their determination in active struggle for socialist revolution.

Women have continued to work in Canada’s factories throughout the twentieth century. Their work continues to be poorly paid and the factories continue to be filthy and dangerous, Hours are still very long and the factory is still hot, poorly ventilated, and often a fire hazard.



A reporter for the *Montreal Star* describes conditions in a garment factory in 1974: "half-filled oil tins, broken jars, plastic tubing, crunched metal, waste baskets, cigarette butts, wads of gum. cast-off stockings and hunks of cardboard littered the black cement floor.... There was no talk... no smiles... no laughter... just the monotonous inhuman whir of sewing machines."¹²³ The conditions of garment work, which is the lowest paid of all factory work as well as the one with the highest proportion of women, are the same in the other imperialist countries as well. A woman in the United States who survived the horrible Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire of 1911 witnessed another garment factory fire in 1958, in a building with no fire escapes and no sprinklers. As she watched the women jump six storeys to their deaths she gripped her friend by the wrists and shook him, demanding in anger and despair: "What good have been all the years? The fire still bums."¹²⁴

Women factory workers are unorganized in their majority.¹²⁵ And those women who work in factories in Canada are still disproportionately immigrants and Quebecois women.¹²⁶ Immigrant women are often shut out of trades such as clerical work, sales and telephone operating because of their limited knowledge of English and French, and so they are thrown into the hot, poorly ventilated factory for a long working day and with no prospects for the future. What is more, the difficulties many of these immigrant women have with the language of their new country is still one more barrier to their collective action, to their unionization and to their defensive organization. This fact does not escape the capitalists in their search for immigrant labour for these factories. A recent report from Ottawa acknowledged that immigrant women were the most exploited members of the Canadian work force, principally in their capacity as workers in the textile and garment industries.¹²⁷

But the rich history of solidarity and struggle among women workers in factories, the objective conditions which thrust them into a situation of discipline and organization, and the particularly brutal nature of their double and triple oppression, make female factory workers a key sector of the economy in the struggle to rally the working class to Marxism-Leninism.

D. Maximum Profit and Productive Work

Thus the history of women workers in factories is rich and inspiring. But the history of women workers in an imperialist country

such as Canada goes far beyond the history of women workers in factories. Under imperialism, the proportion of women workers who work in factories has sharply declined. In 1901, 29.6% of all women in the labour force worked in factories; in 1921, the figure was 17.8%; in 1971, the figure was 11.2%.¹²⁸ To understand the history of women workers in Canada, it must be understood that imperialism has had a profound effect on the very composition of the working class itself, which has been shaped by the specific needs of finance capital for maximum profit.

Stalin explains that imperialism is not governed by the law of average profit, but by the law of maximum profit.

...Monopoly capitalism demands not any sort of profit, but precisely the maximum profit. That will be the basic economic law of modern capitalism.

The main features and requirements of the basic economic law of modern capitalism might be formulated roughly in this way: the securing of the maximum capitalist profit through the exploitation, ruin and impoverishment of the majority of the population of the given country, through the enslavement and systematic robbery of the peoples of other countries, especially backward countries, and, lastly, through wars and militarization of the national economy, which are utilized for the obtaining of the highest profits. (*Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, FLP, p. 39)

It is basic to Marxism that we come to an understanding of what the proletariat is only by first coming to an understanding of the economic system itself, because the proletariat is the specific and essential product of capitalist industry.

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its specific and essential product. (Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, FLP, p. 44)

The proletariat in the imperialist countries is the “**specific and essential product**” of modern industry, of the huge structure of finance capital. The imperialists hire vast armies of proletarians in the capitalist countries themselves, armies which slave in exploitation and misery in order to realize a profit for their exploiters. Lenin, who

first set forth a scientific understanding of the transformation of competitive capitalism into the capitalism of the monopolies, makes it clear that it is finance capital itself which structures the proletariat under imperialism and which gives rise to the socialization of labour in the imperialist countries.

The socialization of labour, which is advancing ever more rapidly in thousands of forms, and which has manifested itself very strikingly during the half-century that has elapsed since the death of Marx in the growth of large-scale production, capitalist cartels, syndicates and trusts, as well as in the gigantic increase in the dimensions and power of finance capital, forms the chief material foundation for the inevitable coming of socialism.
(*Karl Marx*, FLP, p. 35)

Under imperialism, the proletariat is that class which labours in antagonistic contradiction with capital, particularly finance capital, the imperialist bourgeoisie. Stalin definitively states that there are four fundamental contradictions in the world in the era of imperialism; of these, three are internal to the imperialist system itself. Within the capitalist countries is found the first contradiction of imperialism;

The first contradiction is the contradiction between labour and capital. Imperialism is the omnipotence of the monopolist trusts and syndicates, of the banks and the financial oligarchy, in the industrial countries. (*Foundations of Leninism*, FLP, p. 4)

The proletariat in the imperialist countries is the “**specific and essential product**” principally of “**the monopolist trusts and syndicates, of the banks and the financial oligarchy.**” The march of capital, its transformation from competition into monopoly, has given rise to a vast army of socialized labour. These workers depend for their survival on the sale of their labour power; through the exploitation of their labour, the bourgeoisie is able to realize profit because part of the labour of these workers is unpaid.

This discussion becomes necessary because countless hours have been wasted by Marxologists of all stripes who try to figure out “who is and who is not a *real* worker” on the basis of whether these workers make rivets, carry rivets, sell rivets, clean rivets, file letters about rivets, answer telephone calls about rivets, etc. “**The proletariat is the child of capitalism.**” (Lenin, “Imperialism and the Split in Socialism,” LCW 23:111) We cannot know the structure of the proletariat

until we know the structure of the bourgeoisie.

The specific needs of finance capital, then, define the nature of the proletariat as a class in the industrialized countries of the imperialist world. Lenin explains that imperialism results in

...the “training and disciplining” of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialized apparatus of the postal service, railways, big factories, large-scale commerce, banking, etc., etc. (*The State and Revolution*, FLP, p. 120)

Some of these workers labour all day, or all night, to produce goods in the big factories. Others service and repair the vastly complicated machinery of advanced technical society, or punch holes in cards to be devoured by the gigantic computers which the imperialists use to keep track of their squabbling over profit. Some proletarians do maintenance work for the railways and airplanes, others drive trucks for huge transit companies, others sort mail for the postal service. Some sit behind switchboards, doing the work to maintain the huge system of telephone communication which the imperialist system demands. Others type, file, and count money to keep track of the vast labyrinth of paper work generated by the monopolists; others make beds in huge hospitals; still others work behind counters in the department stores of the monopoly sales tycoons who are trying to dispose of a plethora of overproduced goods.

Imperialism socializes the labour of these workers, it trains them and it disciplines them. Monopoly capitalism gives rise to a specific kind of proletarian army, which includes the bank tellers, the telephone operators, the sales clerks and the insurance clerks as fully and as indispensably as the factory workers and the millworkers. The entire army of labourers generated by imperialism, which fills the specific needs of finance capital through the sale of labour-power, an army which is created, exploited, robbed, disciplined and socialized by the imperialist bourgeoisie, is the **“intellectual and moral driving force and the physical executant of this transformation”** from capitalism to socialism in the epoch of proletarian revolution. (Lenin, *Karl Marx*, FLP, p. 35) Lenin is further clear that it is the *socialization of labour* which is key in understanding the relationship between imperialism and proletarian revolution when he says:

It is clear why imperialism is *moribund* capitalism, capitalism in *transition* to socialism: monopoly, which grows out of capitalism, is *already* dying capitalism, the beginning of its transition to socialism. The tremendous

socialization of labour by imperialism (what its apologists — the bourgeois economists — call “interlocking”) produces the same result. (“Imperialism and the Split in Socialism,” LCW 23:107)

Much of this labour is productive labour. Productive workers are those who produce surplus value for capital (whether they are producing tangible products or vendible services).

Productive labour, in its meaning for capitalist production, is wage-labour which, exchanged against the variable part of capital (the part of capital which is spent on wages), reproduces not only this part of the capital (or the value of its own labour-power), but in addition produces surplus-value for the capitalist. Only that wage-labour is productive which produces capital.... Only that labour-power is productive which produces a value greater than its own. (Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, vol. 1, Progress, p. 156)

It is obvious that factory workers who labour all day to produce a specific tangible product are productive workers. Auto workers, textile and garment workers, those who labour in the mines and the steel mills, all produce surplus value for the bourgeoisie. The various women workers whom we have already discussed in Canadian history, such as the textile and garment workers, those who work in weaving factories and those who make cigars, fur coats and shoes, are productive workers of this first type.

But Marx polemicized at great length against those who considered that only labour which produced tangible products was productive labour. He quotes Adam Smith to the effect that “unproductive labour” is labour whose “services perish in the very instant of their performance,” and shows that vendible services are productive labour if they are producing more value for the capitalist than the capitalist has laid out in wages. Thus, for Marx, a prostitute is a productive worker if she is working in the service of an entrepreneur who draws a profit from the services she renders, and if her wages are paid out of the value she has created.

...An entrepreneur of theatres, concerts, brothels, etc., buys the temporary disposal over the labour-power of the actors, musicians, prostitutes, etc. — in fact in a roundabout way that is only of formal economic interest; in its result the process is the same — he buys this so-

called “unproductive labour,” whose “services perish in the very instant of their performance” and do not fix or realize themselves “any permanent” (“particular” is also used) “subject or vendible commodity” (apart from themselves). The sale of these to the public provides him with wages and profit. And these services which he has thus bought enable him to buy them again; that is to say, they themselves renew the fund from which they are paid for. The same is true for example of the labour of clerks employed by a lawyer in his office — except for the fact that these services as a rule also embody themselves in very bulky “particular subjects” in the form of immense bundles of documents. (Ibid., p. 166)

In other words, productive labourers under imperialism consist not only of the auto workers who create cars, but also of the car wash attendants who wash cars and the mechanics who repair cars. Their “services perish in the very instant of their performance,” but what they have done directly enriches the capitalist who owns the enterprise, and their wages are paid out of the total value which is created by what they do.* Charwomen, chambermaids, waiters and waitresses,† and dishwashers perform productive labour — *provided that* a capitalist has employed them to enrich his own profits rather than paying them out of his own pocket in order to enjoy their personal services.

For this second type of work, however — service work — the level of mechanization, the level of investment in equipment, is often far lower than that in a factory. Unionization is at a far lower level

* “A service is nothing more than the useful effect of a use-value, be it of a commodity, or be it of labour.” (Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, 1967, p. 187)

† Marx specifically refers to waiters as productive workers when they are producing surplus value “...The cooks and waiters in a public hotel are productive labourers, in so far as their labour is transformed into capital for the proprietor of the hotel. These same persons are unproductive labourers as menial servants, inasmuch as I do not make capital out of their services, but spend revenue on them. In fact, however, these same persons are also for me, the consumer, unproductive labourers in the hotel.” (*Theories of Surplus Value*, p. 159)

because most service industries have developed more recently in the era of imperialism than has factory work in general. The organization and discipline of the production process is at a lower level, the concentration of workers is at a lower level, and the capitalist has a better chance of paying a pittance and of engaging in layoffs and firings at will than in most unionized factories. In other words, service work is productive work in which the labourers can be more intensively exploited and more easily manipulated than in many forms of factory work. This is very important to the imperialist bourgeoisie in its search for maximum profit, because maximum profit can be more easily realized by investing in sectors where the investment in machinery is lower and the demands of the workers are lower. Thus imperialism has seen the mushrooming of the service sector and the service sector has drawn into its ranks masses of proletarian women.

This is one example of an important use which the imperialist bourgeoisie has made of female labour in the twentieth century. Over the long term, in the twentieth century, women have been steadily drawn out of the home and into the workplace. In proportion as this has happened, certain sectors of the imperialist bourgeoisie have expanded to meet the specific needs of finance capital. These certain sectors are newer than the older sectors of industrial manufacture, they allow therefore for a more intense level of exploitation, and they are more attractive to capitalists because they demand a lower initial investment and offer higher chances for profit. These newer sectors are inevitably created because the surplus value drawn out of the older sectors is used to create additional means of production. Those newer sectors then either hire workers who are thrown off from the older sectors, because the older sectors have reached higher levels of efficiency in production, or else they hire the new population entering the labour market which cannot possibly be absorbed by those older sectors which are growing in efficiency. Marx carefully explains the need of capital to create these new sectors and the inevitability that the surplus labour sloughed off from the older sectors is the labour which is hired by the newer sectors:

In 1875, at the peak of competitive capitalism, clerical work was a relatively privileged male occupation and it employed only a very small percentage of the workforce. The above is an artist's conception of the moral degeneracy and horror which would ensue if women were allowed entry into the clerical field.

With the transformation of competitive capitalism into monopoly came a sudden leap in the needs of the imperialist bourgeoisie for record-keeping, accounting, and keeping track of value.

What was needed was a large, relatively well-educated, and poorly paid army of workers to do this work. Suddenly clerical work became "woman's work," and women were drawn out of the home to do it. By 1921 clerical work surpassed domestic work as the largest occupational category of working women.

The expansion by fits and starts of the scale of production... is impossible without disposable human material, without an increase in the number of labourers independently of the absolute growth of the population.



This increase is effected by the simple process that constantly "sets free" a part of the labourers; by methods which lessen the number of labourers employed in proportion to the increased production. The whole form of the movement of modern industry depends, therefore, upon the constant transformation of a part of the labouring population into unemployed or half-employed hands. (*Capital*, vol. I, Progress, p. 593)

This need of modern industry to constantly create newer sectors and to constantly draw upon an expanding population of labourers to fill these sectors, is serviced very heavily by the increasing employment of women. In the newer sectors of the economy, those which have particularly mushroomed under imperialism — service work being the first example — women make up the majority and sometimes the overwhelming majority of workers. In other words, women

form the ideal reservoir of labour for the new mass occupations, the latent reserve army of labour analogous to the latent reserve army of agricultural labourers which Marx describes at length in *Capital*. They are available in vast numbers for employment and they are available at low wages, which is ideal from the point of view of the bourgeoisie in its search for maximum profit as it seeks new sectors to invest in. The participation rate of women workers in the labour force has been rising steadily throughout the century, as the participation rate of male workers has been slowly declining; as the participation of women increases, they “participate” in those sectors which are poorly paid, menial, poorly unionized, easily manipulated, and easily laid off. Eighty-five percent of the rise in female labour force participation from 1890-1930 was in these newest sectors: service work, clerical work, and sales.¹²⁹

Let us examine service work more closely. We have seen that throughout the nineteenth century domestic work employed by far the largest numbers of women. Marx emphasized that in England and Wales there were far more “**modern domestic slaves**” than factory workers in several different major categories (*Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 420-21). These domestic servants made beds, tended children, washed clothes, prepared food, and tended the sick. Now, with the era of monopoly capitalism, many of these private services have been taken out of the home and transformed into modern large-scale industry. Sick people are put into hospitals, and women of strata deep into the proletariat make the hospital beds and work night shift lifting heavy patients. Poorly paid proletarian women work in dangerous, hot, poorly ventilated laundries washing clothes. Whereas before, thousands of women cooked and served food privately for the bourgeoisie in their own homes, today millions of poorly paid women work around the clock at breakneck pace to serve food to the people who have moved out of the home to eat their meals. Today the occupation of serving food is 83% female.

It is an old song with a new tune. Women move out of the home and into the arenas of socialized public industry to follow their work. Whereas one hundred years ago they left behind their petty hand sewing to follow the sewing machine into the factory, sewing all the time, today they have left the jobs of serving food, washing clothes and tending children to follow these tasks as their historical locus shifts. What is more, when they return home at night these women must still engage in the same tasks, but on a private basis, doing the housework

which they have not been able to do during the day. They are saddled with this double burden because the basis of socialized housework, which they are doing the work to build within the framework of capitalist society, cannot possibly yet liberate them from the drudgery of private housework. Restaurants, laundries, day care centres, etc. under capitalism are part of the basic core out of which socialized housework will be built under a socialist system. But they are far too inadequate and far too expensive to service the masses of women, to liberate them from household drudgery. Thus there is the dual phenomenon: proletarian women are doing the work to lay the foundations of socialized housework through the service industry, and at the same time they are forced to carry the full load of privatized housework in the specific framework of domestic slavery.

There is another form of productive service work which gives many women their livelihood under imperialism, but it is hardly new. This work is prostitution, which Marx specifically mentions as productive work and which Lenin is absolutely clear cannot be abolished under capitalism. **“So long as wage-slavery exists, inevitably prostitution too will exist.”** (“Capitalism and Female Labour,” LCW 36:230) Prostitution under imperialism is a vast industry, not only in the old and “illegal” sense but also in the form of a multimillion dollar pornography industry, which is the bourgeoisie’s way of legalizing prostitution and enabling it to enter the realm of monopolies. This is an example of service work which is fundamentally useless to humanity and which thrives only because of the decadent system in which we are living. Growing numbers of women are being forced to sell their bodies in various ways because the wages which they are paid in other jobs are too low to support their families. The way the bourgeoisie extracts surplus-value from the services of these women by using their specific oppression as women is so obvious as to not need explanation.

Service workers of all kinds produce surplus-value for the bourgeoisie. To an increasing degree, their work is being socialized and they are organizing to defend themselves. Many forms of service work are not only arduous, tedious and exhausting, but also so poorly paid that a full-time worker can often not even support herself on her wages, much less support children or pay for childcare expenses. What is more, many service jobs are night jobs (hospital work, cleaning department stores, telephone operating, etc.) and capitalist society makes no provisions at all for childcare for these women. With the

exception of female factory workers, there is hardly a section of the working class which is more downtrodden than female service workers.

E. Maximum profit and Unproductive Work

Productive labour is at the basis of the capitalist mode of production. Without it there would be no surplus-value.

But this by no means indicates that only productive workers are part of the proletariat under capitalism. On the contrary, Marx polemicized at great length against those who were so busy painting capitalism as an idyllic system, **“the best of all possible worlds, in which everything is useful”** (*Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol. 1, p. 290), that they tried to paint all work under capitalism as productive work. In Marx’s day the bourgeois economists tried to achieve this objective by claiming that **“all useful labour is really productive, and the whole labouring class of society equally deserves the name *productive*.”** (As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 269) Today, the same kind of apology more commonly takes the form of claiming that those who are not productive workers do not really labour, are not really a part of the working class, that only that part of the proletariat which is productive is the **“really revolutionary class.”** Both bourgeois formulations have the same objective: **“...What on the surface is glorification of the productive labourer is in fact only glorification of the *industrial capitalist* in contrast to landlords and such moneyed capitalists as live only on their revenue.”** (*Ibid.*, p. 271)

In contrast to the bourgeois economists, Marx understood that there was a stratum of the bourgeoisie whose workers produced no value but which paid its workers out of revenue. These were the merchant capitalists, who worked in the sphere not of production but of the circulation of capital.

Merchant’s capital is simply capital functioning in the sphere of circulation. The process of circulation is a phase of the total process of reproduction. But no value is produced in the process of circulation and, therefore, no surplus-value. Only changes of form of the same mass of value take place. In fact, nothing occurs there outside the metamorphosis of commodities, and this has nothing to do as such either with the creation or change of values. If a surplus-value is realised in the sale of produced commodities, then this is only because it already existed in

them. (*Capital*, Vol. 3, Progress, p. 279)

Commercial capital... creates neither value nor surplus-value, but acts as middleman in their realisation and thereby simultaneously in the actual exchange of commodities, i.e., in their transfer from hand to hand, in the social metabolism.... Since merchant's capital does not itself produce surplus-value, it is evident that the surplus-value which it pockets in the form of average profit must be a portion of the surplus-value produced by the total productive capital. (Ibid., p. 282)

When the merchant capitalist invests in constant capital (offices, equipment, etc.) and variable capital (wages), he is not investing such as to produce anything, but only to realize the value of goods which have been produced in the productive sector.

All these costs are not incurred in producing the use-value of commodities, but in realising their value. They are pure costs of circulation. They do not enter into the immediate process of production, but since they are part of the process of circulation they are also part of the total process of reproduction. (Ibid., p. 289)

Since the merchant capitalist is not making any investments which directly allow the production of surplus-value, it is obvious that his employees are unproductive workers.

The question now arises: What about the commercial wage-workers employed by the commercial capitalist, here the merchant?

In one respect, such a commercial employee is a wage-worker like any other. In the first place, his labour-power is bought with the variable capital of the merchant, not with money expended as revenue, and consequently it is not bought for private service, but for the purpose of expanding the value of the capital advanced for it. In the second place, the value of his labour-power, and thus his wages, are determined as those of other wage-workers, i.e., by the cost of production and reproduction of his specific labour-power, not by the product of his labour. (Ibid., p. 292)

There can be no doubt, then, that a worker need not produce surplus-value for the bourgeoisie to be a part of the proletariat. The commercial employee sells his labour-power to the bourgeoisie and in do-

ing so expands the value of the capital which is advanced in the purchase of his labour-power. Just as the industrial capitalist and the merchant capitalist are both capitalists, so the industrial proletarian and the commercial proletarian are both proletarians. The difference is merely in what they each do for the bourgeoisie, in which capacity they each serve to enable the bourgeoisie to make its profits.

However, we must make the same distinction between him and the wage-workers directly employed by industrial capital which exists between industrial capital and merchant's capital, and thus between the industrial capitalist and the merchant. Since the merchant, as a mere agent of circulation, produces neither value nor surplus-value (for the additional value which he adds to the commodities through his expenses resolves itself into an addition of previously existing values, although the question here poses itself, how he preserves this value of his constant capital?) it follows that the mercantile workers employed by him in these same functions cannot directly create surplus-value for him. (Ibid., p. 293)

And elsewhere Marx adds that the commercial worker **“creates no direct surplus-value, but adds to the capitalist's income by helping him to reduce the cost of realizing surplus-value, inasmuch as he performs partly unpaid labour.”** (Ibid., p. 300) Engels in a footnote to this section specifically refers to the **“commercial proletariat.”** (Ibid., p. 301)

The surplus-value of a commodity cannot be realized until the commodity is sold. Thus it is obvious that the circulation of capital is an essential component of the capitalist system, whether in its competitive stage or in the stage of monopolies. But whereas under competitive capitalism commodities were sold either directly by a merchant-capitalist or by a very small number of wage-workers whom he hired to realize the value of the commodities, under imperialism the business of sales itself has become its own monopoly. Department stores such as Eaton's and the Hudson's Bay Company, and supermarkets such as Dominion and Loblaws, have established huge networks of sales outlets which drive countless small merchants out of competition and which themselves play their part in the socialization of labour under imperialism. The recent buying-out of Simpsons by the Hudson's Bay Company, making the Bay Canada's largest non-food retailer, is only the latest example of the increasing concentra-

tion of capital in its frantic effort to dispose of a plethora of overproduced goods.

The labour which has been socialized by this sector of finance capital is principally female. It has been women who have been drawn into the department stores and supermarkets to do the labour of disposing of these goods. And this is but another example of the movement of women out of the home and into the employ of monopoly capitalism. Whereas before women at home made clothes, soap and butter for home consumption and then took them to market, or even opened up small grocery stores in order to support their families, today women are being drawn into the vast new sales monopolies selling clothes, soap and butter. As the circulation of goods for mass consumption becomes an industry in itself, it is the women who are called upon to do the work required. The sudden expansion of the sales sector under imperialism, and the sudden leap in the role of women in providing the cheap labour for this sector, is shown by the fact that between 1901 and 1921 the number of Canadian "sales girls" rose from 2,700 to 36,189.¹³¹

The opening of monopoly sales concerns has meant the development of very oppressive working conditions for women. Eaton's Department store, when it first opened its doors, hired women to stand on their feet for twelve to sixteen hours a day and fired them for sitting down.¹³² In some countries the workers won laws protecting their health, such as laws requiring that chairs be provided, but the store management would sidestep these laws by buying chairs and forbidding women to sit in them. If the law stated that women were allowed to sit in these chairs, the company would provide two chairs for 85 women. Toilet facilities would be provided on only one out of every several floors, and the time allotted for breaks was too short to get the toilet, wait in line to use it, and return to work. The result of this desperate thirst on the part of the capitalists for every last dollar was that kidney disease became an occupational hazard of sales work in department stores.¹³³

Particularly promoted by the department stores during the first days of their existence were ready-made clothes and household appliances such as sewing machines and wringer washing machines.¹³⁴ In other words, as the socialization and mechanization of household tasks proceeded in the large-scale social arena, "freeing" women from particularly time-consuming household burdens, the women so "freed" had to follow the goods into the Eaton's sales counters, to

market them to the public, in order to make enough money to buy this free time which such clothes and appliances were to provide for them. And because their salaries were so low, many of them could not afford to buy these goods which they were selling.

The labour force in retail sales is 66%¹³⁵ female. Not only does the bourgeoisie use this reality to slash the wages of retail sales-clerks, but it also uses the sexuality of women as an advertising gimmick in the sale of its products. Women who sell clothes and cosmetics, for example, are expected to display the products on their person, thereby promoting the bourgeois image of the “feminine” (passive, idle) woman consumer to increase the profits of the bourgeoisie. These dress requirements have been a heavy financial burden on poorly-paid women.¹³⁶

But the role of unproductive labour under imperialism comprises much, much more than that of sales-clerks alone. To understand this, we must come back to a basic understanding of imperialism itself.

We have seen that Marx refers to merchant capital as playing the role of middleman in the realization of value for the bourgeois class. At one point he refers to “**the salesman**” as “**the industrial capitalists’ wage-labourer.**” (*Capital*, vol. 3, Progress, p. 290) But the role of certain of these humble middlemen is transformed under imperialism, and the hierarchy of capital is reversed. Lenin states:

The principal and original function of banks is to serve as middlemen in the making of payments. In doing so they transform inactive money capital into active, that is, into capital yielding a profit; they collect all kinds of money revenues and place them at the disposal of the capitalist class.

As banking develops and becomes concentrated in a small number of establishments, the banks grow from humble middlemen into powerful monopolies having at their command almost the whole of the money capital of all the capitalists and small businessmen and also the larger part of the means of production and of the sources of raw materials of the given country and in a number of countries. This transformation of numerous humble middlemen into a handful of monopolists represents one of the fundamental processes in the growth of capitalism into capitalist imperialism. (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, FLP, p. 31)

The role of commercial capital takes a qualitative leap under imperialism, as banking capital merges with industrial capital to form finance capital. And with this qualitative leap, the importance of the commercial proletariat also takes a leap forward, because it is the changing role of merchant capital above all which led the way **“from the old capitalism to the new, from the domination of capital in general to the domination of finance capital.”** (*Ibid.*, p. 52) And the domination of finance capital means the domination of parasitism, the domination of stagnation and decay.

We have already seen Lenin explain that capitalist monopoly **“inevitably engenders a tendency to stagnation and decay.”** (*Ibid.*, p. 119)

Since monopoly prices are established, even temporarily, the motive cause of technical and, consequently, of all progress, disappears to a certain extent and, further, the economic possibility arises of deliberately retarding technical progress. (*Ibid.*, p. 120)

Furthermore, imperialism is marked by the

extraordinary growth of a class, or rather, of a social stratum of rentiers, i.e., people who live by “clipping coupons,” who take no part in any enterprise whatever, whose profession is idleness. The export of capital, one of the most essential economic bases of imperialism, still more completely isolates the rentiers from production and sets the seal of parasitism on the whole country that lives by exploiting the labour of several overseas countries and colonies. (*Ibid.*, p. 120)

Imperialism is a moribund, decaying system, **“dying but not yet dead.”** (“Revision of the Party Program,” LCW 24:464) It is featured by the extraordinary growth of an idle bourgeoisie, which has its roots in the merchant bourgeoisie of which Marx spoke in reference to the era of competitive capitalism. This parasitic bourgeoisie hires out of its revenue an entire stratum of unproductive workers. The mushrooming of these unproductive sectors is basic to the functioning of finance capital.

We have seen before that just as the industrial capitalist and the merchant capitalist were both capitalists, so the industrial proletariat and the commercial proletariat were both proletarians. Now, with the transformation of competition into monopoly, industrial capital and banking capital are fused into one, finance capital.

The concentration of production; the monopolies arising therefrom; the merging or coalescence of the banks with industry — such is the history of the rise of finance capital and such is the content of this term. (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*,” FLP, pp. 52-3)

And if banking and industrial capital are fused into one, finance capital, this being the very meaning of imperialism itself, so we may say that from a strategic point of view their workers are *the proletariat*, the proletariat of finance capital, the proletariat under imperialism. There is no scientific basis whatsoever to make a strategic distinction between productive and unproductive labour when coming to conclusions about the nature of the proletariat under imperialism. Both serve the imperialist bourgeoisie in its quest for maximum profit; both are a part of one aspect of the contradiction between labour and capital. In fact, there could be no imperialism without the unproductive workers, for it is these workers who labour to prop up the agony and decay of imperialism, it is the sector in which they work which puts the stamp of reaction upon the entire imperialist system.

Just as imperialism by definition is marked by a large stratum of idle parasitic capitalists, so these capitalists inevitably hire workers in order to increase their share of profits. With the qualitative leap from competitive to monopoly capitalism, the need suddenly grew for accounting, record-keeping, and correspondence. Shoes did not just have to be produced; to an unprecedented degree, they now had to be accounted for, files had to be kept on their manufacture and distribution, and they had to be advertised. Letters had to be written about them, from one business to another, keeping track of whose profit on the shoe was whose. To an unprecedented degree, loans had to be made to shoe manufacturers and shoe establishments had to be insured against loss. With the huge monopoly method of production, planning and scheduling became an industry of its own. Bankers, insurance agents, lawyers, advertisers, financiers, stockbrokers and rentiers of every stripe swarmed around the industrial capitalist trying to extract ever more profit from work which they had not done and which their own labourers had not done. All of this squabbling had to be accounted for so that every parasite was to be assured of his maximum profit.¹³⁷

In securing his maximum profit, the idle capitalist does not make profit directly from the surplus value of his labourers. On the con-

trary, the high capital investment in industrial production drives capitalists to seek their profits from parasitic adventures where the investment in equipment is low or nil. It takes a huge sum of money to open up a new centre of industrial manufacture, with modern equipment. On top of that, the capitalist may take a chance that his workers will unionize quickly, particularly if they are already a part of a trade which is unionized. The prospects for maximum profit are not particularly appealing. The clever parasite may well decide that he would sooner place his money in a one-room office with a rug, a desk, a telephone, a typewriter, and an adding machine. He hires a woman at a pittance wage to answer the telephone and to do some office work and he makes a fabulous sum of money clipping coupons and gambling on investments.

It is precisely this drive for maximum profit which drives the transformation from competitive capitalism to monopoly, to avoid the price-lowering effects of competition by concentrating production. It is precisely this search to invest in sectors with the lowest initial output of money, the lowest labour costs, and the highest return on investment which creates the stratum of rentiers, financiers, and coupon-clippers; which creates the moribund, decadent, unproductive, reactionary nature of imperialism. Imperialism is the epoch of capitalism in which the tendency to stagnation and decay is principal; one implication of this is that the laws of the system discourage the bourgeoisie from investing in those sectors which are the most productive and encourage it to invest more in those sectors which are useless and parasitic. It is the drive for maximum profit which ushers in the downfall of capitalism and which creates the inevitability of proletarian revolution.

“Marxologists” think a great deal about defining the working class around the question of the creation of surplus value. Capitalists, however, think not about surplus value, but about profit. Marx explains:

To industrial capital the costs of circulation appear as unproductive expenses, and so they are. To the merchant they appear as a source of his profit.... (*Capital*, vol. 3, Progress, p. 301)

In their endless and insatiable thirst for maximum profit, the rentiers, the parasites, the financiers and the coupon-clippers squabble ever more intensely for a share of the surplus value produced by the productive workers of the society.



It is precisely a characteristic of this decaying system to employ vast armies of workers who themselves produce no surplus value but who instead labour to enable the stratum of parasites to realize more profits for themselves. These workers are fully part of the **“majority of the population of the given country”** which is subject to **“exploitation, ruin and impoverishment.”** In fact, Marx’s basic prediction that the advance of capital would more and more polarize society into two hostile classes, with the vast majority of the society thrown into the ranks of the proletariat, *can have no other meaning than this*: precisely because the advance of capital means the transformation of capital into monopoly and hence the extraordinary growth of the stratum of parasites. The labour employed by these parasites is fully part of the **“first contradiction, the contradiction between labour and capital”**; in fact such a contradiction can take no other form, given the objective laws of imperialism. There are those who talk only about productive workers when they seek to describe the proletariat as a class in the imperialist countries, but such talk is only an apology and a cover for the decadent nature of monopoly capitalism. The link between imperialism and the mushrooming of the unproductive sector was well established by Lenin when he set forward his basic analysis in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, where he carefully documented the growth of the banks, the leap in the number of holding companies, the extraordinary expansion of the export of capital. These scientific truths are confirmed on another level when we examine the sudden changes which took place in the structure of the

proletariat at the turn of the century. Table 1 [p. 88] shows the extraordinary mushrooming of the clerical sector and the trade and finance sector between 1891 and 1921. The statistics for manufacturing and mechanical work are provided for comparison. The same leaps forward are obvious in the American statistics: the number of stenographers and typists went from 154 in 1870 to 5,000 in 1880, to 33,400 in 1890, to 112,600 in 1900, to 326,700 in 1910, and to 615,100 in 1920.¹³⁸ The bourgeoisie was hiring workers in accordance with its newest needs.

This vast army of unproductive workers in insurance companies, banks, advertising agencies, computer firms, accounting offices, trust companies, and the stock exchange, as well as the nonproductive sectors of industrial enterprises, transportation companies, and the telephone companies, are a part of the **“huge, complex, socialized apparatus”** of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Their revolutionary struggle is inseparable from the revolutionary struggle of productive workers.

And to whom has the bourgeoisie turned in its need for nonproductive labour, in its need to fill the accounting offices, the banks, typing and filing pools, and the keypunch operations with workers? In overwhelming numbers, it has turned to women, the vast reservoir of labour, the latent reserve army which is being drawn steadily into the workplace in proportion as imperialism advances. By far the largest occupational category of women in Canada today is clerical work, representing more than a third of all women workers.¹³⁹ Clerical work was the first work to supplant domestic service as the largest occupational category of women.¹⁴⁰

Before the era of imperialism, clerical work was a relatively privileged male occupation. Clerical workers worked in small offices under the direct eyesight of their employers and they often developed a certain privileged relationship with them.¹⁴¹ But now, with the advent of imperialism, a whole new stratum of low-level, dead-end proletarian jobs was opening up, ones which could offer no possible avenue of advancement or future for the workers.¹⁴² It is therefore not surprising that the bourgeoisie turned to the reserve of women to fill these new needs.

The women who went into clerical work at the beginning of the century were generally high-school educated and native-born.¹⁴³ Frequently employers formally refused to hire any immigrants for clerical jobs.¹⁴⁴ These jobs were seen as a very desirable form of work for educated women who were closed off from nursing, teaching, and

social work, because the working conditions were much cleaner and less strenuous in offices than in factories, domestic work, laundries, hospitals, department stores, etc.¹⁴⁵ Many young women attended business school to learn typing and shorthand in order to ensure their survival.¹⁴⁶ Turning clerical work into women's work was a golden opportunity for the bourgeoisie to slash the wages of its well-educated workforce as it braced itself for the expansion of the clerical sector.¹⁴⁷

It was not without plan and effort that clerical work became women's work. Before the imperialist epoch, bourgeois publications had expressed outright horror when the occasional woman sought to enter the clerical field.

My voice trembled a little, but I mustered up courage and spoke. "I have called about your advertisement—" "

He eyed me up and down. I am slender, and, I will venture to say, if not pretty, at least interesting looking.

"How many words a minute?" he asked after a long pause....

He perused me up and down with his small pig's eyes, as if he were buying a horse, scrutinizing my face, my figure, my hands, my feet. I felt like a Circassian in an Arab slavemarket....¹⁴⁴

Comments one writer on the above-quoted novel, *The Typewriter Girl*, believed to have been written in the late nineteenth century:

The implication here seems to be that a decent girl is risking her morality if she tries to invade the male preserve of the office.... The message seems clear: the office was a dangerous place for a woman of virtue.¹⁴⁹

By 1916, however, the bourgeoisie had changed its tune with regard to women in office work. *Ladies' Home Journal* had the following words to say about "the stenographer plus":

I should describe the equipment of the ideal stenographer as follows: Twenty percent represents technical ability — that is, the ability to write and read shorthand and to typewrite rapidly and accurately; thirty percent equals general information—that is, education other than that in shorthand and typewriting; and the last and most important fifty percent I should ascribe to personality....

A large employer of stenographic help said to me once: "I expect from my stenographer the same service that I

get from the sun, with this exception: the sun often goes on a strike and it is necessary for me to use artificial light, but I pay my stenographer to work six days out of every seven, and I expect her all the while to radiate my office with sunshine and sympathetic interest in the things I am trying to do.”

It is the spirit in which the stenographer lives and works as well as the volume of her work that makes her profitable. She must be adaptable, agreeable, courteous. Perhaps no single word so underwrites her success as “courtesy”; this is the keyword in all of our new gospels of salesmanship and efficiency. Our great enterprises are showing us to what extent courtesy can be capitalized.¹⁵⁰

Another (much later) statement by the bourgeoisie, an even clearer one, of the fine addition which the “women’s role at home” could make to office life, is as follows:

The whole point of the whole problem, in other words, is that women occupy the office because the male employer wants them there. Why he wants them there is another question which cannot be answered merely by saying that once there they take to the work very nicely. It is doubtless true that women take to the work nicely. Their conscious or subconscious intention some day to marry, and their conscious or subconscious willingness to be directed by men, render them amenable and obedient and relieve them of the ambition which makes it difficult for men to put their devotion into secretarial work. But that fact only partially explains the male employer’s preference. It indicates that women and by virtue of some of their most womanly traits are capable of making the office a more pleasant, peaceful, and homelike place. But it does not indicate why the employer desires that kind of office rather than an office full of ambitious and pushing young men intent upon hammering their typewriters into presidential desks. To get at that problem pure speculation is the only tool.

One might well speculate somewhat as follows: the effect of the industrial revolution was the domestication of women. In the working classes the substitute for domestic servitude was factory servitude. In the well-to-do classes, to which the office employer’s wife belongs, the substitute for

domestic responsibility was no responsibility — or no responsibility to speak of. Consequently, in the well-to-do classes, women were presented first with idleness, then with discontent with idleness, and finally with that odd mixture of rebellion and independence which changed the face of American society in the years that followed the War. In the process the upper-class home, as the upper-class home was known to the Victorians, disappeared. The male was no longer master in his own dining room and dreadful in his own den nor did a small herd of wives, daughters, and sisters hear his voice and tremble. He was, on the contrary, the more or less equal mate of a more or less unpredictable woman. And he resented it.

He resented the loss of his position. He regretted the old docility, the old obedience, the old devotion to his personal interests. And finding himself unable to re-create the late, lost paradise in his home he set about re-creating it in his office. What he wanted in the office was not the office mistress described at least fifty-two times a year by American short-story writers. His very pretty and very clever and very expensive wife was already mistress enough and to spare. What he wanted in the office was something as much like the vanished wife of his father's generation as could be arranged — someone to balance his checkbook, buy his railroad tickets, check his baggage, get him his seats in the fourth row, take his daughter to the dentist, listen to his side of the story, give him a courageous look when things were blackest and generally know all, understand all....

Whether or not any such speculative explanation of the male desire for a female office is sound there can be no doubt that the desire exists and that it is the male employer who is chiefly responsible for the female secretary.¹⁵¹

And Marjorie MacMurchy, the wife of the chairman of the 1916 Ontario Commission on Unemployment, cautioned stenographers to be tranquil, well-poised, to put themselves in the background and to work harmoniously with their associates.¹⁵²

The clerical workforce, much more so than any other sector of the proletariat, labours directly under the nose of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Often the workers are expected to dress and act like the bourgeoisie (a very expensive pursuit on low wages) and to represent the

bourgeoisie directly to the public and to other bourgeois clients. Thus it is clerical workers who must bear the brunt of the dissatisfaction of the public when the bourgeoisie is cutting back on costs and the services rendered to the public are inadequate. For example, when cutbacks at banks force customers to wait in long lines, the bourgeoisie can hide the cause of its cutbacks and let the bank tellers be blamed by customers for the discomfort and time lost. Although clerical work is actually increasingly proletarianized, the bourgeoisie has struggled to foster a sense of individual identification with management among clerical workers, a struggle which it was forced to abandon much earlier in the case of factory workers and other proletarians. The bourgeois are much more capable of keeping a careful watch on any budding trends towards unionization than they are in other workplace circumstances.

In such conditions, the bourgeoisie has found the “feminization” of the clerical workforce extremely useful. The woman’s place is supposedly in the home, but the office was to become the home away from home. The stenographer-typist was to become a surrogate housewife, happy to serve coffee, flirt, dress in ways which attract physical attention, and expect or demand nothing in terms of equality, advancement, rights, or self-defense. The office was thus to become a locus of the oppression of women not only as workers but also in terms of their specific oppression as women, the locus of reinforcement of the concept of the “woman’s place.” It took much effort and propaganda, but the bourgeoisie was able to make the ever-increasing participation of women in the workforce appear utterly compatible with the idea that the woman naturally belonged in the home.

The objective laws of the march of capitalism, of course, override such subjective plans on the part of the imperialist bourgeoisie. The needs of the system for maximum profit have forced the bourgeoisie to socialize the labour of clerical workers to an ever-increasing degree and to increase the capital investment in clerical work. Electric typewriters replaced manual ones, automatic word-processing machines are replacing electric typewriters, typing pools undermine the housewifely “secretary-boss” relationship which long served to discourage the unionization of clerical labour. The heavy dependence of banks and insurance companies on computer workers and keypunch operators only add to the fact that finance capitalism produces a stream of paper which is processed in a continuous flow just like the flow of an assembly line, with workers organized in much the same

way.¹⁵³

Today, with clerical work by far the largest category of working women, more and more women work in offices because they desperately need their wages for their own survival and for the survival of their families. Many government clerical workers are organized, and Canadian banks, which are among the most concentrated banks in the world and which essentially hold the power of Canadian finance capital, are bracing themselves for the unionization of bank employees.¹⁵⁴ January 1979 saw the first strike in the history of Canadian bank workers; it was very short-lived, but it was a forecast of things to come. As imperialism desperately tries to hold onto its overextended possessions around the world, and as inter-imperialist rivalry deepens, the bourgeoisie is expanding its nonproductive sectors at an ever faster rate in order to increase its ability to gain the maximum share of the booty through parasitic means. To do this it must keep on drawing women into the workplace, laying them off as they are temporarily unneeded and drawing them back when they are needed again. And in the process it is being caught in its own contradictions, because the increasing socialization of clerical employees and the increasing necessity to invest in expensive accounting and word-processing equipment cut into its chances of maximum profit for which it has long eyed the nonproductive sector. It attempts to cope with these irreconcilable contradictions by slashing wages and inflating prices. The employees, in turn, are becoming much less docile and much more organized, inevitably challenging some bourgeois ideas about "femininity" and "woman's roles" in the process.

These objective changes taking place among the clerical workforce make clerical workers riper than ever before for the receptivity to communist ideas. But in the task to rally these workers to Marxism-Leninism, several things become particularly clear. Bourgeois mythology about women's roles and "femininity" have been so basic in the creation of the female clerical proletariat that such ideas must be directly confronted and exposed in the process of rallying these workers to Marxism-Leninism. Simple economist slogans about unions and strikes are never enough to rally the proletariat to communism, but in the case of women workers who labour under a double oppression, any economist strategy carries with it a particularly disastrous result. This is because such workers cannot fully come to understand the nature of their oppression *as workers* unless they are able to link it with the nature of their oppression *as women*. The bour-

geoisie has so skillfully linked the role of women in the family with the work of women in the workplace, that communists must also link these two questions, only this time from a communist point of view. Communists must be capable of showing these workers that only with a communist understanding of the question of women can they strike at the basis of their double oppression and organize in an offensive way to overthrow the yoke of the bourgeoisie. And only with a scientific understanding of the nature of imperialism, and the way that imperialism has affected the masses of women who are being drawn into the workplace to prop up imperialist decadence, can communists rally women workers to revolution against the imperialist bourgeoisie.

The Crisis of Imperialism

We have shown at length that the transition from competitive capitalism to monopoly brought with it certain basic changes in the nature of women's work in capitalist society. We still live in the epoch of Leninism, the Marxism of the epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution. Thus it can be of no surprise that these basic patterns have continued through to the present day.

The degree of participation of women in the workforce is steadily increasing throughout the imperialist world. In 1976, 45% of all women in Canada were a part of the labour force.¹⁵⁵ This reflected a giant leap even from the 1971 figure of 39.9%.¹⁵⁶ In 1976 again, 37.4% of the Canadian labour force was female, a figure which is double that of the 1941 figure when the labour force was only 18.5% female.¹⁵⁷ Women have entered the labour force so rapidly in the period following World War II that, for the first time in Canadian history, there were more women entering the labour force than men during the period 1951-61.¹⁵⁸ For the 1961-71 period, women were responsible for 55% of the labour force growth.¹⁵⁹ By far the largest degree of increase took place among married women and, within that category, the largest relative increase in labour force participation has occurred among married women with children under six years old.¹⁶⁰ In addition, because of the wholesale attack by the bourgeoisie against the proletarian family and the general degeneration of family life brought on by capitalist crisis, more and more women are becoming the sole supporters of families; since the salary of one working man is not even enough to support a family any more, and since the average full-time wage of women is 59% that of men,¹⁶¹ it should not be surprising that millions of full-time working women are having a

great deal of trouble supporting their families on their incomes.

Since time immemorial, the masses of women have been indispensable in providing for the material survival of their families. With the advent of competitive capitalism, the earliest members of the female urban proletariat poured into the factories to continue to contribute to the survival of their families; by hiring women in this way as well as men, the bourgeoisie was able to increase the rate of exploitation of the working class by lowering the real wages of each labouring member of the family. We have shown that, with the transition to imperialism, the temporary rise in real wages created a social pattern in which married women stayed home in massive numbers, without any outlets for socially useful labour. Today, as imperialism is thrown deeply into crisis, as real wages plummet, married women and women with young children are once again becoming the vital support to the material survival of the family which they had been since time immemorial. But today, with imperialism in agony, there is a basic difference: whereas under competitive capitalism only a small minority of women were working in factories, and the vast majority of working women laboured in agriculture and other forms of petty production, today the masses of women who must provide for their families are doing so by selling their labour power to the bourgeoisie as part of the huge proletarian army which has been generated by finance capital. Never before have toiling women directly confronted the power of capital in such massive proportions.

The participation of women in the labour force is on the rise every year, and the participation of men is on the decline.¹⁶² But when we say that the bourgeoisie is replacing male labour by female labour because it is cheaper, this does not mean that women are moving into the very factories and trucking firms where men had been working and taking their jobs directly away. In fact, most job categories which had been male preserves remain male preserves.¹⁶³ The bourgeoisie has fulfilled its needs in this regard by investing less in the older sectors of the economy (highly productive, high-investment sectors, such as manufacturing) and expanding the newer sectors, into which women can pour.¹⁶⁴ The facts are that sectors which have been female — whether because they are extensions of work women had long done in the home, or because they are newer sectors, such as typing, which had not yet been reserved for men and which therefore opened their doors to the female labour reserve — have become even more heavily female.¹⁶⁵

Of the new jobs created in Canada between 1961 and 1974, 39.2% were in the service industries alone and another 17.8% were created in trade.¹⁶⁶ The state sector, where there is an enormous amount of clerical work, has also mushroomed.¹⁶⁷ There are many sectors such as mining, oil and gas, and certain manufacturing industries whose total share of all jobs has declined since World War II and in which the absolute number of workers would probably have declined were it not for the clerical and sales work which they have generated.¹⁶⁸ In 1951, two-thirds of all women in the labour force held jobs in just four industries: trade; finance and real estate; community, business and personal services, and public administration and defense.¹⁶⁹ By 1971, over three-quarters of all working women in Canada were concentrated in these industries.¹⁷⁰ More than [actually “almost” – *transcriber's correction*] half of all working women in Canada are concentrated into ten occupations (see Table 2 [p. 88]), and the percentage of women in these occupations has shown a steady increase.¹⁷¹ In eight out of these ten occupations, women make up more than 70% of the work force, and in the other two— sales work and custodial work — the proportion of women is growing rapidly.¹⁷² And, whereas the proportion of women in waitressing, clerical work, and retail sales is growing, the proportion of women in teaching and nursing declined.¹⁷³ It seems that it has been only the most menial and low-paying work in which the bourgeoisie has decided to allow women to “fulfill themselves” and “be liberated” as imperialism nears its total collapse.

The pattern is clear. The bourgeoisie is panicking. In response to its panic it is struggling to maintain its possessions through more intense inter-imperialist rivalry and through beefing up its defense sectors to maintain its possessions abroad. These struggles involve, among other things, much planning and paperwork and hence much typing, filing, accounting, computer calculations, recording, and keypunching. Women pour into the workplace at lower and lower wages to bail the bourgeoisie out of its problems generated by inter-imperialist rivalry and the loss of its possessions. And, to keep its rate of profit the highest possible within its own national borders, the bourgeoisie abandons the more expensive sectors (male) in favour of the cheaper sectors (female) where it can — as in the case of service industries, which have shown the highest rate of expansion. Thus, for example, although a full 22,000 jobs were lost in Quebec in the manufacturing sector in 1977, the number of jobs in the service sector

actually increased.¹⁷⁴

Another aspect of this pattern which is particularly oppressive to women is that many of the jobs in these newest sectors are in relatively small enterprises which are desperately trying to enter into competition with the huge monopolies.¹⁷⁵ Women who serve food in restaurants, or who become sales clerks in relatively small stores, or who do clerical work for petty insurance agents or real estate agents, fall completely victim to the need of these capitalists to depress wages and benefits to rock bottom in order to survive in the face of monopoly capitalism, inflation, and crisis. Such women do not have the smallest chance of being protected by a union, and the capitalist will usually laugh in her face if she complains that her legal rights are in some way being violated. Although these women are not directly labouring for monopoly capitalist concerns, as proletarians their concrete situation is very acutely affected by the laws and crises of monopoly capitalism. Lenin states: **“...It is this combination of antagonistic principles, viz., competition and monopoly, that is the essence of imperialism, it is this that is making for the final crash, i.e., the socialist revolution.”** (“Revision of the Party Program,” LCW 24:465)

Another tool which the bourgeoisie has used to cope with its crisis is the increase in part-time and seasonal work. The usefulness of this tool consists in spreading the available work over more workers by intensifying the underemployment of the working class. Women, naturally, are the first to suffer from this pattern; the bourgeoisie’s various mythologies about where women belong have always come in very handy to the bourgeoisie in times of capitalist crisis. Now the bourgeoisie finds part-time work an eminently feminine pursuit. Through part-time work, women are told, they can “fulfill themselves” by cleaning floors but also not “neglect and abandon” their families at the same time. Such an “ideal” alternative also frees the bourgeoisie from much expenditure in the area of child care, which would become far more necessary if the masses of women were working full-time in social industry. Although fewer than 9% of all men in Canada work less than 35 hours per week at part-time jobs, more than 25% of all women in Canada are in that situation.¹⁷⁶ These part-time workers are invariably paid less than full-time workers — whereas full-time working women are “fortunate” enough to earn 59% of the average wage of full-time working men, part-time working women earn 50% of what the men earn.¹⁷⁷ And part-time workers

usually lose claims to fringe benefits and they usually find themselves high and dry in terms of unemployment insurance when their jobs are terminated. Thus it comes as no surprise that, of the 26,000 part-time jobs which were created in the Province of Quebec in 1977, 17,000 went to women.¹⁷⁸ Most of these jobs, of course, were in waitressing, hospital work and the like. Two thousand full-time jobs were lost during the same period.¹⁷⁹

Seasonal and temporary work serves similar purposes for the bourgeoisie, which also finds it very “feminine” for women to be laid off in the summertime and otherwise to spend months out of the year “fulfilling themselves” at home with their families. Five percent of employed women leave the labour force in the summer.¹⁸⁰ Although 74% of all Canadian working men work for more than 40 weeks in the year, only 59.4% of working women are in that position.¹⁸¹ Of those women who work for more than 40 weeks, *less than half* work full-time at their jobs.¹⁸² It is no coincidence that the latest proposals by the Canadian government for unemployment insurance “reform” will limit the participation of those who have worked less than 40 weeks. And, since those who do work more than 40 weeks usually work part-time, they too will suffer in terms of unemployment insurance. It is easily exposed that the bourgeoisie’s many stopgap measures to placate an angry working class are, in the final analysis, manipulated in favour of the aristocracy of labour and other less oppressed sectors of the population. The masses who most need such assistance under capitalism are thrown out onto the sidewalk and left to starve.

A good example of the part-time and seasonal work scandal is the very rapid mushrooming of temporary work agencies in the field of office work. Such agencies take large wages from the employer and pay the temporary employee only a small part of these wages. The parasites in the middle pocket the difference, giving a tiny percentage of it to the clerks whom they have hired to make the arrangements. And the push by the bourgeoisie to justify this new stratum of parasites is the same as always: how joyful it is to be a “feminine” woman with one foot in the kitchen all the time. “Girls! Why be tied down to permanent, full-time work? Take your vacation to the Mediterranean whenever you feel like it! Be available at home for your husband’s beck-and-call! Work at lower-than-market wages and never be sure where your next dollar will come from! All you need is an alluring, fashionable dress and a servile, ready-to-please smile!

Try Kelly Girls!" The bourgeoisie is able to use women as a cheap and manipulable labour force by singing the joys of the woman's specific position within the home.

The sexual segregation of the workplace is one of the most important tools of the bourgeoisie to maintain a sharp wage differential between women and men. With the workplace so segregated, liberals can scream as loud as they will for "equal pay for equal work" and the bourgeoisie can chime in in chorus, all the way to the bank. Even if all high-tension wire workers were to receive the same pay and all laundry workers were to receive the same pay, the gap between male and female wages would continue to widen, because men and women do not do the same work. More than two-thirds of all working women work at occupations which are more than half female, whereas almost 90% of all working men work at jobs which are less than one-third female.¹⁸³ And even this statistic is very misleading. For example, the category of "clerical work" is 69% female, but the clerks in an insurance company are almost always female whereas the clerks in a post office are usually male. Restaurant service is 83% female,¹⁸⁴ but anyone who goes to restaurants knows that certain types of restaurants hire waitresses and other types of restaurants hire waiters; rarely are waitresses and waiters found working together in one restaurant. 97% of all telephone operators are women,¹⁸⁵ but telephone switchmen are usually men. Sales work is another example: 51% of all sales-people in Canada are women, but those who sell alcoholic beverages are 5.8% female and those who sell in variety stores are 73% female.¹⁸⁶ Those who sell on a commission basis are much more likely to be male than those who sell for wages. Manufacturing workers are 22% female, but 74% of garment workers are female whereas 5.2% of metal workers are female.¹⁸⁷ If these categories are broken down further in terms of job promotions within these sectors, the lowest strata are of course even more heavily female. In other words, the co-workers of most women are women.

With the workplace so segregated, the bourgeoisie can engage in the most vulgar forms of wage discrimination against women without being touched by the graces of bourgeois law. In the case of the sales-clerks, for example, those who sell alcoholic beverages receive twice the wages of those who sell in variety stores.¹⁸⁸ Postal clerks are unionized and paid relatively well whereas file clerks in an insurance firm are ununionized and paid barely above minimum wage. Women in the clothing industry earn an average of \$84 per week, the lowest

wage statistic in manufacturing, whereas workers in primary metals receive almost twice that wage.¹⁸⁹ Waiters are usually hired in more expensive restaurants than waitresses, and so the salaries are higher and the tips as well. Telephone switchmen are paid twice the salaries of telephone operators. The examples are endless, the facts clear: two-thirds of all working women work for wages below the poverty level. The “woman’s place” has been the excuse for “woman’s work,” and “woman’s work” has been the excuse for the starvation and immiseration of the masses of women workers in Canada and in all the imperialist countries.

Here it is necessary to state the obvious, that the gap in wages between men and women of the working class does not fundamentally or in the long term benefit male workers. The use of women as cheap labour acts, and has always acted, to depress the wage levels of the entire working class. Married men suffer when their wives bring home paycheques half the size of their own, paycheques which, once the costs of daycare and other work-related expenses are subtracted, sometimes make it not worthwhile for the woman to work at all. Thus, the income level of the whole family remains depressed, sometimes below the poverty level. And, finally, a labor market which is segregated by sex is divisive to the revolutionary unity of the working class as a whole, and the backward level of consciousness to which women workers are particularly victim is a brake on the liberation of the entire working class.

When women labour, they are oppressed as workers; but they are also oppressed in the workplace as women. The two sides of the oppression of women are not separated by a Chinese wall, with sexual oppression being confined to the home where the woman engages in domestic slavery. It has been pointed out that very many of the jobs which women find in the labour market duplicate, in one way or another, the functions which women are expected to perform as wives and mothers. It follows that women who work for the bourgeoisie are not allowed to forget their sex for a minute. Sexual harassment on the job is extremely common: propositions, friendly “pats,” sexual allusions or condescending remarks making reference to the worker’s sex. More than a few women workers lose their jobs for refusing to go along with the boss’s advances. Women who service the public, such as waitresses and sales-clerks, are often expected to be alluring and decorative in order to draw in customers.

In a note of final irony, it is clear that, despite the fact that women

are pouring into the workplace and replacing men in the job market, the unemployment rate among women is higher than among men and the gap is steadily widening. This apparent contradiction is to be explained by the fact that women who are sent home to be housewives are not counted as unemployed by the statistics. But in times of crisis, when masses of women are seeking work, their unstable attachment to jobs gives them a very high rate of unemployment. It is women of child-bearing age who suffer the most in this regard: in 1976, whereas 5.1% of men aged 25-34 were unemployed, the jobless rate of women was 7.4%. In the age bracket 35-44, 3.5% of males were unemployed whereas 5.5% of females were unemployed.¹⁹⁰

CONCLUSION:

Imperialism the Highest Stage in the Development of the Double Oppression of Women

In our concrete analysis of women workers under capitalism we have shown beyond doubt that the double oppression of women has been integral to the entire mode of capitalist production and exchange at every stage of its development.

At the dawn of the putting-out system in the rural areas, women's work in textile production was indispensable to primitive capitalist accumulation. As hand manufacture was transformed into the machine manufacture of the industrial revolution, the specific oppression of women was basic to the ability of the bourgeoisie to lower wages and intensify the exploitation of the entire working class. It was through using the vulnerable position of the woman in the family, her need to provide for her children and her inability to command wages equal to the wages of a man, that the bourgeoisie was able to engage in the super-exploitation of women.

Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. It **"carries the contradictions of capitalism to their last bounds, to the extreme limit, beyond which revolution begins."** (Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, FLP, p. 4)

Engels has consistently shown that throughout the epoch of class society **"every step forward is also relatively a step backward, in which prosperity and development for some is won through the misery and frustration of others."** (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, ed. E. Leacock, N.Y.: International Publishers, 1975, p. 129)

Since civilization is founded on the exploitation of one class by another class its whole development proceeds in a constant contradiction. Every step forward in production is at the same time a step backward in the position of the oppressed class, that is, of the great majority. (*Ibid.*, p. 236)

Imperialism, as the highest stage in the development of societies based on class antagonisms, exhibits the highest development of this **“constant contradiction,”** the ultimate **“step backward in the position of the oppressed class.”** That is why imperialism is the era of proletarian revolution. Stalin continues:

Either place yourself at the mercy of capital, eke out a wretched existence as of old and sink lower and lower, or adopt a new weapon — this is the alternative imperialism puts before the vast masses of the proletariat. Imperialism brings the working class to revolution. (*Foundations of Leninism*, pp. 4-5)

Under imperialism for the first time in history, the vast majority of the population is forced to confront the power of capital directly every day in wage slavery. Imperialism drives the masses to sink lower and lower in their relative material position, leaving them no choice but to join the active liberation army of the proletariat and struggle for socialist revolution.

Just as imperialism is the highest stage in the development of capitalism, the extreme limit in the relative impoverishment of the vast majority of toilers, so it is the highest stage in the development of the specific oppression of women. It carries the oppression of women not only in wage slavery but also in sexual subjugation to its **“last bounds, to the extreme limit, beyond which revolution begins.”**

Never before in the history of class society have the ruling classes so skillfully, so thoroughly, so intensively, manipulated the specific position of the woman in the family in the interests of the amassment of wealth, in the development of its cyclical needs of survival as a class. As imperialism dawned, the bourgeoisie dealt with its massive problems of relative surplus population by driving the woman into the home, drumming up an ideological campaign which consigned her to the four walls of the kitchen, striking at the very core of her physical identity as a woman in order to shut her out from any productive contribution to social labour and to break her political re-

sistance. For the first time in history, masses of women of the oppressed class were placed in the same position of utter material dependence upon the male in monogamous marriage as ruling class women had been before them — but without any of the compensations of class privilege which ruling class women had been able to reap.

Engels states:

...The monogamous family... reveals the antagonism between the man and the woman expressed in the man's exclusive supremacy, it exhibits in miniature the same oppositions and contradictions as those in which society has been moving, without power to resolve or overcome them, ever since it split into classes at the beginning of civilization.... In the great majority of cases today, at least in the possessing classes, the husband... within the family... is the bourgeois, and the wife represents the proletariat. (*Origin*, pp. 131, 137)

By demanding that the masses of proletarians adopt the model of the bourgeois monogamous family, by demanding that the married woman develop a material dependence on her husband, the imperialist bourgeoisie temporarily created an objective basis for the supremacy of the male in proletarian households. The result of this was the creation of a wretchedly narrow outlook among masses of women who could not perceive any future for themselves outside of their own tasks of housework and childcare, and also to drag countless proletarian men into the backward outlook of male chauvinism and a bourgeois view of the role of the woman. Imperialism has used its needs for a weak, vulnerable, manipulable reserve army of labour to weaken proletarian solidarity by weakening the defensive capacity of the proletarian family, splitting the unity of the sexes within the family, using the proletarian family as a locus of male supremacy and the domestic slavery of the woman and as an agent for the propagation of male chauvinism to working-class children, and breaking the will and determination of masses of proletarian women.

Moreover, this ideology of the “woman’s place” has been used by the imperialist bourgeoisie with an unprecedented sophistication to shape the structure of the labour market in the interests of maximum profit. As the needs of imperialism for maximum profit demanded the expansion of certain sectors of the workforce which had been relatively small under competitive capitalism, such as the public

service sector, the sales sector, and the clerical sector, it was principally the reserve army of women which was tapped to fill these needs, and the woman's position in the family has been persistently used to keep these sectors of the workforce poorly paid, nonunionized, and manipulable, and to weaken the resistance of the women in their place of work. Imperialism in crisis leans ever more heavily on the specific oppression of women in order to shape the labour market for its needs: the rapid expansion of the service and clerical sectors, the growth of part-time and temporary work, the steady falling of real wages to a level far below that which can support a family — all are achieved through manipulating the relationship of the woman to her obligations in the sphere of private housework and domestic slavery.

The steady introduction of women into the workplace has weakened the dependence of the working woman upon her husband, but it has not destroyed it, because the position of the woman in the labour market is so much more vulnerable. In fact, far from being an escape from or a final solution to the specific oppression of women, the massive entry of women into the labour market has been used to deepen the specific oppression of women, and to reinforce the ability of the bourgeoisie to use the oppression of women to amass even more wealth. The sexual segregation of the workplace, the stubborn persistence of “woman's work,” the use of women for specific tasks which exploit their sexuality (such as in being required to dress and act in an alluring manner in order to draw in customers), the widespread existence of sexual harassment of women at work and their exploitation as “wives away from home” for their employers, all demonstrate that the system of wage slavery does not abolish but only deepens the specific oppression of women.

To the degree that the entry of women into the labour force in capitalist society weakens the dependence of the married woman upon her husband (and the young unmarried woman upon her parents), it also works to shift the balance from domestic slavery to its complement, prostitution, which Engels states clearly to be the necessary complement of domestic slavery and to co-exist with it in order to ensure that the woman has no escape whatsoever from the all-pervasive supremacy of the male sex in class society. Marx and Engels observed this pattern for competitive capitalism as well: the introduction of women in the workplace resulted in **“the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.”** (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, FLP, p. 53) The more

women are forced into wage slavery, the more they are forced into prostitution; this is a fact as old as class society itself. Lenin states: **“So long as wage-slavery exists, inevitably prostitution too will exist.”** (“Capitalism and Female Labour,” LCW 36:230) The prostitute is the wage slave whose specific tasks in the system of wage slavery consist in her constant submission to the most absolute forms of sexual subjugation. In her work, wage slavery and sexual slavery are absolutely fused. And as imperialism sinks deeper into its death throes, it lures and forces more and more women into the very profitable prostitution industry, proving one more time that the oppression of women is woven into the very fabric of class society at every stage of its existence.

No matter what the stage in the cycles of capitalism — “prosperity” or crisis, wartime or postwar period, surplus labour or a crying need for the cheapest labour — the imperialist bourgeoisie has been able to shape the structure of the labour market for its needs by orchestrating the appropriate chorus of bourgeois psychologists to sing about the woman’s duties to her family. And within the labour market itself, woman’s work is carefully made to appear to be an extension of her “joyously” executed servile role within the family, a veritable act of love for which she “cheerfully” receives the most pitiful of wages and demands nothing in terms of her rights as a worker.

Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, has pushed the oppression of women to its highest stage, its extreme limit. It has woven the oppression of the woman so deeply into the very structure of the labour market itself, it so utterly depends on the subjugation of the woman for its very ability to make its profits, that it has forced upon



the masses of downtrodden women this ultimate choice: **“sink lower and lower, or adopt a new weapon”** — proletarian revolution.

TABLE I

	1891		1901		1911		1921	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Clerical	21,029	3,092	46,220	12,569	72,595	33,756	127,325	90,612
Trade and Finance	81,130	6,934	91,795	7,757	28,651	193,154	47,670	245,664
Manufacturing and mechanical	175,861	62,111	229,027	70,508	275,439	96,795	317,019	89,658

Source: Newman, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, p. 59. Note that the number of women workers in factories actually declined from 1891-1921 [actually from 1911 to 1921 – *transcriber's correction*].

TABLE II

Ten Leading Occupations of Women, Canada 1971

	Female % of occupation	% of all female workers
Stenographers and typists	96.9	12.3
Salespersons	51.0	6.7
Personal service workers	93.5	3.4
Teachers	66.0	6.4
Textile and garment workers	76.0*	3.4
Nurses	95.4	3.9
Waiters and bartenders	76.6	4.1
Nursing assistants, aides, orderlies	79.2	2.9
Telephone operators	95.9	1.2
Janitors, charworkers, and cleaners	32.4	2.1
TOTAL	72.0	46.4

Source: Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and their Segregated Work*, Toronto: McLelland and

* 90.1% of all sewing machine operators, etc., are women; the low figure is explained by the presence of foremen, furriers, cutters, etc. The same breakdowns can be made in the other categories, showing a far more radical sexual division of labour than is indicated in the table.

Stewart, 1978, p. 33.

Notes

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2. Oakley, p. 14; Guilbert.
3. Universally acknowledged. Marx and Engels provide much documentation of this question.
4. Oakley, p. 16.
5. Heidi Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," in *Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation*, ed. Martha Blaxall and Barbara Reagan, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.
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7. Oakley, p. 17.
8. Michael Paul Sacks, *Women's Work in Soviet Russia: Continuity in the Midst of Change*, NY: Praeger, 1976, p. 14.
9. Guilbert, p. 31; Sacks, p. 14.
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11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., pp. 14-15
13. Guilbert, p. 30.
14. Guilbert, p. 31.
15. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, ch. 15.
16. Ibid.
17. Oakley, pp. 37-38.
18. Guilbert, p. 36.
19. Sacks, p. 15.
20. Guilbert, p. 44.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
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25. Ibid., p. 217.
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27. The Corrective Collective: *Never Done: Three Centuries of Women's Work in Canada*, Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974, pp. 12-14; *La société canadienne-française*, ed. Marcel Rioux et Yves Martin, Montreal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, Ltée, 1971, Section 1.
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30. Ibid.
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32. Ibid., p. 16.
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34. The Corrective Collective, p. 35.
35. Lori Rotenberg, “The Wayword Worker: Toronto’s Prostitute in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Women at Work*, ed. Acton et al., pp. 38-41; Genevieve Leslie, “Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920,” in *ibid.*, p. 85; Johnson, pp. 19-20.
36. Leslie, p. 71; The Corrective Collective, p. 74; Oakley, p. 40; Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, “Women During the Great War,” in *ibid.*, p. 264; Wertheimer, p. 61.
37. Ramkhalawansingh, p. 264; The Corrective Collective, p. 80.
38. The Corrective Collective, p. 73; Wertheimer, p. 56.
39. Ibid.
40. Wertheimer, pp. 62-3.
41. Ibid., ch. 5.
42. Oakley, p. 41; Wertheimer, p. 63; D. Suzanne Cross, “The Neglected Majority: The Changing Role of Women in 19th Century Montreal,” in *The Neglected Majority*, ed. Trofimenkoff and Prentice, 1977, p. 71.
43. Wertheimer, ch. 6.
44. Johnson, pp. 28-9; Wertheimer, pp. 96-7.
45. Wertheimer, chs. 5, 6.
46. Ibid., pp. 102-3; Rotenberg, p. 38.
47. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, ch. 15; Engels, “The Condition of the Working Class in England,” MECW 4; Wertheimer, p. 105.
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- 52.53. Ramkhalawansingh, pp. 264-66.
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83. Strong-Boag, pp. 89-91; Klein and Roberts, pp. 235-6.
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THE PROLETARIAN FAMILY

It has been impossible to talk about women workers under capitalism without talking about the family. The super-exploitation of women as workers must be linked to their specific oppression as women; the specific oppression of women is rooted in domestic slavery; and the locus of domestic slavery is the home and family.

The only solution to the oppression of wage slavery is the abolition of the wages system. Yet the solution to domestic slavery is not the abolition of the home and family. The reason for this is that, although domestic slavery is located in the home, the existence of the home is not its fundamental cause. On the contrary, domestic slavery exists because of the private ownership of the means of production, which in its origins necessitated the subjugation of the woman in order that the owner of the means of production, who was male, could pass his property on to his children. The woman became a part of the property inventory of the male, along with his children. Thus, the abolition of domestic slavery demands the abolition of the system of the private ownership of the means of production, the capitalist system. Only a system in which property is socialized can undertake the struggle to abolish domestic slavery.

There are few questions concerning women which give rise to so much confusion as the question of the family. The undeniable existence of domestic slavery in capitalist society has given pretext to countless anarchist, Trotskyite, and feminist currents to engage in a wholesale attack on the working class through an attack on its families. These petty-bourgeois counter-revolutionaries seek to spread illusions among the working class, specifically among the women, that the cause of the oppression of women is not the bourgeoisie but rather the family, and that the struggle against male supremacy should be waged principally by struggling against the family or by dissolving the family. On the other hand, various economists, **“gazing with awe upon the posteriors of the proletariat”** (Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*, FLP, p. 132), have dealt with this question with equal stupidity. In the same spirit in which they “implant” into factories, carrying lunch buckets and limiting their political vocabulary to that of the most backward worker in the plant, they insult the entire working class by mimicking the most backward behaviours and attitudes within families of the working class, such as overt male chauvinism towards women.

Both tendencies are known to quote Marx, Engels or Lenin to suit their evil purposes in this regard. The economists quote the scientific truth that the proletarian family is a fighting unit for socialism, but, since economists think that class consciousness comes to the working class spontaneously, without Marxist knowledge brought from outside of the sphere of employer-employee relations, they do not distinguish between a proletarian family which is *fighting for socialism* (because it is conscious of socialism) and one which is objectively in the working class but which is not conscious of itself as a part of the proletarian class. They perceive a backward proletarian family, choked in bourgeois ideology and unaware of the struggle against the oppression of women, as a “fighting unit for socialism,” just as they perceive the workers in the plant who are demanding an end to speed-ups as “fighting for socialism.”

The feminists take a different approach to show their contempt for the working class. The crudest, most vulgar feminists will dismiss Marxism-Leninism on this question because “Marx and Lenin were men.” Others, however, of the more sophisticated strain, will manipulate Marx and Engels in their frantic efforts to justify their bourgeois ideology. The Trotskyites, who shamelessly tail feminism at every turn, are particularly adept at this, since they are accustomed to the necessity of hiding behind the great teachers of scientific socialism in order to spread counter-revolutionary ideas. They will, for example, quote one sentence from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*: **“Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists”** (FLP, p. 53), not daring to read further or to quote further, as if to thereby prove that Marx saw in the dissolution of the family the liberation of the proletariat. Another example is this priceless gem from the Trotskyites:

The family... isolates women from society and confines them to a lifetime of what Lenin described as “the most stultifying, the most difficult work which women could do... utterly inconsequential, containing no elements that can aid in women’s development...” (*Women and Revolution*, Autumn 1974, the Spartacist League, p. 2),

whereas if the Trotskyites had dared to divulge the entire citation it would have been made clear that Lenin was denouncing *private housework*, not the family as a fighting unit for socialism, which is what the Trotskyites go on to denounce.

In view of all of the confusion and outright slander on the ques-

tion of the family, it is necessary to re-establish what the great leaders of scientific socialism said about it. To re-establish the content of Marxist orthodoxy on the question of the family, of course, will require extensive quotation; those who cringe in fear of the classics can consider themselves duly warned.

Let us begin by showing just what Marx and Engels did say in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital. (FLP, p. 53)

We have already seen that Marx perceived the effect which the industrial revolution was having on the family: in drawing women and children into the workplace, it was breaking up the old form of the patriarchal family, and replacing it by what he calls in the *Manifesto* the “**absence of family**.” But Marx and Engels never saw this as a form of liberation in itself for the proletariat; on the contrary, in *Capital* Marx is very clear that in its present appearance the dissolution of the old family ties is “**terrible and disgusting**.” Marx’s depictions of the utter absence of normal morality among proletarians who were thrust into the crowded, filthy factories by the new industries leave no question that he did not see the dissolution of the family as a thing of beauty in itself. What he perceived as beautiful was the liberating potential which this situation had for the future, in creating “**a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes**.” (*Capital*, vol. 1, p. 460)

In the *Manifesto*, of course, he is saying basically the same thing. The bourgeois family, which “**in its completely developed form... exists only among the bourgeoisie**,” is complemented by the breakdown of the family in the ranks of the proletariat. *Both* phenomena are the products of capitalism; both will be replaced “**with the vanishing of capital**” by “**a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes**.” Engels says the same thing in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*:

...Have we not seen that in the modern world monog-

amy and prostitution are indeed contradictions, but inseparable contradictions, poles of the same state of society? Can prostitution disappear without dragging monogamy with it into the abyss? (ed. E. Leacock, NY: International Publishers, 1975, p. 139)

Let us continue to consider what Marx and Engels had to say in the *Manifesto* on this question.

The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour.

But you Communists would introduce community of women, screams the whole bourgeoisie in chorus.

The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women.

He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous indignation of our bourgeois at the community of women which, they pretend, is to be openly and officially established by the Communists. The Communists have no need to introduce community of women; it has existed almost from time immemorial.

Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each others' wives.

Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common and thus, at the most, what the Communists might possibly be reproached with, is that they desire to introduce, in substitution of a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalised community of women. For the rest, it is self-evident that the abolition of the present system of

production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private, (pp. 53-4)

The “**community of women,**” for Marx and Engels, comes from the use of women as instruments of production, that is, from the private ownership of the means of production. **“The real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production The abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private.”** No wonder the Trotskyites and their friends dare not cite further than **“Abolition of the family!”** Their purpose, as always, is to conceal **“the real point aimed at,”** i.e., the full liberation of women.

From his earliest days Marx perceived the link between the free exchange of women and the free exchange of bourgeois property. His bitter attacks on the utopian socialists such as Saint-Simon showed that the Utopians were only agents of the bourgeoisie, that is, that they only wanted to perpetuate the free exchange of women as commodities and to perpetuate the vulgar oppression of women. Talking of utopian socialism (which he here refers to as “communism”), Marx states:

It wants to disregard talent, etc., in an arbitrary manner. For it the sole purpose of life and existence is direct, physical possession. The category of the worker is not done away with, but extended to all men. The relationship of private property persists as the relationship of the community to the world of things. Finally, this movement of opposing universal private property to private property finds expression in the brutish form of opposing to marriage (certainly a *form of exclusive private property*) the *community of women*, in which a woman becomes a piece of *communal* and *common* property. It may be said that THIS IDEA OF THE COMMUNITY OF WOMEN GIVES AWAY THE SECRET OF THIS AS YET COMPLETELY CRUDE AND THOUGHTLESS COMMUNISM. Just as woman passes from marriage to general prostitution,* so the entire world of wealth (that is,

* Prostitution is only a *specific* expression of the *general* prosti-

of man's objective substance) passes from the relationship of exclusive marriage with the owner of private property to a state of universal prostitution with the community.

...In the approach to *woman* as the spoil and handmaid of communal lust is expressed the infinite degradation in which man exists for himself, for the secret of this approach has its *unambiguous*, decisive, plain and undisguised expression in the relation of man to *woman* and in the manner in which the *direct* and *natural* species-relationship is conceived. The direct, natural and necessary relation of person to person is the *relation of man to woman*. In this natural species-relationship man's relation to nature is immediately his relation to man, just as his relation to man is immediately his relation to nature — his own *natural* destination. In this relationship, therefore, is *sensuously manifested*, reduced to an observable *fact*, the extent to which the human essence has become nature to man, or to which nature to him has become the human essence of man. From this relationship one can therefore judge man's whole level of development. From the character of this relationship follows how much *man* as a *species-being*, as *man*, has come to be himself and to comprehend himself; the relation of man to woman is the *most natural* relation of human being to human being. It therefore reveals the extent to which man's *natural* behaviour has become *human*, or the extent to which the *human* essence in him has become a *natural* essence — the extent to which his *human nature* has come to be *natural* to him. This relationship also reveals the extent to which man's *need* has become a *human need*; the extent to which, therefore, the *other* person as a person has become for him a need — the extent to which he in his individual existence is at the same time a social being. (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, MECW 3:294-

tution of the *labourer*, and since it is a relationship in which falls not the prostitute alone, but also the one who prostitutes — and the latter's abomination is still greater—the capitalist, etc., also comes under this head. (Note by Marx)

6)

Marx is clear. Counterposed to *both* bourgeois marriage and its necessary complement, prostitution and the free community of women, is the highest form of intimate human relationship, an equal and loving relationship between a man and a woman.

Scientific socialism has never deviated from this position since the beginnings. In *The Origin of the Family* Engels speaks of **“the greatest moral advance:... modern individual sex love, which had hitherto been unknown to the entire world”** (p. 132), and describes it in part:

...It assumes that the person loved returns the love.... Our sex love has a degree of intensity and duration which makes both lovers feel that non-possession and separation are a great, if not the greatest, calamity; to possess one another, they risk high stakes, even life itself. In the ancient world this happened only, if at all, in adultery. And finally, there arises a new moral standard in the judgment of a sexual relationship. We do not only ask, was it within our outside marriage, but also, did it spring from love and reciprocated love or not? (p. 140)

And Engels recognizes that this form of love can only be fully realized when the private system of property ownership is abolished.

Full freedom of marriage can therefore only be generally established when the abolition of capitalist production and of the property relations created by it has removed all the accompanying economic considerations which still exert such a powerful influence on the choice of a marriage partner. For then there is no other motive left except mutual inclination, (p. 144)

And Engels is in absolute agreement with Marx that, to elevate love to the higher level of morality which will be known under socialism, the free community of women must be abolished.

And as sexual love is by its nature exclusive — although at present this exclusiveness is fully realized only in the woman — the marriage based on sexual love is by its nature individual marriage. We have seen how right Bachofen was in regarding the advance from group marriage to individual marriage as primarily due to the women. Only the step from pairing marriage to monogamy can be put down to the credit of the men, and his-

torically the essence of this was to make the position of the women worse and the infidelities of the men easier. If now the economic considerations also disappear which made women put up with the habitual infidelity of their husbands — concern for their own means of existence and still more for their children's future — then, according to all previous experience, the equality of women thereby achieved will tend infinitely more to make men really monogamous* than to make women polyandrous. (p. 144-5)

In complement to the continuing presence of bourgeois marriage, the ideas of the Utopians (whose counterparts today are the anarchists, the hippies, the feminists and the Trotskyites) continued to flourish. Lenin took up sharp struggle against the “free love” advocates who tried to undermine the stability and dedication of the youth to socialist revolution by demanding that they be distracted into sexual self-cultivation. In the course of this struggle he exposed the idea of “free love” (meaning the free exchange of women), and showed the alternative: passionate, loyal, individual, sexual love such as is found in the ranks of the proletariat. To Inessa Armand he wrote:

I advise you to throw out altogether — the “demand (women’s) for freedom of love.”

That is not really a proletarian but a bourgeois demand.

After all, what do you understand by that phrase? What *can* be understood by it?

1. Freedom *from* material (financial) calculations in affairs of love?

2. The same, *from* material worries?

3. From religious prejudices?

4. From prohibitions by Papa, etc.?

5. From the prejudices of “society”?

6. From the narrow circumstances of one’s environment (peasant or petty-bourgeois or bourgeois intellectual)?

7. From the fetters of the law, the courts and the po-

* In this context Engels is not referring to bourgeois monogamy, based on the subjugation of the woman. He uses “monogamous” here strictly to indicate an exclusive man-woman relationship.

lice?

8. From the serious element in love?

9. From child-birth?

10. Freedom of adultery? Etc.

...Just because in modern society the most talkative, noisy and “top-prominent” classes understand by “freedom of love” nos. 8-10, just for that very reason this is not a proletarian but a bourgeois demand.

For the proletariat nos. 1-2 are the most important, and then nos. 1-7, and those, in fact, are not “freedom of love.” (Letter to Inessa Armand, LCW 35:180-1)

And further:

Kisses without love between a vulgar couple are *dirty*. I agree. To them one should contrast... what?... one would think: kisses *with* love? While you contrast them with “fleeting” (why fleeting?) “passion” (why not love) — so, logically, it turns out that kisses without love (fleeting not love) are contrasted with kisses without love by married people.... Strange. For a popular pamphlet, would it not be better to contrast philistine-intellectual-peasant (I think they’re in my point 6 or point 5) vulgar and dirty marriage without love to proletarian civil marriage with love.... (Letter to Inessa Armand, LCW 35:183-4)

And, in the most orthodox of Marxist traditions, Lenin also stated:

I may be a morose ascetic, but quite often this so-called “new sex life” of young people — and frequently of the adults too — seems to me purely bourgeois and simply an extension of the good old bourgeois brothel. All this had nothing in common with free love as we Communists understand it. No doubt you have heard about the famous theory that in communist society satisfying sexual desire and the craving for love is as simple and trivial as “drinking a glass of water.” A section of our youth has gone mad, absolutely mad, over this “glass-of-water theory.”... I consider the famous “glass-of-water theory” as completely un-Marxist and, moreover, as anti-social.... To be sure, thirst has to be quenched. But would a normal person normally lie down in the gutter

and drink from a puddle? Or even from a glass whose edge has been greased by many lips?

...Emancipation of love is neither a novel nor a communist idea. You will recall that it was advanced in fine literature around the middle of the past century as “emancipation of the heart.” In bourgeois practice it materialised into emancipation of the flesh.

...The revolution calls for concentration and rallying of every nerve by the masses and by the individual. It does not tolerate orgiastic conditions so common among d’Annunzio’s decadent heroes and heroines. Promiscuity in sexual matters is bourgeois. It is a sign of degeneration. The proletariat is a rising class. It does not need an intoxicant to stupefy or stimulate it, neither the intoxicant of sexual laxity or of alcohol. It should and will not forget the vileness, the filth and the barbarity of capitalism. It derives its strongest inspiration to fight from its class position, from the communist idea. What it needs is clarity, clarity, and more clarity. Therefore, I repeat, there must be no weakening, no waste and no dissipation of energy. (From *My Recollections of Lenin*, Clara Zetkin, as quoted in *The Emancipation of Women*, NY: International Publishers, 106-08)

Lenin attacked not only bourgeois promiscuity and casual sexual relationships, but also lax and pessimistic attitudes in matters of having children. Defending the family in the ranks of the proletariat, Lenin counterposed the petty-bourgeois attitudes towards the family to the proletarian attitude in saying:

The petty-bourgeois sees and feels that he is heading for ruin, that life is becoming more and more difficult, that the struggle for existence is ever more ruthless, that his position and that of his family are becoming more and more hopeless. It is an indisputable fact, and the petty bourgeois protests against it.

But *how* does he protest?

He protests as the representative of a class that is hopelessly perishing, that despairs of its future, that is depressed and cowardly. There is nothing to be done... if only there were fewer children to suffer our torments and hard toil, our poverty and our humiliation — such is

the cry of the petty bourgeois.

The class-conscious worker is far from holding this point of view.... We are fighting better than our fathers did. Our children will fight better than we do, and *they will be victorious*.

The working class is not perishing, it is growing, becoming stronger, gaining courage, consolidating itself, educating itself and becoming steeled in battle. We are pessimists as far as serfdom, capitalism and petty production are concerned, but we are ardent optimists in what concerns the working-class movement and its aims. We are already laying the foundation of a new edifice and our children will complete its construction.

That is the reason — the only reason — why we are unconditionally the enemies of neo-Malthusianism, suited only to unfeeling and egotistic petty-bourgeois couples, who whisper in scared voices: “God grant we manage somehow by ourselves. So much the better if we have no children.” (“The Working Class and Neo-Malthusianism,” LCW 19:236-7)

We have not begun to exhaust what can be drawn from the literature of international communism on the question of the family, but what we have cited should be enough to show that Marxism-Leninism has always defended the highly moral family form which is based on the right of the proletariat and the people to love and to bear children in an atmosphere free from fear, free from material deprivation, and devoted to the struggle for socialism. This highest form of proletarian morality is everywhere pitted against two interconnected evils of bourgeois society: the domestic slavery of the woman in monogamous marriage, and the free exchange of women outside of marriage. The victory of proletarian morality is the defeat of both monogamy (bourgeois marriage based on the subjugation of women) and prostitution (paid or unpaid — the free community of women).

Within the capitalist order there can be no emancipation of the woman. Not only is she a wage slave, but her wage slavery is compounded by the fact that she is trapped in a nightmare of domestic drudgery, because housework remains unsocialized. The bourgeoisie uses the specific position of the woman in the family to superexploit her in the workplace and keep her attachment to the workplace relatively marginal, and to pay her at the bottom of the wage scale. Under

these circumstances the dependence of the woman upon the man is continuously reproduced under capitalism in the ranks of the proletariat.

Stated the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921:

So long as the power of capitalism and private property continue to exist, the emancipation of woman from subservience to her husband cannot proceed further than her right to dispose of her property and earnings, as she sees fit, and also to decide on equal terms with her husband the destiny of their children.

...The dependence of the proletarian woman upon the capitalist and upon her husband remains just the same. The absence of adequate laws to safeguard motherhood and infancy and the lack of proper social education render entirely impossible the equalisation of women's position in matrimonial relations. As a matter of fact, nothing that can be done under the capitalist order will furnish the key to the solution of the problem of the relationship of the sexes. (Appendix to this issue)

The Comintern also specified as one of the tasks of all Communist Parties **"to fight against the prejudices of male proletarians towards the women."** (Ibid.) Lenin states: **"...In practice not a single bourgeois republic, even the more advanced, has... delivered women from dependence on and the oppression of the male."** ("Soviet Power and the Status of Women," LCW 30:121)

Throughout the period of the struggle for socialism, the struggle against incorrect and backward attitudes towards women must be waged with eternal vigilance. Lenin told Clara Zetkin:

Unfortunately, we may still say of many of our comrades, "Scratch the Communist and a philistine appears." To be sure, you have to scratch the sensitive spots — such as their mentality regarding women. Could there be any more palpable proof than the common sight of a man calmly watching a woman wear herself out with trivial, monotonous, strength- and time-consuming work, such as her housework, and watching her spirit shrinking, her mind grow dull, her heartbeat growing faint, and her will growing slack? It goes without saying that I am not referring to the bourgeois ladies who dump

all housework and the care for their children on the hired help. What I say applies to the vast majority of women, including the wives of workers, even if these spend the day at the factory and earn money.

Very few husbands, not even the proletarians, think of how much they could lighten the burdens and worries of their wives, or relieve them entirely, if they lent a hand in this “women’s work.” But no, that would go against the “privilege and dignity of the husband.” He demands that he have rest and comfort. The domestic life of the woman is a daily sacrifice of self to a thousand insignificant trifles. The ancient rights of her husband, her lord and master, survive unnoticed. Objectively, his slave takes her revenge. Also in concealed form. Her backwardness and her lack of understanding for her husband’s revolutionary ideals act as a drag on his fighting spirit, on his determination to fight. They are like tiny worms, gnawing and undermining imperceptibly, slowly but surely. I know the life of the workers, and not only from books. Our communist work among the masses of women, and our political work in general, involves considerable educational work among the men. We must root out the old slave-owner’s point of view, both in the Party and among the masses, (as quoted in *The Emancipation of Women*, pp. 114-5)

On the Family: Oppose Economism and Feminism

Within the ranks of the proletariat in the capitalist countries, backward attitudes among the men as well as the women constantly reinforce the inequality in the family upon which the bourgeoisie depends for the super-exploitation of women. Yet in the ranks of the proletariat, the existence of the family is one of its most important defenses against the daily onslaught of capital. Both of these things are true; to deny the first is economism, to deny the second is feminism.

Communists support the existence of the proletarian family as a defense unit against the onslaughts of capital. It defends the entire family against starvation and loneliness; having a family often means the difference between paying the rent and not paying it, between living above the poverty level and below it, between the survival of old

people and their death, between a wage and welfare, between keeping one's children and giving them away. Not only do countless proletarians struggle with fierce energy to keep their families together, but they are often found to try to keep their families as extended as possible both linearly (living with parents or grown children, or supporting them) and laterally (keeping close ties with siblings, cousins). Often non-blood relatives are drawn into this kin network, in the interest of survival; where families are small and disintegrating, in the ranks of the proletariat we find that people are ever struggling to make them larger and stronger.

This unit of economic and social defense is important for the entire proletarian class, but particularly for the women. It is the women who have the most trouble finding employment, or who are paid the lowest when they do find employment, or who cannot work because they have children but no daycare facilities, or who cannot afford daycare facilities because their wages are too low, or whose health has been ruined through inadequate medical attention during the childbirth period. Single women are often so desperate for survival that their only choice is prostitution in some form or another; many prostitutes and hotel club dancers do what they do because they can find no other work with which to support their children. As Marx stated more than a century ago, the alternative to marriage in capitalist society is public prostitution. The family may be oppressive to women, but in the ranks of the proletariat the lack of the family is even more oppressive to women.

Our concrete analysis of women workers showed that during the time of Marx and Engels, when competitive capitalism reigned, what the industrial revolution brought about in the ranks of the proletariat was (as Marx worded it) **“the practical absence of the family.”** We have seen that as imperialism dawned the bourgeoisie sent masses of proletarian women back into the home. The purpose of this was to quiet the ferment of the women, to break the backs of their resistance to the onslaughts of capital, in order to eradicate the influence of the Bolshevik Revolution and stem the tide of communism, and to provide for the future regeneration of the working class. Women in the home were being kept in reserve, to be drawn out into the labour market when they would be needed. The cost of investment was high, but it was able to be absorbed because of the ascendancy and the exploits of the imperialist system. It was in these concrete conditions that Lenin and the Comintern wrote about the stultifying position of the

proletarian woman in the home, about the dependency of the woman on the man and the oppression of the woman by the man, about the inequality of the sexes within the proletarian family.

But imperialism is capitalism in general crisis. The reserve of women is being tapped, to a greater extent every year, as it becomes more and more necessary for the bourgeoisie to intensify the exploitation of the working-class family by paying each worker at or below the poverty level. The proletarian class is under attack from all sides: speed-ups, layoffs, cutbacks, military buildups, inflation, overcrowding — everything the bourgeoisie can think of to maintain its falling rate of profit. An integral part of this attack is the attack on the proletarian family, its renewed disintegration. It becomes more and more difficult to retain the integrity of the family. More women every year sell themselves into prostitution in one form or another. Children are seduced from productive contributions to the family into a lifestyle governed by drugs, self-cultivation and degeneracy. In the name of modern psychology, workers are disdained for disciplining their children. Welfare cheques are impossible to live on. Feminists and other agents of the bourgeoisie are busy at work propagating the idea that the source of the suffering of the woman is her husband and children rather than the bourgeoisie; the purpose of this propaganda is to assist the bourgeoisie in its attack on the family, to free increasing numbers of women to be available commodities for the sale and free exchange of their bodies, to minimize the ability of the proletariat to defend itself against these bitter assaults and attacks against itself. Thus it becomes clear once again that domestic slavery co-exists with prostitution and the general social use of women as commodities. Both are forms of sexual slavery, they are the two principal expressions of the specific oppression of women. During this period of imperialist crisis, as women are being drawn out of the home and into the labour market and as the family is more and more disintegrating, it is prostitution which is particularly on the ascendancy.

What conclusions can we draw from all of this as to the correct communist position on the proletarian family?

Communists support the proletarian family in capitalist society as an important, indeed vital, unit of defense: defense of the entire working class, but particularly of the women and children. But communists do not equate this unit of defense with the unit of offense, that is, the proletarian family which has grasped scientific socialism and which has transformed itself through consciousness into a

fighting unit for socialism. Just as communists do not confuse trade union struggle with class struggle, or trade union consciousness with class consciousness, so they do not confuse the economic defense unit of the proletariat with the fighting unit for socialism. Just as communists defend the existence of trade unions to defend the proletariat against capital, and oppose as bourgeois reaction all attempts to destroy the right to organize and strike, so communists view all bourgeois, anarchist, feminist and Trotskyite assaults on the existence of the proletarian family as assaults on the proletariat itself. But the correct existence of trade unions does not inhibit communists from opposing the bourgeois domination of the trade unions and from seeking to transform the economic struggle for defense into the conscious political struggle against the rule of the bourgeoisie. Likewise, the task of communists towards the proletarian family is to transform it from an economic defense unit, trapped by bourgeois ideology, into an offensive political unit, a fighting unit for socialism.

The proletarian family is a fighting unit for socialism when it is united around Marxism-Leninism; when it is struggling for the correct political line, for the realization of the socialist revolution; when it is raising its children to adhere to communist ideas with the firmest loyalty and commitment; when it is knitted together by love, equality and mutual respect despite the continual attempts by the bourgeoisie to undermine these and perpetuate male chauvinism and reactionary ideas of all kinds.

The class-conscious proletarian family lives according to mores of proletarian morality and struggles against all attempts to perceive the liberation of women as coming about through the free exchange of women, against all attempts to view women as **“instruments of production to be exploited in common.”**

The proletarian family, as a fighting unit for socialism, fights for moral standards which will abolish both monogamy (based on the subjugation of women within the family) and prostitution (based on the subjugation of women outside the family). It fights for the equality, the dignity, and the full social participation of women, for the free and enlightened upbringing of children, for socialism and for human liberation.



OPPORTUNISM

Introduction

The time has passed in the Western imperialist countries such as Canada when the bourgeoisie could successfully quiet the ferment of women on the basis of its simple, traditional rhetoric about the woman's place, on the basis of sermons, recipe columns and the woman's page. The masses of women have begun to perceive with unprecedented depth that their conditions of life are worsening and that their oppression takes on many forms, all of which reinforce each other. The masses of women are searching for an alternative, and the bourgeoisie is frantically trying to provide many different dead-ends, on many different fronts.

Virtually everybody who loiters in the neighbourhoods of the new left, the old left, the Marxist-Leninist movement, the Trotskyites, Chinese revisionism, Soviet revisionism, hippies, the "counter-culture," feminists, "radical" lesbians, or the beautiful people of Bay Street has been heard to pronounce opposition to the oppression of women, to come out in favour of the liberation of women. The Parti Quebecois has endorsed "wages for housework" since its beginnings. Margaret Trudeau has been held up as a model of female liberation by all sorts of feminists. *Playboy* has campaigned for abortions and "sexual liberation" for years; organizations of prostitutes are springing up to extol the virtues of prostitution as a road to the "sexual liberation" of women. Feminist platitudes are given broad audience in the most popular of current situation comedies. In fact, one cannot comfortably frequent the cocktail circuit in any Western imperialist country if one cannot offer up a few intelligent-sounding opinions about the position of women. So the simple declaration that an organization, or a group, or a trend, stands for the equality of women, cannot be taken to mean anything of value in the struggle to liberate women.

How, amidst all of the bourgeois cacophony and rhetoric about the situation of women, are the masses of women to determine where to go in the struggle for their liberation?

The history of all countries has proved beyond dispute that the capitalist system has nothing to offer the masses of women in their struggle for liberation. This universal truth is an inescapable reality for millions of Canadian women whose situation is worsening daily

as they are crushed further and further under the burdens of bourgeois rule. It is scientific truth that only socialist revolution can offer full employment, full equality, full liberation to the broad masses of women. Therefore all of the bourgeois cacophony and rhetoric about the “many ways to liberate women” actually has a clear plan to it, a clear design: by one means or another, it seeks to divert the masses of women from socialist revolution, to keep a knowledge of Marxism-Leninism from them.

The oppression of women has a dual nature: wage slavery and sexual slavery. Science tells us, therefore, that the bourgeois conspiracy to keep women from rallying to Marxism-Leninism will also take on a dual form; that is, that the bourgeoisie will float false solutions to each side of the oppression of women, in order to keep women chained in their double misery. Thus, amidst all of the cacophony and rhetoric, two main trends can be discerned, which can be described broadly as *economism and feminism*.

Economism is the bourgeois ideology which seeks to trick and divert the working class at the workplace itself, in order to keep it chained to the bourgeoisie in wage slavery. Feminism is the bourgeois ideology which floats reams of rhetoric about the eternal suffering of women in order to keep women chained to the home, to the kitchen, and to sexual subjugation. Both are rabidly anti-communist, although both are known to assume communist covers in order to give themselves credibility among the masses who yearn for socialist liberation.

The two opportunist tendencies both collude and contend in their struggle for hegemony over the masses of toiling women. Often they claim the fiercest hatred for each other, each scoring points off of the weakness of the other one; but just as often the two tendencies are seen to shake hands and converge.

Each of these two forms of counter-revolution has the same social basis in the imperialist countries: the petty-bourgeoisie, together with the labour aristocracy which is bribed from the crumbs of the table of the imperialists. These strata are paid to act in the interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie and this means that their political representatives engage in active work to serve the bourgeoisie through diverting the anger of the broad masses of the proletariat into reformism, illusions and dead-ends.

We have already seen economism and feminism conspiring in the early days of the twentieth century, when the imperialist bour-

geoisie was young. We have seen that the labour aristocracy in the workplace carried openly male chauvinist policies in the trade unions, deciding that married women should not work for capital, deciding that women did not need anything but the barest minimum in wages because their true occupation was at home, deciding that women should not and must not organize in trade-unions or engage in sustained and militant struggles for their just demands. We have seen that hand in hand with this trade-union hack plot came the development of a feminist movement, whose leaders were often the wives of the trade-union hacks if not the wives of the bourgeois who enslaved women at the workplace. These feminists, all the while campaigning for specific reforms and even protective legislation for women, were above all dedicated to glorifying the position of the women in the home and to proving that the home was the woman's most important and final destiny. The feminist propaganda was eminently useful, and evidently used, by the trade-union hacks in the workplace to manipulate the role of women as a reserve army with a specific vulnerability to any and all bourgeois manipulation. Feminism also functioned during the second decade of the twentieth century and the early days of the Bolshevik Revolution to divert women from their productive and revolutionary tasks by urging them to pursue their own individual "sexual liberation" and offer their bodies in the market of the free exchange of women.

So it is clear that the two forms of opportunism, economism and feminism, have historically worked hand in glove. It will come as no surprise to find this historical pattern continuing and intensifying as the bourgeoisie is increasingly steeped in crisis. As the petty-bourgeoisie is increasingly thrown into the upper ranks of the proletariat, as the labour aristocracy is increasingly thrown into panic over the loss of its privilege, it fights with renewed vigour for those petty, gradual reforms which it perceives as key to the maintenance of its privileged position with respect to the broad masses of workers.

Economism is that form of spontaneism which centralizes the economic struggles of the working class in the workplace. What the economists do is work principally within the sphere of relations between workers and employers, manipulating each side and playing one against the other one in order to find their niche of hegemony somewhere in between. To keep women chained to wage slavery, the economists can be found infiltrating the workers' movement, carrying out a wide variety of tasks. Some of them are women who seek

hegemony over the tiny but growing union movement among women workers, to ensure that it does not go beyond the bounds of bourgeois politics and trade-unionism and spill over into revolutionary demands, to ensure that women do not make the link between their oppression at the workplace and the need for socialist revolution and the struggle to build the party. Many more are open male chauvinists who centralize the role of the already-established trade unions, where women have always been powerless. These economists use communist covers to propagate the idea that trade unionism is the only avenue to struggle for socialist revolution and therefore automatically devalue the role of women in this struggle, since only a very small percentage of women are organized into unions. It is very common for these economists to deny the specific oppression of women entirely, admitting only to the oppression of women as wage slaves. By doing so they not only turn their backs upon the masses of women who still do not work outside the home, but they also can more successfully peddle their rotten line that the way women must struggle for their liberation is to “join the class struggle,” i.e., fight for higher wages under the hegemony of the economists themselves.

Whereas some women, and men, of these privileged stratum seek to strangle the masses of women proletarians in their struggle for socialism by strangling them directly at the workplace, many others — and these would be principally women — throw themselves into the struggle against the mighty tide of capital which is drawing of women, willy nilly, into the labour market. Historically the right to keep a wife at home for domestic service has been one of the “victories” of the labour aristocracy in its quest for privilege from the imperialist bourgeoisie. Thus there is a stratum of women which has avoided wage slavery through the privileged position of their husbands in the labour market, and which is struggling against the advance of capital by fighting for the right to stay home — or else to enter the labour market only on their own terms, in search of a privileged career of their own picking. At the same time, they assist the bourgeoisie in its growing search for a large pool of women to service them as prostitutes and concubines. These petty-bourgeois housewives, who hold nothing but contempt for the broad masses of women whose “careers” consist of cleaning the floors of Eatons at midnight and similar work, talk of only the sexual oppression of women and not their oppression as workers. They form the social basis of feminism in the advanced capitalist countries and they usually

blame the “left” — communists — for trying to drag women into the workplace, rather than the bourgeoisie. “Wages for Housework,” a plot to keep women enslaved in the kitchen through the institutionalization of domestic slavery, has been one of their noisiest trends. Their promotion of “the uninhibited expression of our sexuality” goes hand in hand with it. The struggle to keep women isolated from men, ignorant of the broad political movements going on in the world at large, knowledgeable only of women’s questions and the women’s page, and chained forever to sexual slavery, has been the basis and the purpose of their political work.

The rest of this position will go into some detail about both of these two broad trends, economism and feminism. It will show examples of both, examples of how each uses the errors and biases of the other one to inflate its own false position and to justify itself as a political trend. It will show, too, how often economism and feminism converge, how opportunist trends such as revisionism and Trotskyism happily pick from both sides in order to delude the maximum amount of women into following them into their dead-ends. It is through exposing the falseness of the twin conspiracy in all of its manifestations that the trail to a correct strategy for the liberation of women can be blazed. We will start with economism.



Economism

The history of the international working class has everywhere confirmed that spontaneity is a fierce enemy of the proletariat in its struggle for socialism. Lenin states: **“...All worship of the spontaneity of the working-class movement, all belittling of the role of ‘the conscious element,’... means, quite irrespective of whether the belittler wants to or not, strengthening the influence of the bourgeois ideology over the workers. A fierce struggle against spontaneity was necessary.”** (What Is To Be Done?, FLP, pp. 46, 50) The ideology of spontaneity is bourgeois ideology: **“That struggle is desirable which is possible, and the struggle which is possible is the one that is going on at the given moment. This is precisely the trend of unbounded opportunism, which passively adapts itself to spontaneity.”** (Ibid., p. 58)

Economism is that form of spontaneism which centralizes the economic struggles of the working class in the workplace. The error of the economists is in

their conviction that it is possible to develop the class political consciousness of the workers *from within*, so to speak, their economic struggle, i.e., making this struggle the exclusive (or, at least, the main) starting point, making it the exclusive, or at least, the main basis. Such a view is fundamentally wrong.... Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside of the economic struggle, from outside of the sphere of relations between workers and employers. (Ibid., p. 98)

The purpose of economism is to deroute the working class from the knowledge of scientific socialism, and hence from its class struggle for socialism, and to bring it instead under the hegemony of the bribed elements who are panicking at the loss of their own class privilege. To accomplish this reactionary task, the economists bang out reams of propaganda in an effort to persuade the working class that it is already engaged in revolutionary struggle, that its spontaneous struggle to maintain its living standard under capitalism is itself revolutionary. In focussing its attention on the workplace, it blinds the working class to an awareness of **“all cases, without exception, of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter what class is affected... the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of**

all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata and groups of the population.” (Ibid., p. 86) Therefore, concludes Lenin, **“Those who concentrate the attention, observation and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social-Democrats.”** (Ibid.)

This latter, absolutely true declaration by Lenin can be referred to over and over again in our search for a correct understanding of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata and groups of the population; that is, in our search for a scientific program for revolution. Those who fall into economism, neglect countless other questions of oppression, countless other manifestations of tyranny and violence by the imperialist bourgeoisie, simply by concentrating upon the economic struggles of the working class. Economists are invariably social-chauvinists, for example; they turn their back on the colonial oppression of the Native north and look to Native people in Canada only as more bodies to feed their picket lines. At this time we have the opportunity to show at length that economism is also inherently a male chauvinist tendency, and inherently works to keep women crushed under the yoke of capitalist oppression. This truth reveals itself when we examine economism from any of a number of angles. Let us take some examples.

A. Trivializing the Specific Oppression of Women

It is a scientific fact that the oppression of women in class society takes two basic forms: wage slavery and sexual slavery. None of the great masters of scientific socialism has ever overlooked this truth. Lenin states:

...Under capitalism the female half of the human race is doubly oppressed. The working woman and the peasant woman are oppressed by capital, but over and above that... they remain in “household bondage,” they continue to be “household slaves,” for they are overburdened with the drudgery of the most squalid, backbreaking and stultifying toil in the kitchen and the family household. (“International Working Women’s Day,” LCW 32:161)

...The capitalists of all countries recruit for themselves (like the ancient slave-owners and the medieval feudal lords) any number of concubines at a most “reasonable” prices. And no amount of “moral indignation”

(hypocritical in 99 cases out of 100) about prostitution can do anything against this trade in female flesh; so long as wage-slavery exists, inevitably prostitution too will exist. All the oppressed and exploited classes throughout the history of human societies have always been forced (and it is in this that their exploitation consists) to give up to their oppressors, first, their unpaid labour and, second, their women as concubines for the “masters.” (“Capitalism and Female Labour,” LCW 36:230)

Economism by definition makes the wage struggles of the working class the main basis of its political work. Therefore economism by definition trivializes and overlooks the domestic slavery of women, which is the root of the specific oppression of women as *women*. Women for the economists become but one more minority of the proletariat which walks out on picket lines, the sum total of whose activities will allegedly spill over into socialist revolution. Their articles read something like this: “The Italians in the factories are struggling for higher wages and for socialism, the Portuguese in the factories are struggling for higher wages and for socialism, the Quebecois in the factories are struggling for higher wages and for socialism, the women in the factories are struggling for higher wages and for socialism, the Native people in the factories are struggling for higher wages and for socialism....”

Let us look at *In Struggle*, for example. For years *In Struggle* rarely mentioned the question of women, except in preparation for its Mother’s Day, each March 8. To complement its theory, its political practice remained utterly male chauvinist: women were pushed into the background at public conferences, the leading cadre and spokespeople were invariably male, ideas expressed by women were gratuitously dismissed.

In April, 1977, *In Struggle* decided to initiate a column on women, probably to imitate its chief rival in the recruitment of petty-bourgeois: the “Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist).” The column was used almost exclusively for reportage of the spontaneous struggle for democratic rights among women, something which any liberal or Trotskyite newspaper would have no trouble producing. But this effort was much too much for *In Struggle*. In explaining why it decided to abolish its women’s page, *In Struggle* put forward the following: “On occasion, it led to dealing with the women’s question from the sole perspective of their specific oppres-

sion. And because the women's column existed, the women's question was not a regular part of the press in its treatment of political, economic and international questions." (*In Struggle*, no. 127, p. 8) To compensate itself for its overexertion in putting forward a special column on women — which "on occasion" mentioned the specific oppression of women, and for that very reason was weeded out like poison — *In Struggle* had been carefully omitting any references to women in the rest of its vacuous drivel.

This is the way these economists perceive the necessity of dealing with the question of women:

...It is clear that the very conception of a special column for women as the major method for a communist newspaper to rally women to communist ideas was wrong.

It was wrong because it is incorrect to assume that women are interested first and foremost in their problems as women, their own demands and grievances and their own struggles. The participation of women in the class struggle is growing — this is clear from their increasing involvement in political life. The women workers at Fleck and in the Post Office, the native women in the Mackenzie Valley or at Caughnawaga and the women office workers at York University in Toronto are all affected by the proletarian struggle against rising reaction and increasing repression, against State attacks on the right to strike and the right to unionize and against the denial of national rights and deteriorating working and living conditions — The communist press must discuss all these questions, but not in an isolated way, not by putting them off in their own special column. (*Ibid.*)

To begin, any school-age child could perceive that special articles about women *in no way* presuppose that "women are interested first and foremost in their problems as women, their own demands and grievances and their own struggles." Those who are invariably of the petty-bourgeoisie, still have their heads stuck into the bog of feminist tabloids. Women who read communist newspapers do so precisely because their horizons are broadened beyond the specific question of women's oppression, because they are seeking to grasp correct ideas about many aspects of social life. What *In Struggle* is telling them is that the specific question of women has *no* importance; that particular articles on Quebec, the Middle East, or immigrants, are acceptable, but particular articles on women are not acceptable,

that they are a feminist deviation.

And what does In Struggle counterpose to the alternative of taking seriously the specific question of women? “The participation of women in the class struggle is growing.... The communist press must discuss all these questions, but not in an isolated way....” In other words, more and more women are going out on strike, and the “communist” press must report these strikes as faithfully as it reports any other strikes. (To In Struggle, the “class struggle” is equivalent to strikes, and the duty of its newspaper is to “reflect and systematize the class struggle.”) And that is all. To delve into question of women in more depth, to link the struggles of women at the workplace to some specific analyses of the oppression of women **as women**, to show how the bourgeoisie uses the vulnerable position of women in the family in order to superexploit them as workers — all of this would distract In Struggle from its economist obsessions.

Thus women for In Struggle become one more set of marionettes in its puppet show of trade unionism. Whether it is the workers at Puretex, Bell Canada, or Canada’s banks who are organizing and on strike, we are fortunate to even read it specified that the people on the picket lines are women. Its summary of the recent struggle in Vancouver to unionize bank workers makes reference only to the “(male) bank workers” and says nothing of the fact that the overwhelming majority of proletarians who enable banks to realize higher profits are women. (*In Struggle*, December 5, 1978, p. 2) In Struggle is so incapable of facing the specific oppression of women that it is reluctant even to talk about women specifically in the context of their economic struggles.

In issues no. 12 and 13 of “*Proletarian*” *Unity*, In Struggle’s insipid “theoretical” journal which exists “**to regard shortcomings as virtues,... to invent a theoretical basis for slavish cringing before spontaneity**” (Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, FLP, p. 40), In Struggle goes into some detail on the question of bank workers. Here it is openly acknowledged that the overwhelming majority of proletarians who toil for Canada’s huge banks are women. We shall have much occasion to refer to this set of articles by In Struggle on the structure of the Canadian proletariat, for it speaks volumes about In Struggle’s whole apology for imperialism, its spontaneism and its male chauvinism. For now we simply want to note that the fact that the bank workers are overwhelmingly female is stated, in fact several times; but from there it is left dangling. We might as well have been told

that the majority of bank workers in Canada have brown hair, or eat Cheerios. There is no effort made at all to show that the banks use the *specific oppression of women* to keep bank workers so poorly paid, to make their struggle to unionize so difficult, to visit harassment upon them — including sexual harassment — at work. There is no mention of the way the bourgeoisie tries to draw customers into its bank by selling the image of the sexually appealing female teller who remembers every customer's name, i.e., by using the sexuality of women as an advertising commodity. In *Struggle* is so deaf and blind to the specific conditions of women in capitalist society that it bypasses the most glaringly obvious opportunity to link the specific oppression of women with their oppression as workers:

'The large-scale use of part-time workers is another weapon in the banks' arsenal, in the never-ending battle to pay the least for the greatest amount of work possible. In 1975, 21,437 part-time workers were hired, 19,725 of them women. So for one worker out of six the situation is even worse. On top of the general conditions there are a host of other annoyances which particularly affect working women, not the least of which is the inconvenient hours which the bosses can and do set arbitrarily. Hence, there is a high rate of turnover for lower-level employees — the average stay for a proletarian in the banks is two to two and one half years. In one way this shows just how little workers care about how capitalism or any given capitalist fares. Proletarians are the property of the capitalist class as a whole. They may change from one individual capitalist to another or from one sector to another, but that won't change their situation much on any level. Everywhere you look the scene is the same — workers are nothing more or less than the arm of Capital. ("*Proletarian*" *Unity* 13:38)

Very good, In *Struggle*! Most part-time workers are women; women workers at low-level jobs suffer a very high turnover. Nothing that any bourgeois sociologist could not have stated. But why — why are women so weakly attached to the labour market, why are they crushed under part-time work, why do they constantly leave jobs after short periods of time only to be kept at the lowest levels of seniority and promotion throughout their working lives? Could this have anything to do with the specific position of women in the family, with the privatized nature of housework? Could the bourgeoisie keep

women in the bottom strata of the workplace by manipulating the specific oppression of women? That is where In Struggle stops, because the turf would have to move away from the workplace and into the home, the locus of the domestic slavery of women. And In Struggle wouldn't want to discuss the question of women "in an isolated way, in their own special column!"

When In Struggle has dealt with specifically women's questions, it is always on the level of more petty battles for gradual, achievable reforms, such as 100% free daycare centres and maternity leave. But what In Struggle brings out in dealing with these questions has nothing to do with political education, Marxist education on the dual oppression of women. In Struggle raises the issues of daycare and maternity leave in order to establish itself in charge of two more day-to-day spontaneous struggles of the working class, representing these as revolutionary, proclaiming the importance of "concrete demands promising palpable results" (as the economists in Lenin's day constantly insisted upon doing), and derouting the masses from the struggle for the party. Where In Struggle talks of housewives, it is only to speak of them in the context of their support for striking husbands. When In Struggle does mention the specific conditions of women, it is just some more spontaneism, just some more diversion.

And this economist diversion is a feminist's delight. With what glee the feminists point to the patronizing male chauvinism of the likes of In Struggle to prove their point. Their point, of course is that "the left" is purely male and has nothing to offer women; their purpose is anti-communism, and the perpetuation of the isolation and the oppression of women. The ranks of the feminists have always been fertilized by petty-bourgeois women fleeing these bourgeois politicians who wanted to keep women around as typists and "groupies." As economism hangs on and on, and with it its male chauvinism, so do the excuses of the feminists to demand that women must organize into an autonomous movement. Economism is natural fertilizer. What it fertilizes is the feminist weed.

B. Contempt to Theory, Disdain for the Subjective Factor

The objective conditions for socialist revolution are being prepared daily by the capitalist system itself. Marx says:

As soon as this process of transformation has sufficiently decomposed the old society from top to bottom, as

soon as the labourers are turned into proletarians, their means of labour into capital, as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet, then the further socialisation of labour and further transformation of the land and other means of production into socially exploited and, therefore, common means of production, as well as the further expropriation of private proprietors, takes a new form. That which is now to be expropriated is no longer the labourer working for himself, but the capitalist exploiting many labourers. This expropriation is accomplished by the action of the immanent laws of capitalist production itself, by the centralisation of capital.... Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. (Capital, vol. 1, Progress, pp. 714-15)

Thus the creation, discipline and organization of the proletariat as a class-in-itself, the socialization of labour, the periodic recurrence of crisis, and the spontaneous revolt of the working class all form a part of the objective basis for socialist revolution. They are all an integral part of the capitalist system and they are its inevitable by-products. Lenin states: **“the trade union struggle is one of the constant forms of the whole workers’ movement, one always needed under capitalism and essential at all times.”** (“To S. I. Gusev,” LCW 34:356) It is the bourgeoisie which lays the objective conditions for socialist revolution. It is the bourgeoisie which trains, organizes and disciplines the proletariat as a class in itself. It is the bourgeoisie which draws women into the workplace in steadily increasing numbers, as they are forced to go to work because they and their families can survive in no other way. It is the bourgeoisie which leads and takes political hegemony over the spontaneous struggles of the working class for self-defense.

Communists are not agents of the bourgeoisie and they do not assign themselves the tasks of the bourgeoisie. Communists do not assign themselves the work of creating the proletariat as a class-in-

itself, substituting monopoly for competition, creating periodic crisis, creating or leading the bourgeois labour movement, or drawing the masses of women into the workplace. The task of communists is to prepare the subjective factor for revolution: the creation and organization of the Marxist-Leninist party, to bring scientific socialism to the working class and lead the political class struggle for socialist revolution. Lenin says:

The bourgeoisie makes it its business to promote trusts, drive women and children into the factories, subject them to corruption and suffering, condemn them to extreme poverty. We do not “demand” such development, we do not “support” it. We fight it. But *how* do we fight? We explain that trusts and the employment of women in industry are progressive. We do not want a return to the handicraft system, pre-monopoly capitalism, domestic drudgery for women. Forward through the trusts, etc., and beyond them to socialism! (“The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution,” LCW 23:81)

Thus, to rally the vanguard of the female proletariat, communists use science to know where the female proletariat is situated — an objective situation created by the laws of the imperialist system — and enter into the arena where the female proletariat is found in order to bring the knowledge of scientific socialism.

The economists, however, are not communists. They are not engaged in the creation of the subjective factor for revolution. They are agents of the bourgeoisie, they ally with the bourgeoisie in their work and they assign themselves the tasks of the bourgeoisie. Thus the economists perceive their tasks as the preparation of the *objective* conditions for revolution. When the question of women is posed, they therefore see as their tasks to urge the masses of women into the workplace and to organize their spontaneous struggle for self-defense. In doing so, their battle cries sound quite Marxist: “Women, integrate yourselves into social production! Join the class struggle!”

Marxists know that it is not the integration into social production by itself which will liberate women. Under capitalism, women’s integration into social production is patterned on a rigid sexual segregation of the workplace which finds its justification in the domestic slavery of women and which keeps women working for wages half those of men. Moreover, the integration of women into the workplace under imperialism is accompanied by serious job insecurity, part-

time work, and innumerable other expressions of unemployment and underemployment, and they are still burdened by private housework when they return home. Thus Marxists know that the integration of women into production under capitalism although it lays the objective basis for the liberation of women and is therefore historically progressive, nevertheless only further crushes the masses of women under the weight of oppression; that the liberation of women requires the integration of women into production *under socialism*, with the socialization of housework; that this in turn requires the dictatorship of the proletariat, under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist party; that the **“role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory.”** (*What Is To Be Done?*, FLP, p. 29) Thus it is not by telling women to get jobs whatever communists will lead the liberation of women. Women will be getting jobs whatever communists have to say on this question. It is by building a strong organization, with a monolithic unity of steel, unity around a correct strategy for revolution and its correct application, and rallying the best elements of the female proletariat to the front ranks of this organization that communists provide leadership to women in their struggle for liberation.

In turning their back on the preparation of the subjective factor, and instead urging on the bourgeoisie as it draws women into the workplace, the economists show the greatest disdain and contempt for Marxist-Leninist theory, Marxist-Leninist knowledge. Economists do not seek to bring proletarian women the knowledge which they crave; on the contrary, if proletarian women acquire this socialist knowledge, they will soon find they have no need for the economists, for there are plenty of bourgeois to draw women into the workplace and to lead their strikes. Thus the economists treat women as ignorant children who are incapable of understanding science and who, anyway, do not need it for what they have to do.

Take, for example, In Struggle's special supplement for its “Mothers' Day” celebration, March 8, 1978 (no. 108). “No revolution without the participation of women! No women's liberation without revolution!” screams the bright red headlines. The interested woman might open this supplement to learn some ideas about how to achieve this revolution, or this liberation. Instead she is treated to four pages of pictures of women around the world, a *National Geographic* of socialist revolution. Apparently the masses of women are supposed to rally to the great show-and-tell editor of Oppression Illustrated. Of

all of In Struggle's vulgar, patronizing, male chauvinist insults to women, of all of its Mothers' Day poems and simple-to-read how-to manuals on the liberation of women, this supplement has to be an exemplary prize.

In Struggle fills its women's pages with pictures, easy-to-understand slogans and white space because it has nothing to say about the concrete situation of women in Canada. In Struggle has no interest in the broad masses of working women except when they make themselves obvious by picketing, and then In Struggle runs to the head of the picket line to take charge. In Struggle never mentions the role which the specific oppression of women plays in segregating women in the workplace and thereby driving them into the lowest strata of the labour market. To deal with this question would require some attention to Marxist-Leninist theory, would require some attention to the fact that women are weighted down by a *double oppression* which must be defeated if women are to be liberated. It would require that In Struggle lift its head out of the bog of economism.

In Struggle has no idea how to connect domestic slavery with wage slavery, or to connect the two of them with the struggle to build the party. Stalin states:

...The first task of the proletariat and its advanced detachment, the Communist Party, is to engage in decisive struggle for the freeing of women workers and peasants from the influence of the bourgeoisie, for political education and the organization of women workers and peasants beneath the banner of the proletariat. ("International Women's Day, 1925," as quoted in *The Woman Question*, NY: International Publishers, p. 44)

By refusing to bring women political education, *Marxist* education, by refusing to engage in the task of the political organization of the female proletariat along the lines correctly set out by Lenin and Stalin, In Struggle is neglecting the basic tasks which are required for the rallying of women to the struggle for liberation, of the rallying of the women to the banner of the proletariat.

In Struggle is utterly incapable of struggling against feminism. It is only with a correct understanding of the specific oppression of women that a struggle against feminism can be waged, because feminism is precisely the struggle of a panicking stratum of petty-bourgeois women to keep women in a state of sexual subjugation and bondage. Thus for In Struggle, feminism becomes only a threat to its

trade-unionism, as it did in explaining the abolition of its women's column.

Women won't advance the struggle for socialism by struggling for their specific demands, but rather by getting involved in all the battles of the working class. (*"Proletarian" Unity*, no. 4, p. 17)

Reformists advocate that women will emancipate themselves by individually climbing the ladder of social success. Feminists try to cut off the struggle of women from the struggle of the whole working class against capitalist exploitation. Contrary to what the reformists believe, the women of the world advance on the path of their liberation by building a strong unity with their class brothers. (*In Struggle*, no. 108, Supplement, p. 2)

Anyone with any knowledge at all of In Struggle's line knows just what In Struggle means by these things —join your union!

In turning its back on concrete analysis and Marxist-Leninist theory, In Struggle turns its back on women, because the conditions of women cannot be explained by the economic struggle alone. In sabotaging the struggle for the party, In Struggle turns its back on the liberation of women, because women cannot be liberated without the proletarian party. By fixing its eyes on the workplace, In Struggle cannot even arrive at a correct vision of women in the workplace, because the very position of women in the workplace is linked with the specific oppression of women. And none of this can be explained correctly without recognizing and putting into practice the leading role of Marxist-Leninist theory. By so utterly neglecting the preparation of the subjective factor for revolution, In Struggle only allies with the bourgeoisie in maintaining the objective conditions which keep women enslaved in wage slavery.

Such is one more example of the male chauvinist nature of economism.

C. A Caricature of Factories, and Imperialist Economism

So the economists constantly put out the battle-cry to the masses of women that they should leave the home and go find jobs. But they do not put out this call in a random fashion. One very economist and opportunist trend is to call upon women to find jobs not just anywhere, but particularly in factories. When this trend speaks of women

in the workforce, it places overwhelming emphasis on factory work.

This is a very hard line to tow, because factory work is not one of the ten commonest occupations of Canadian women. By far the commonest occupation of Canadian women is clerical work; aside from that, retail sales, waitressing, hospital work, and domestic work all employ more women in Canada than does factory work. And as imperialism grows nearer to its collapse, factory jobs for women are on the absolute decrease whereas jobs in the clerical, service and sales sectors are expanding even as the crisis intensifies. Yet if we were to listen to these revisionists, we would conclude that most of the women who labour directly for the bourgeoisie are labouring inside of factories.

Women who work in factories are undoubtedly among the most oppressed of female proletarians, and they have been so since the birth of the industrial revolution. Historically they have fought bitter battles for the barest of human demands, and the discipline and organization which they learn in factories ripens their receptivity to class consciousness. Nevertheless, this does not explain why these economists represent things as if 80% of the female proletariat worked in factories, when in fact the reverse is true.

The alleged theoretical “basis” of such a line, which is thrown around in economist newspapers everywhere (The League’s newspaper, *The Forge*, is an example of this trend — no analysis has been done, but in practice this is the way *The Forge* regards the working class), is the “theory” that one must directly be engaged in productive labour to be a “real worker.” Often these analyses depart so utterly from reality, from scientific socialism, that they do not even recognize as productive labour that labour which is engaged in the production of services, but focuses exclusively on the production of material goods.

The revisionist “Communist Party of France” recently published a lengthy justification of its putrid politics, including a defense of this “theory.” Its definition of the working class is as follows:

In distinction from members of other strata or categories of wage-earners, the worker is directly associated with the means of work; he puts them to work, within the framework of material production; he is a direct producer of merchandise; therefore he is placed at the origin of the surplus-value which the capitalists then appropriate. The working class therefore consists of all of those wage-earners who, by their

action on the material means of production, create for the capitalists surplus-value, capital. (*Le Capitalisme Monopoliste d'Etat*, tome 1, Paris: Editions Sociales, 1976, p. 213, our translation)

The revisionists place trade and office workers in direct contrast with the “real workers” by saying: “*Employees* (in offices and in sales) do not participate *directly*, as a whole, in material production.” (Ibid.)

And further:

Belonging to the working class necessarily implies waged productive activity which creates surplus-value, but the working class for all that does not include all salaried workers.... The determining criterion for belonging to the working class: the creation of surplus-value in the sphere of material production. (Ibid., pp. 217, 219)

The revisionist party finishes off its discussion of this question by assuring its readers that only this analysis is consistent with the materialist conception of history, with the correct understanding of the development of the productive forces.

In Struggle has recently published a criticism of this line by the revisionist party of France, without daring to mention, however, that In Struggle carried exactly the same line in 1974, and refused to budge on it when confronted:

In Canada, the proletariat must above all count on the petty-bourgeoisie, in particular its lower strata. In fact, these social strata, that is sales and office employees,* subordinate functionaries, teachers, small agriculturalists and traders, housewives, an important fraction of students, manual labourers, etc., must suffer the contradictions of capitalism and in large measure bear the costs of its current development. ... These social strata are called upon to constitute a strength of considerable support to the revolutionary movement led by the proletariat.... (“Creons l’organisation,” *In Struggle* Supplement, December 12, 1974, p. 9, our translation)

The opportunists have specific reasons for glorifying the indus-

* Notice that the distinction in terminology — “workers” vs. “sales and office employees” — is identical to that used by the “PCF” two years later. Could the “PCF” have learned its politics from Charles Gagnon?

trial worker at the expense of the worker in other sectors in capitalist society. These reasons lie in the very nature of imperialism itself, and its relationship to the opportunist stratum.

Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* exposes the essence of economism as it manifested itself in its struggle to turn the workers' movement in Russia into an appendage of the liberal bourgeoisie. Under imperialism, economism has flowered into imperialist economism.

Capitalism has triumphed — therefore there is no need to bother with political problems, the old Economists reasoned. Imperialism has triumphed — therefore there is no need to bother with the problems of political democracy, reason the present-day imperialist economists. (“A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism,” LCW 23:29)

Imperialist economism is opportunism in its full form. Its tenants have been bribed by the super-profits of imperialism and owe their existence to the international exploits of the imperialist bourgeoisie. They use economism to bring the ideology of international imperialism into the ranks of the proletariat, to defend the imperialist bourgeoisie by making the workers' movement tow the line for the needs of imperialism.

In the course of their all-out defense of the imperialist system, the opportunists constantly try to cover for the very existence of imperialism. Thus their “analyses” of the structure of the working class under imperialism invariably “forget” the fact that this structure has profoundly changed since the days of competitive capitalism.

Stalin is clear that what governs imperialism is the law of maximum profit.

...Monopoly capitalism demands not any sort of profit, but precisely the maximum profit. That will be the basic economic law of modern capitalism. (*The Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, FLP, p. 39)

As we have shown in our discussion of women workers, profits are much higher where the investment in constant capital is much lower. Therefore the imperialist bourgeoisie is regularly drawn away from investing in those sectors which require a much higher investment in machinery. As well, factory work is far more heavily unionized than is non-factory work, and the bourgeoisie finds lower profits in sectors where wages are the highest. Therefore it will seek to invest, for example, in the service sector, where wages are low, union-

ization is poor, and the costs of equipment are not too high. The service sector is the fastest-growing sector in the imperialist economy during its crisis; it is absorbing large numbers of women as they pour into the labour market.

But for the revisionist party of France, a service worker is not a “real worker” because (s)he is not a “direct producer of merchandise,” or, as Adam Smith worded it, does not produce “vendible commodities,” but only “services which perish in the very instant of their performance.” (Marx attacked Adam Smith at great length for this position, as we have already shown.) Thus the growing masses of workers — many of them women — who create surplus value through their work in the service sector, are tucked out of the way in this “analysis.” In presenting such an analysis the revisionists are denying the law of maximum profit as the motive in the imperialist system, and they are representing the (overwhelmingly male) industrial proletariat as the “only really revolutionary class.”

Rather than investing in new factories, capitalists also find much higher rates of profit by “clipping coupons” and investing in sales, banks, insurance, and other unproductive sectors where their profits are made by squabbling for the surplus value produced by workers elsewhere. These sectors, too, are growing very fast, particularly as the imperialists are intensifying their competition with each other for the redivision of the world and their needs for paperwork and accounting are swelling; these sectors are growing much faster than the factory sectors, precisely because of the needs of imperialism for maximum profit. Again, they are absorbing masses of women as they pour out of the home and into the workplace.

Lenin is clear: **“Imperialism is moribund capitalism, capitalism which is dying but not dead.”** (Preface to *Revision of the Party Program*,” LCW 24:464) Thus it is non-productivity, not productivity, which is principal in imperialist economics, because imperialism is not principally a progressive system.

The fact that imperialism is parasitic or decaying capitalism is manifested first of all in the tendency to decay.... The democratic-republican and the reactionary-monarchist imperialist bourgeoisie... are both rotting alive. (“Imperialism and the Split in Socialism,” LCW 23:106)

The idea that the only “real workers” are those in the industrial proletariat, producing “vendible commodities,” was bankrupt even

under competitive capitalism. Not only does it ignore service workers, but it also ignores the unproductive workers, whom Marx and Engels fully recognized as part of the proletariat. Marx stated:

...What on the surface is glorification of the productive labourer is in fact only glorification of the industrial capitalist in contrast to landlords and such moneyed capitalists as live only on their revenue. (*Theories of Surplus Value*, Progress, vol. 1, p. 290)

Once the question of imperialism is posed, this glorification of the industrial capitalist becomes an apology for the very essence of imperialism, which is its moribund, parasitic nature. It is at bottom an attempt to paint imperialism as a basically productive, and hence progressive, system. And it is also a flat denial of the basic structure of the imperialist bourgeoisie, which is that it is a *merger*, a *fusion*, of industrial and banking capital *to form finance capital*. How can such a crucial strategic distinction possibly be made between the industrial proletariat and the non-industrial “employees” in imperialist economics when the distinction between the industrial bourgeoisie and the merchant bourgeoisie has been obliterated? Is the proletariat not the product of capital? Under competitive capitalism, the industrial capitalist and the commercial capitalist were distinct, but they both belonged to the same class; likewise their labourers. How much more so under imperialism, when industrial and commercial capital have fused and, as one, hire a vast army of workers to fill the many interlocking needs of this vast system?

But the opportunists cannot confront Lenin or Stalin on the question of imperialism, because their careers consist in hiding the nature of imperialism from the working class, the better to reap its bribes. Thus they tell nothing of the law of maximum profit, or of imperialism’s tendency to decay; in keeping these secrets, they are seeking to represent imperialism as a progressive system. That is why they pretend that the structure of the working class is unchanged from the days of competitive capitalism, or else a mere gradual extension of the state of affairs under competitive capitalism, denying the qualitative leap which was taken with the advent of imperialism.

Thus imperialist economism is — once again — by its very nature male chauvinist, because in ignoring the sectors of the highest profit for imperialism, it ignores the female proletariat, imperialism’s most exploited workers. This opportunist line also serves to undermine socialist revolution because it is an implicit denial of Marx’s

irrefutable prediction that with the march of capital **“society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.”** (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, FLP, p. 31) The implication of the revisionist line is that the masses of women have over the decades been steadily drawn out of the home and into the ranks of the petty-bourgeoisie, that these women serve as a reserve army of petty-bourgeois, that the petty-bourgeoisie is expanding at a faster rate than the proletariat, that the petty-bourgeoisie is a class on the ascendancy and ever becoming stronger with the deepening needs of moribund imperialism. No doubt this would be another example of the “creative application of Marxism-Leninism” which the revisionists are always ready to offer up in order to undermine socialist revolution.

The damage which this political line has done is incalculable; the conception that only those who produce surplus-value (particularly in factories) are “real workers” has sown great confusion throughout the ranks of authentic Marxist-Leninists. It is crucial, in the task of rallying the vanguard of the proletariat to Marxism-Leninism, to expose this line as an apology for imperialism and as one which perpetuates the oppression of women and impedes the rallying of the female vanguard.

In the process of exposing this line, it is necessary, as usual, to expose the inevitable centrist adaptations to Marxism which creep up during those times when the more open revisionist positions are being discredited. And, as usual, In Struggle stands as a shining example of such a centrist adaptation. In Struggle has recently published a grand attack on the revisionist party of France for its line on this question, but reading In Struggle’s new analysis — published without any self-criticism for its former analysis in the *Creons* — we can find the revisionist line lurking throughout.

Boldly In Struggle attacks the revisionists by saying:

...The absurdity of the revisionists’ theory is evident which would make the line of demarcation whether the people are engaged in the production of surplus value and in which work is directly productive. (*“Proletarian” Unity*, no. 12, p. 27)

For In Struggle, therefore, any sector of workers who occupy the same place within the social relations of capital as does the industrial proletariat is entitled to participate in the spontaneous movement

“against the Canadian bourgeoisie and its state” and thus be part of In Struggle’s “proletarian unity.”

Now let us see what role In Struggle sees for these newer sectors of the proletariat, and why.

...The amazing growth in the size of the Canadian working class has not in the slightest diminished the decisive role of the industrial proletariat* which still represents the largest single group of proletarians.

But the place of the industrial proletariat doesn’t depend solely or even mainly on its numbers. Its importance is rather a function of the central role that it occupies in capitalist production. The *main force in producing surplus-value*, the industrial proletariat produces the capital which then is divided and subdivided among the different sectors of capital. This is the reason why it is the main target of their attacks. In addition, the industrial worker is situated in a relationship to capital which helps develop his or her class-consciousness.

In the same way, the rapid increase in the strata of workers in the non-productive sectors is, as we have already seen, directly dependent on the rising productivity of productive labour. Thus, the development of these proletarian strata is in itself proof of the central role occupied by the industrial proletariat within the capitalist system. (Ibid., p. 36)

And later:

The question is not one of numbers but rather of the place occupied in production. In this respect, the industrial proletariat stands out by the fact that *it alone creates surplus value*, although the entire proletariat shares the same fundamental position in relation to Capital. The creation of most social wealth and the very existence of Capital is based on the labour of the industrial proletariat. It is at the very heart of the class antagonism between the entire proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

That the industrial proletariat is the hard core of the proletariat is reflected in the central place it occupies in the class

* In Struggle defines “industrial proletariat” as factory workers, transport workers, and mine workers. Whereas factory workers are only 78% male, transport workers are 85% male and mine workers are 95% male.

struggle. (*"Proletarian" Unity*, no. 13, p. 32)

The first thing we note is that In Struggle, like the revisionist party of France, has loyally rallied to Adam Smith. After having bravely attacked the revisionist party as follows:

Worse still, the PCF "thinkers" even state that only "productive workers *in the area of material production*" belong to the working class, thus denying the very concept of productive work which in no way implies the criterion of *material* production. (*"Proletarian" Unity*, no. 12, p. 25)

In Struggle is now telling us that "the industrial proletariat... alone creates surplus value." In Struggle lumps service workers together with truly non-productive workers, to pit them all against the industrial proletariat:

The other half, represented by the non-industrial proletariat, includes workers in offices, stores, banks and services. It does not create new value but, through its non-paid work, it allows various factions of the bourgeoisie to get their piece of the surplus-value cake produced in the industrial sector. (*"Proletarian" Unity*, no. 13, p. 28)

So since this huge and rapidly-growing service sector allegedly does not produce surplus value for the bourgeoisie, it is therefore only peripheral to the "industrial proletariat" which occupies the "central place in the class struggle." By twisting and dementing Marx's theory of surplus value in favour of the bourgeois economics of Adam Smith, In Struggle is more able to cling to the line of the revisionist party of France, and its own old line, which elevates the role of the factory worker and minimizes the role of all other workers.

As for the truly non-productive sectors, including sales workers in the banks, insurance companies, accounting firms, advertising agencies, and countless other offices, In Struggle places them in the same category as service workers, that is, as tailing behind the industrial proletariat in strategic importance in the making of socialist revolution, because they allegedly do not occupy the "central place in the class struggle," i.e., in the spontaneous movement. Once again the production of surplus value in the area of material production becomes the determinant criterion; the non-productive sectors do not create surplus value but "only" labour to realize it for the imperialist system, which depends for its very existence on a huge army of un-productive workers.

In 1974, In Struggle placed sales, service and office workers in

the petty-bourgeoisie and invited them to provide “considerable support” to the industrial proletariat which would “lead the revolutionary movement.” Now, five years later, these same sectors have been told that they occupy the “same place” in the capitalist relations of production as the industrial proletariat but not the “same place” in the “class struggle” of the proletariat, that in their objective conditions they occupy the same position with respect to capital but in their struggle to transform their objective conditions they occupy an inferior position, that their role is still to provide “considerable support” to the overwhelmingly male industrial proletariat. It is a carefully drawn up centrist position which admits the masses of female workers into the ranks of the proletariat so that they may participate in the spontaneous struggle and so that the likes of In Struggle may seek hegemony over them, but which insists that the (overwhelmingly male) aristocracy of labour is still justified in seeking leadership and hegemony in the spontaneous movement as a whole. The role of women workers, the most exploited workers in the imperialist system, is devalued, all the while the imperialist bourgeoisie is admitting women into the working class at a faster rate than men because this better serves its striving for maximum profit. For all of its calls for “proletarian unity,” In Struggle in practice rejects the notion of a single working class pitted against the imperialist bourgeoisie.

In Struggle’s denial of the realities of imperialism are at the very heart of its “class analysis.” “It denies Stalin’s summation that the law of maximum profit is the basic law of imperialism, monopoly capitalism, and claims that this law is applicable to the entire period of capitalist production: “These new strata of the proletariat... too, are under the direct rule of the laws of Capital, the laws of maximum profit,” (Ibid., p. 40) By refusing to confront that the law of maximum profit is a law specific to monopoly capitalism, In Struggle can conceal the importance of this law in creating the newest sectors of imperialism and in drawing women into these sectors; it can conceal the role which women are specifically playing in propping up the imperialist system.

In Struggle is also blind to the parasitic nature of imperialism itself, trying to use Marx to refute Lenin by stating that “commercial capital... in the framework of the capitalist system, is not parasitic on the society as a whole but constitutes an essential gear of its inner workings.” (*Proletarian Unity*, no. 12, p. 26) It is of course true that Marx in *Capital* shows the important role which commercial cap-

ital plays in promoting the accumulation of surplus value. But to use Marx in such a villainous fashion, in order to deny the parasitic nature of idle capitalists, is (as Lenin once said of his detractors) like wishing mourners at a funeral “many happy returns of the day.” Lenin, in fact, was not the first to note the idle and parasitic nature of capitalists outside the industrial sector; Marx makes numerous references to the idle capitalists who live only on the revenue of the industrial capitalist, such as in the following attack on bourgeois economists:

...It had to be established that even from the “productive,” economic standpoint, the bourgeois world with all its “unproductive labourers” is the best of all worlds.... Both the *do-nothings* and their *parasites* had to be found a place in this best possible order of things.

...The sycophantic underlings of political economy felt it their duty to glorify and justify every sphere of activity by demonstrating that it was “linked” with the production of material wealth, that it was a means towards it; since, namely, a labourer who labours in the service of capital, is useful in one way or another to the enrichment of the capitalist, etc.

In this matter even such people as Malthus are to be preferred, who directly defend the necessity and usefulness of “unproductive” labourers and pure parasites. (*Theories of Surplus Value*, vol. 1, Progress, p. 176)

And this is In Struggle’s game, as well: seeking to establish that all of the component parts of capitalism today are useful, productive and progressive, denying the existence of “pure parasites.” In Struggle’s analysis does not deal with the transformation from competition to monopoly, and its impact upon the structure of the proletariat. Its statements about the nature of commercial capital are left standing, without any reference the fact that imperialism has transformed its very role. Thus, if In Struggle had cared to consider reading Lenin’s brilliant work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, it might have recalled that parasitism is a central feature of imperialism. In Section VIII of his book, entitled “Parasitism and the Decay of Capitalism,” Lenin states:

Parasitism... is characteristic of imperialism.... Hence the extraordinary growth of a class, or rather, of a stratum of rentiers, i.e., people who live by “clipping coupons,” who take no part in any enterprise whatever,

whose profession is idleness. The export of capital, one of the most essential economic bases of imperialism, still more completely isolates the rentiers from production and sets the seal of parasitism on the whole country that lives by exploiting the labour of several overseas countries and colonies.

...The income of the rentiers is *five times greater* than the income obtained from the foreign trade of the biggest “trading” country in the world! This is the essence of imperialism and imperialist parasitism.

...The rentier state is a state of parasitic, decaying capitalism, and this circumstance cannot fail to influence all the socio-political conditions of the countries concerned, in general, and the two fundamental trends in the working-class movement, in particular. (“Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” LCW 22:276-9)

Parasitic! Yes, In Struggle, there *is* parasitism in your beloved Canada! Your Canadian bourgeoisie, which you have stated on occasion is an imperialist bourgeoisie, is a *parasitic* bourgeoisie! But In Struggle finds the coupon-clipping of the financiers “an essential gear of its inner workings,” not at all parasitic!

In denying the basic laws of imperialism as it does, in denying imperialist parasitism and in refusing to confront the implications of the law of maximum profit, In Struggle has proved that it has nothing whatsoever to say on the question of women. Women have been drawn into the workplace in all of the imperialist countries to prop up a decadent, moribund bourgeoisie in its death throes. They are particularly drawn into the most exploited sectors of the proletariat, the ones which allow the bourgeoisie to reap its greatest profits. This has given them a crucial place in the impending class struggle for the political power of the proletariat, even though the history of these sectors is much younger than the history of the industrial proletariat in its clashes with capital, even though the industrial proletariat has years more experience in discipline, defensive organization, and the socialization of labour.

To deny imperialist parasitism is to fall into opportunism on the question of women — as on every other question. Lenin makes the clear link between imperialist decay and the decay of opportunism, when he speaks of **“the tendency of imperialism to split the workers, to strengthen opportunism among them and to cause temporary**

decay in the working-class movement.” (Ibid., p. 283).

The international split of the entire working-class movement is now quite evident. What is the economic basis of this world-historic phenomenon?

It is precisely the parasitism and decay of capitalism, characteristic of its highest historical stage of development, i.e., imperialism. (Ibid., p. 193)

The revisionists, like the imperialist bourgeoisie which they exist to defend, are marked by parasitism and decay.

It is a revisionist, anti-Marxist position, an apology for imperialism, to hold that only industrial workers are a part of the proletariat, or that only the industrial proletariat produces surplus value, or that those workers who produce surplus-value are by that fact more central to revolution against imperialism than those who do not. It could not be clearer how such a line serves the oppression of women, because it denies the vast army of women workers their correct role in the active liberation army of the proletariat. To rally the masses of working women to revolution in the imperialist countries, this revisionism on the nature of the working class must be exposed and defeated.

D. Joining the Ladies' Auxiliary: The Worship of Trade-Unionism

So far we have seen that the economists have assigned themselves the task of drawing the women into the workplace, as if it were a handful of opportunists who accomplished this rather than the mighty tide of capital; and that their vision of the workplace is amazingly restricted to the factories, despite the huge structure of finance capital which shapes a proletariat stretching far beyond the factory. But it is not principally for its own sake that the economists urge on the bourgeoisie in drawing women into the factories. The economists have a goal in wishing to see more women in the workplace: to draw them into the trade union movement, because it is principally in that arena that they strive for hegemony. Thus they put out the call of women: “Join the class struggle! Road to your liberation!”

But for the economists, the “class struggle” consists in any clash or antagonism between classes. They equate the spontaneous movement of the proletariat for self-defense with the proletarian class struggle, in order to deroute the proletariat from grasping Marxism-Leninism and organizing itself for socialist revolution. But Lenin, in

contrast, is clear:

We are all agreed that our task is that of the organization of proletarian class struggle. But what is this class struggle? When the workers of a single factory or a single branch of industry engage in struggle against their employer or employers, is this class struggle? No, this is only a weak embryo of it. The struggle of the workers becomes a class struggle only when all the foremost representatives of the entire working class of the whole country are conscious of themselves as a single working class and launch a struggle that is directed, not against individual employers, but against the *entire class* of capitalists and against the government that supports that class. Only when the individual worker realises that he is a member of the entire working class, only when he recognizes the fact that his petty day-to-day struggle against individual employers and individual government officials is a struggle against the entire bourgeoisie and the entire government, does his struggle become a class struggle. “Every class struggle is a political struggle” — these famous words of Marx are not to be understood to mean that any struggle of workers against employers must always be a political struggle. They must be understood to mean that the struggle of the workers against the capitalists inevitably becomes a political struggle insofar as it becomes a class struggle. It is the task of the Social-Democrats, by organizing the workers, by conducting propaganda and agitation among them, to *turn* their spontaneous struggle against their oppressors into the struggle of the whole class, into the struggle of a definite political *party* for definite political and socialist ideals. This is something that cannot be achieved by local activity alone. (“Our Immediate Task,” LCW 4:215-16)

The Economists believed that any clash between classes was a political struggle. The Economists therefore recognized as “class struggle” the struggle for a wage increase of five kopeks on the ruble. (“Liberal and Marxist Conceptions of the Class Struggle,” LCW 19:121)

By calling the spontaneous movement of the working class “class struggle,” the economists are trying to make the rotten work they are

doing seem very very Marxist. By putting out the call to women to “join the class struggle,” to “get involved in all the battles of the working class” (*“Proletarian” Unity*, no. 4, p. 17), etc., etc., the economists are only plotting that women be drawn into those reformist struggles over which they can establish their petty-bourgeois leadership, in order to keep a knowledge of scientific socialism from them and restrict their battles to demands for improvements under the capitalist system. By seeking to strangle the masses of proletarians through gaining hegemony over the spontaneous movement and keeping it limited to reformism, economism, is utterly male chauvinist, for the basic reason that only socialism can liberate women and so their work to maintain capitalism is one and the same as their work to maintain the oppression of women.

The “class struggle,” for the economists, is led principally within the arena of the trade union movement. But to centralize the trade union movement as they do is to centralize the industrial proletariat to the exclusion of the other sectors of the proletariat (those where women are most heavily concentrated), because it is the industrial proletariat which is the most highly unionized and the unions of the industrial proletariat have in general been able to command more comfortable wages and working conditions than other sectors of the proletariat. It has been many years since the bourgeoisie first perceived the danger which the high level of organization and discipline in the factories posed to bourgeois rule, and so the crumbs from the table of its super-profits have been swept onto a stratum of factory workers — particularly male factory workers — with far greater concentration than onto the less developed sectors of the proletariat, the newer sectors, the ones specifically swelled up in the service of imperialism. Thus it serves the interests of the aristocracy of labour to centralize the role of these best-paid, highly unionized sectors, which have the most to gain from wage hikes and petty reforms, which suffer the most from wage controls (in contrast to the broad masses, wage increases would not exceed that allowed by wage controls anyway), which have the most to gain from imperialist economism, which have the most to lose as imperialism heads for its collapse.

It is clear that the industrial proletariat is the sector of the proletariat with the highest proportion, by far, of male workers. Within the industrial proletariat, however, female factory workers are not only the most oppressed of the industrial proletariat, but also the most oppressed of all women workers. The aristocracy of labour, in defend-

ing the interests of the upper stratum of the proletariat, has always plotted and schemed against the women of the industrial proletariat. It has a long history, going back decades, of sabotaging their defensive struggles and of standing in the way of their right to form unions. These women suffer terrible job insecurity, are constantly laid off and thrown out onto the sidewalk without work, their working conditions are unimaginably poor and dangerous, they are vulnerable to a wide variety of occupational hazards and diseases, including attacks on their reproductive systems, they are sent home to do piece-work in times of crisis, and their wages are by far the lowest of all factory workers. Although women factory workers have a higher rate of unionization than the overall rate of female unionization — 34.5% as opposed to 22.3% in 1975² (stats 287) — they are far more poorly unionized than male factory workers, and their unions are perpetually under the domination of male labour aristocrats and bourgeois. In the overall designs of the trade-union bureaucrats, unions with heavy female memberships are given the lowest priorities in terms of their demands, their struggles for the betterment of their conditions.

So the penchant of the economists for prioritizing factory work, to the exclusion of the other sectors of the proletariat, does not even benefit women factory workers. Women factory workers occupy such a weak position in the trade-union movement — even when they are unionized — that they are usually used as a bargaining card by the union bureaucracy to win greater reforms and immediate gains for the more well-to-do sectors of the industrial proletariat, which are overwhelmingly male. In the meanwhile, most female industrial workers are left out of the trade-union movement altogether. Thus the fetish which the economists have for exaggerating the role of the industrial proletariat with respect to workers in other sectors does not even bring benefit to the women who toil in the industrial proletariat. Women who work in factories are known to turn a deaf ear when the opportunists try to win them to a newer strain of militant economism. They have learned from their own experience that these various trade-union secretaries have nothing to offer them, despite their youth and newer rhetoric; they have learned from their own experience that the struggle for reforms does not lead to a life of comfort and ease for them, and that it also does not lead to socialist revolution.

The service, sales, and clerical sectors of the Canadian proletariat are far more poorly unionized even than female factory labour. That is why the economists place them at a lower level of priority. There

are some references in *In Struggle* and *League* newspapers to women workers for Bell Canada, and for hospital staffs, when these workers go on strike and the opportunists have an opportunity to infiltrate their unions and their picket lines. And rumours of new organization among bank tellers or office employees will be seized upon by them, as in the case of *In Struggle*'s recent discovery of the Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada. But the fact is that the analysis which the opportunists make of the importance of different sectors of the working class simply tails and trails after the trade-union movement.

Whereas the old-line revisionists seek power principally in the established unions of the industrial proletariat, the newer blood of opportunists (such as the *League* and *In Struggle*) must expand to other sectors of the spontaneous movement if they do not want their careers to founder completely. They still pin their principal hopes on the organized industrial proletariat, where the super-profits of imperialism rain the heaviest, but they are as yet too vulnerable and too powerless to place all of their hopes on this one prize sector. Therefore they graciously admit the newer sectors of the proletariat into their analysis (where they make analyses), but they have not yet abandoned their hopes to compete with the revisionists in the choicest areas. *In Struggle*'s "class analysis" is a graphic example of this, admitting sales and office workers into the proletariat but being sure to clarify that their struggles are secondary in importance to the struggles of the workers in industry.

We have already seen much of the opportunism which infests *In Struggle*'s latest "class analysis" of the Canadian proletariat. We have seen how it is the "class struggle," i.e., the defensive movement, which in the end defines its priorities of what constitutes the key sectors of the Canadian proletariat. We have seen how it has — amazingly — written an entire section on bank workers without a peep on the key role of banks in the functioning of the imperialist system. It is clear that *In Struggle* has singled out bank workers and workers for the state sector because these are the sectors which have gone on active drives for unionization in recent months.

In Struggle had one purpose and one purpose alone for writing its "class analysis" of the Canadian proletariat — as a tool for its spontaneism and trade-unionism. It refers to this, of course, as "the unity of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and its state," by which it means — as everyone familiar with the line of *In Struggle* knows

— the spontaneous attacks of the proletariat to demand better concessions from the “employers and the government.” In *Struggle* thus begins: “The struggle of the working class in all countries has always required the greatest possible unity inside its own ranks.” (“*Proletarian*” *Unity* no. 13, p. 26) By putting forward that the entire proletariat occupies the “same place” in capitalist social relations, this then should foster such “proletarian unity.” But, of course, in a relationship among equals, we sometimes find that some people are more equal than others. Thus, the industrial proletariat will occupy the “central place in the class struggle” because it alone (supposedly) produces surplus value, and the less equal among equals will provide the “considerable support.” In *Struggle* ends its article in the same tone as it begins it. Immediately after having denied that the law of maximum profit is a law particular to imperialism, In *Struggle* concludes:

...The new and old proletarian strata alike have no other interests but one, and that is to unite in the struggle for socialism and the definitive overthrow of the capitalist system. It is this fundamental unity of the Canadian proletariat — whatever the respective origins of this or that strata, in whatever sector they may work, no matter what the specific forms of exploitation they experience — that the revisionists and the capitalist apologists of all sorts try to hide from view. Confronted with tactics that try to divide the proletariat, it is up to the communists to make the fundamental unity of the working class stronger and more solid in the face of its main enemy — the Canadian bourgeoisie. (Ibid., p. 40)

When we sweep away the few words of revolutionary rhetoric about socialism — and anyone familiar with In *Struggle*’s line will not hesitate to discount them, for they are only the necessary cover for its all-round spontaneism and reformism — we can see that what In *Struggle* is calling for is one big strike movement among all of the strata of the Canadian proletariat, women as well as men, productive along with non-productive workers. And in this strike movement, the industrial proletariat is to hold the “central place,” and the non-industrial proletariat — containing the overwhelming masses of women workers — is to provide “considerable support,” its penalty for not actually contributing to the production of surplus value in In *Struggle*’s “Marxist” analysis. In *Struggle*’s search for hegemony in this strike movement will reflect its priorities, that is, its infiltration into

the unionization drives of bank workers and sales workers, will carry with it the line that these workers should subordinate their struggle to the industrial proletariat which occupies the “central place in the class struggle.” In Struggle’s “proletarian unity” carries with it its own divisions, since for In Struggle, some proletarians are more equal than others.

The economists feebly attempt to counter bourgeois feminism by saying that it splits the unity of the sexes in the struggle for socialism. There is no doubt that bourgeois feminism does this, and must be exposed for this. But the economists are hardly the ones who should be making this accusation. Most women proletarians work at jobs which are overwhelmingly female. Moreover, most women who are in unions are concentrated into a very small number of unions. In 7% of all Canadian unions, women accounted for 80% or more of the total membership, whereas in 40% of Canadian unions, less than 10% of the members were female.³ So to begin political work from within the trade union movement, or even from within the economic struggle in general, is, despite the best intentions of our economist friends, to champion and deepen the political division of the sexes along the lines designated by the bourgeoisie.

It is only through the Marxist-Leninist political unity of an authentic communist party that a revolutionary unity of the sexes can be realized. **“A Woman Communist,”** states Lenin, **“is a member of the party just as a man Communist, with equal rights and duties. There can be no difference of opinion on that score.”** (As quoted by Clara Zetkin, *Lenin on the Woman Question*, in *The Woman Question*, NY, International Publishers, 1972, p. 89). But the economists have no use for a monolithic Bolshevik unity, which is the deepest threat to their search for hegemony over the economic movement of the working class. Thus economism, for all its phony anti-feminism, actively serves to split the revolutionary unity of the sexes in the struggle for socialism.

What is clear is that economism, which has little enough to offer the broad masses of proletarians, has even less to offer the broad masses of women workers. The shallowness and bourgeois ideology of trade-unionism does nothing to explain the overall situation of women in capitalist society, much less offer a solution to it. Masses of women workers have learned from their own experience that the trade union movement is just one more locus of the oppression of women, and that their liberation cannot be won through following

one trade-union hack after another, whatever the communist rhetoric. The trade-unionist leadership is utterly irrelevant to the overwhelming majority of female proletarians, who have never been inside a union hall and for whom the idea of winning their liberation through union battles is as realistic as winning it through a trip to the moon. It is equally irrelevant to unemployed women, who are out of work far out of proportion to their numbers in the labour market; and to housewives, still a majority of Canadian women, chained to domestic slavery because of the backward institution of private housework. To rally sincere elements, seeking Marxism-Leninism, to an economist political line is merely a trick to split them from the broad masses of women workers, to divert them from the crucial work which must be done to rally the vanguard women proletarians to the struggle for the party, for many of these women will emerge from deep within the masses, where there are no unions. Thus the obsession with trade-unionism which the economists propagate, their insistence on making the economic battles the main starting point of their political work, is by its very nature in service of the ugliest and most malicious male chauvinism, pitted against the fundamental interests of the broad of women.

E. The Structure of the Proletariat: Another Revisionist View

There is another revisionist line on the structure of the proletariat which we have not yet treated. That is the line which makes the working class not too narrow, but too broad. The revisionist party of Canada holds to the following view of the working class:

The working class is the one class which continues to grow in numbers with the further expansion of capitalist production. Today it constitutes the overwhelming majority of all who are gainfully employed. At the same time changes have taken place in the structure of the working class arising from the rapid development of the scientific and technological revolution. The proportion of white-collar workers has greatly increased, as has the proportion of engineering, technical, scientific and professional workers. These changes in the composition of the working class have not eliminated the production workers whose numbers continue to grow and who constitute the most revolutionary core of the working class. ("The Road to Socialism in Canada: The Program of

the Communist Party of Canada, “ p. 34)

Usually when this political line comes forward it finds a way to reconcile itself with the other revisionist position. That is, while including engineers and professional workers in the ranks of the proletariat, the revisionist party of Canada will still insist that “the production workers” (and of course this includes only those who produce material goods) “constitute the most revolutionary core of the working class,” a line which *In Struggle* reproduced almost verbatim when it stated that “the industrial proletariat is the hard core of the proletariat is reflected in the central place it occupies in the class struggle.” (*“Proletarian” Unity*, no. 13, p. 32) The revisionist party of France, too, expands the working class to include the professional sectors when it states:

...Productive workers are not only those who intervene physically in the objects produced. The work of a part of the technicians, the engineers, and even the employees, intervenes for an increasing part in the manufacture of products, to the degree that the process of production results in more and more complex techniques, becomes more and more tributary to the progress of scientific knowledge. (*Le Capitalisme Monopoliste d’Etat*, pp. 216-17 — our translation)

What the revisionists do on the one hand is elevate the factory worker above all other workers in order to justify the hegemony of the aristocracy of labour and their own opportunist work in the trade-union movement, which also camouflages the nature of the imperialist system; and then, on the other hand, they “compensate” for the apparent “shrinking” of the working class by amassing all kinds of petty-bourgeois into their analyses of the proletariat, in order to justify the hegemony of the petty-bourgeoisie in other spontaneous struggles of the working class. In both cases, the effect is the same: to negate the distinction between the proletariat and the petty-bourgeoisie, particularly between the masses of female proletarians and the petty-bourgeoisie. Whereas factory workers are “workers,” bank and sales workers are merely “employees,” the same title given to any bureaucrat within the government apparatus or the corporation hierarchy, provided that he receives a salary.

The masses of women workers who are not located within the ranks of the industrial proletariat are placed by this analysis in the same category as the petty-bourgeoisie which occupies a position of control, enforcement, and decision-making in the exploitation of the

working class. When In Struggle stated in 1974 that office and sales “employees” were in the same social class as government bureaucrats and that proletarian housewives were in the same social class as merchants and teachers, it was in essence doing the same thing, undermining the struggle of the vast proletarian army in the imperialist countries against its enemy, the imperialist bourgeoisie.

To categorize teachers, managers, engineers, social workers as proletarians, is to deny the very basis of the existence of the proletariat as a class, which is that it has been stripped of everything in the social relations of production except the ability to sell its own labour-power. Even though their income comes in the form of a paycheck, and even though their labour is often increasingly socialized, these categories of workers cannot be considered proletarians because their principal role in capitalist social relations is in the control and management of the exploitation of the working class. Far from being appendages to a machine, far from labouring solely to produce and realize profit for the bourgeoisie, these petty-bourgeois are empowered to make decisions in the management of capitalist production and can therefore become allies of the proletariat in its struggle only to the degree they *desert* the stand of their own class and place themselves at the service of the revolutionary proletariat.

Teachers are sometimes cited as an example of a stratum which is becoming increasingly proletarianized, and the growing prominence of teacher’s strikes is used by revisionists to conceal the actual role which teachers play in the functioning of the capitalist system. The principal role of teachers for the bourgeoisie is the propagation of bourgeois ideology in the minds of the future generation of workers, along with the exercise of control over the working class which teaching entails. Teachers (and university professors) also are an important arm of capital in maintaining a strict class hierarchy in the educational level and educational opportunities of the social classes, so as to ensure that only a small percentage of the population is actually admitted into the ranks of the privileged strata of the society. Thus teachers’ strikes often involve reactionary demands, such as the demand that the most experienced teachers have the option of refusing to teach working-class children. Bitter battles have been fought throughout North America by teachers’ unions who refused to relent on a demand such as this one.

Under socialism, teachers will not have control over their own work, but on the contrary the content of their work will be placed at

the service of the needs of the proletarian class. The idea that teachers are but one more component of the proletariat is therefore an extremely dangerous view, one which only invites the continued hegemony of the petty-bourgeoisie in the training of the future generations of workers.

Likewise, social workers, managers, and engineers play their role for the bourgeoisie in the control, decision-making, and management of the exploitation of the working class. Their class interests lie in the continued exploitation of the proletariat, from which they gain position and privilege. In their work they learn not proletarian organization and discipline, but petty-bourgeois individualism. And policemen and soldiers, although very well disciplined and organized, have as their function to step in to ensure the continued subjugation of the working class by force of arms where the more “peaceful” methods of ideology and workplace management have failed. Policemen and soldiers can assist the proletariat in its class struggle against the bourgeoisie to the degree that they mutiny and turn their guns around on the bourgeoisie.

It is obvious that the revisionist parties include petty-bourgeois strata such as these in the ranks of the proletariat in order to reinforce the continued control and subjugation of the proletariat by the bourgeois class. Such a political line is designed for the perpetuation of wage slavery and all of its correlates, including the oppression of women. And by lumping these hirelings of the bourgeoisie together with the masses of women workers who toil to create and realize value for the bourgeois class, without any control over the means of production, without any means to survive except through the sale of their own labour-power, is to trivialize their struggle for liberation and force it under the heel of bourgeois domination.

The Great Conspiracy: The Economists Use Women for their Hegemonic Designs

What we have seen so far is evidence that economism is a male chauvinist plot to keep the broad masses of women crushed in wage slavery, to keep the knowledge of scientific socialism from them. The agents of this plot are the petty-bourgeoisie and the aristocracy of labour, bribed from the crumbs of the table of imperialist super-profits; their male chauvinism is an objectively inevitable by-product of their social position, their social basis, which their political work is a struggle to maintain. Given that it is an organized plot, a conspiracy,

let us look at it in action, as the economists engineer their political work to degrade, patronize, manipulate, exploit, and crush the masses of women of their own elitist and hegemonic ends.

A. In Struggle

In Struggle is the great Christian, the great tender-hearted liberal of Chinese revisionism in Canada. It is a highly factionalized friendship society which is gearing itself for parliamentary victories and which allows all manner of views in its ranks except Marxism-Leninism. In Struggle is known for its male chauvinism within its ranks; women are kept out of the leadership, their ideas are scoffed at, only to be repeated by some leading male cadre and cheered on.

In 1976 some of In Struggle's leading men hatched a "unity project" whose goal was the regroupment of diverse petty-bourgeois throughout the country, all of whom declared themselves to be Marxist-Leninists the better to hide their various bourgeois views. The purpose of this regroupment of petty-bourgeois was to have a single organization strong enough to seek hegemony over the spontaneous struggles of the Canadian proletariat in particular — at the time — the struggle against the Trudeau law, which In Struggle repeatedly equated to the revolutionary struggle itself.

The historical facts are clear that In Struggle drove its phony, malicious "unity project" into the struggle for the party on the backs of International Women's Day, 1976. Rather than using the occasion of this important day to advance the revolutionary cause of women in Canada, that is, to advance the cause of the struggle for the party, In Struggle used the IWD as an occasion to launch its sabotage of the struggle for the party, to launch its "Project" which was to destroy the Marxist-Leninist movement.

The specific set of events was the refusal by the newly-formed social-fascist Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist) to participate in tactical unity for an IWD event. The League had been a fusion of three groups with years of history as economists and opportunists of the ugliest variety; one of the groups actually emerged from the vilest of counter-revolutionary formations, the so-called "Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist)." Rather than to expose the consolidation of the right-opportunism of these groups in the form of the League's conspiracy to strangle the spontaneous movement of the proletariat towards the ends of imperialism and fascism, In Struggle took the occasion of IWD to promote the League as a

“leftist” “sectarian” formation, erring only in the direction of not showing a proper desire for unity. This was a great step forward for the League, because In Struggle’s revisionism on the question of unity was so obvious even to swarms of economist petty-bourgeois that the League was able all the more easily to represent itself as authentically communist. In Struggle rode this “anti-sectarianism” Christianity crusade against the League for long enough to rally various groups, of whatever political line, to form the base for a Canada-wide organization. At the moment that this was accomplished, In Struggle dropped its “unity project” and suddenly decided that principled “Marxist-Leninist” unity had to be realized around a party program, the line which the Bolshevik Union *had* been struggling for since the inception of the sadly famous “unity project.”

It was on the backs of the masses of women, then, that In Struggle set up its sabotage of the Canadian Marxist-Leninist movement. What of the IWD event in 1976 itself? In Struggle used the occasion to put forward the ugliest, most demagogical economism which it had yet propagated. It openly attacked and insulted the women workers who were present, telling them that they were utterly incapable of understanding Marxist-Leninist politics and that they could do no other than to relate to life through each petty, immediate struggle which confronted them. This attack took the form of criticizing those In Struggle members who had enough respect for the working women present to put forward some politics to them.

This attitude of inquiring, of listening attentively to the masses failed in certain workshops. As a result of working men, women and housewives did not dare express themselves in front of the intellectual comrades’ eagerness to take the floor, often in a complex and abstract way. (Supplement, May 27, 1976, p. 2)

This attempt of these “dogmatist” comrades to raise political questions — we have no way of affirming, of course, if the politics which they raised were authentically Marxist-Leninist, or just a better disguised form of Gagnonism — is represented as “intellectual,” “complex,” and “abstract.” In other words, say the Gagnonites, working women and housewives are dumb; great ideas will escape them.

In the workshops, some comrades adopted an attitude which consisted in hurriedly reciting a series of Marxist-Leninist principles without linking them to the concrete pre-occupations and struggles that the participants were telling

us about. That is a dogmatic way of intervening among the masses. These people are afraid of applying too much attention to the immediate interests of the proletariat and people and thus of falling into economism.... Not starting from the masses' consciousness in order to advance it, leads to adopting a dogmatic style of intervention. (Ibid.)

Marxism-Leninism is repeatedly attacked as being a mere matter of "general ideas," against which are pitted the spontaneous struggles guided by bourgeois ideology: "We must avoid repeating the same general ideas. It is more important to concentrate ourselves on convincing the masses of the correctness of these ideas by many concrete examples of class struggle." (Ibid.) To ensure that the working women who came to In Struggle's IWD event were carefully guarded from all political questions, to ensure that their political curiosity was left unsatisfied and that the discussion was kept on the lowest possible level, the level of individual petty struggles, far away from Marxism-Leninism, to ensure that In Struggle itself was playing its proper role in splitting scientific socialism from the masses, In Struggle launches a direct attack on the correct political line that building the communist party is the principal task of Marxist-Leninists. It states that the IWD coalition;

did not give the necessary attention to the struggle for women's democratic rights. This may have led many to believe that we considered these correct struggles that women are leading for their emancipation, as being of little importance compared to the struggle for the creation of the proletarian party. (Ibid.)

In Struggle's utter disdain for the working women present, for their thirst for communist ideas, for their search for participation in the struggle to build the party, stands in direct contrast to the expressed opinions of the working women themselves.

But what was striking during that day, was the growing desire of these women for education, for the comprehension of the mechanisms of their oppression and exploitation, for their appropriation of the science of proletarian struggle, Marxism-Leninism by overcoming their fear of "big words." (Ibid., p. 1)

In Struggle's principal task is to keep the "big words" from the masses of workers, because it is in grasping the "big words" — which the snobby elite of In Struggle is convinced the working class is in-

capable of doing — that the masses of workers will grasp the tool to their liberation.

To propagate bourgeois ideology to its English-Canadian readers, *In Struggle* published a “special issue” of its English Digest in specific preparation for IWD 1976. The principal theme of this issue was its promotion of the League and its sabotage of the principled Marxist-Leninist unity demanded for the struggle for the party. But this issue also carried a “supplement” in order to ensure that the snuggle against Marxist-Leninist unity was firmly linked with the most rancid of economism. In this supplement *In Struggle* went to every length affirm that the capitalist system could be opposed through various demands for reforms. In regard to “equal-work, equal pay,” *In Struggle* affirms:

For putting forward this claim means to refuse the role of women for capitalists: “cheap labour” and cheap manpower reserve. To put forward this claim means to refuse underpaid hard jobs, to refuse the bourgeoisie’s crisis politics which accentuate wage differences between men and women. To put forward this claim is to oppose capitalism, because capitalism needs the inequality between men and women of the working people to live and increase profits onto the back of the whole proletariat, (p. 15)

The most die-hard anarcho-syndicalist would have no trouble agreeing with this one. We can supposedly “refuse” the oppression of the bourgeoisie by making a demand for equal pay! We can supposedly “oppose capitalism” through reforms!

In Struggle has repeatedly used the occasion of International Women’s Day to strangle the participation of women in the struggle for the party, to patronize and insult working women and to propagate its counter-revolutionary economism. Its 1977 IWD event for the Toronto area showed a film about “socialist China” and held this up as a model for the struggle for “socialism” in Canada. Inspired by photographs of daycare centres in China, the participants were then exhorted to emulate what they saw by struggling for daycare centres in Canada. The question of the party was mentioned in the vaguest terms; it was entirely unclear that the purpose of the party was socialist revolution, the distinct impression was left that this party would be built out of the spontaneous struggles and in order to further the spontaneous struggle. Not a peep was uttered about the dictatorship of the proletariat. In advertising this event, the *In Struggle* leaflet

made a few vague comments about socialism and then concretized this by concluding:

We'd also like to hear your experiences in fighting the cutbacks and wage controls. Let's discuss the best demands to support and how to organize and link ourselves with other sectors of the people in order to defeat the crisis measures. We invite men as well as women to attend the meeting since men must actively support women's demands. How can you defeat the crisis measures and struggle for socialism (yes, let's not forget that struggle for socialism! — BU) if you leave half the army behind, burdened with unequal pay, job discrimination, housework, and childcare. A successful resistance is a unified resistance!

In other words, how can the female proletariat possibly struggle for "socialism" when it is burdened with double oppression? The obvious road to the liberation of women, then, for In Struggle, is to make women equal under capitalism, to abolish job discrimination under capitalism, so that they can unify their resistance with male workers. For In Struggle, the struggle for reforms is principal; the party and "socialism" are secondary, mere tools, means to the end of the struggle against the various crisis measures of the bourgeoisie.

International Women's Day 1978 was the occasion for In Struggle to give credence and support to the malicious petty-bourgeois feminists who mobilized to attack Marxism-Leninism and silence every expression of a communist idea. The event was a panel discussion organized by various feminist collections, and In Struggle was the only non-feminist group invited to speak on the panel. It used the occasion to recite the emptiest of slogans about the unity of the sexes and the unity of English and French Canada in the struggle "against the bourgeoisie and for socialism." It did not have one word to say about the specific oppression of women or what the struggle for socialism could do to end the specific oppression of women. Its only response to feminism was economism. Even the least intelligent of the feminists present had no trouble attacking the shallowness and uselessness of In Struggle's presentation, which was handily used as an example of "communism" and which was pointed to as a means of attacking communism. Only the interventions of the Bolshevik Union at this event were able to make a correct distinction between the drivel of In Struggle and some authentic Marxism-Leninism on the question of women.

We have shown at length that In Struggle's entire economist line is a male chauvinist conspiracy against the masses of women. A specific example of this may be found in the line it propagated in ADDS, a Montreal welfare rights organization. In Struggle's line in ADDS was that it was by struggling against the wage controls that the welfare recipients would satisfy their demands from the bourgeois state — just a petty plot to hitch the most oppressed strata of women behind its labour-aristocrat program. In Struggle included in its "Draft Program" — which said practically nothing on the question of women — a demand for a guaranteed minimum annual income, which was a demand which ADDS members had been opposing for several years.

In Struggle actively allied with counter-revolution against the masses of welfare recipients in ADDS when it supported the presence in ADDS of the social-fascist League, which had been conspiring for many months to split, wreck and destroy the organization. In Struggle attacked the welfare recipients by telling them that they were anti-communist for opposing the presence of the League — thus not only defending the League as "communist," but also pitting its tender-hearted Christian ideas about so-called "communists" against the best instincts of the masses, whose opposition to the League had nothing whatsoever to do with anti-communism. But, although In Struggle defended the League against the masses in ADDS, it took the occasion of its Fourth National Conference of the Marxist-Leninist Movement to seize several welfare recipients by the collar and expel them by force. Their "crime" was to have stood at the microphone and express their views which, unfortunately for In Struggle, were democratic and communist views. It was a terrible embarrassment to In Struggle that women of the working class were standing up to defend Marxism-Leninism when In Struggle, in the five years it has been manipulating around and operating within the masses, has only managed to achieve the regroupment of some panicking petty-bourgeois.

B. The "Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist)"

The so-called "CCL(ML)" is the official agent of Chinese revisionism in Canada, openly recognized by the counter-revolutionary clique in Peking and proudly defending the designs of the Chinese leadership towards great power status. In defending imperialism, covering for international fascism, and propagating the theory of

“three worlds,” the League of course is engaged in the strangulation of the broad masses of women, because imperialism and fascism are systems in which the oppression and exploitation of women form an integral part.

Every year the League uses the occasion of International Women’s Day to propagate its economism, which in its hands is a counter-revolutionary tool to seize the leadership of the spontaneous struggles of the proletariat in order to place them in the service of the most reactionary sectors of finance capital. IWD for the League becomes an occasion for it to urge women to “join the class struggle,” by seeking jobs in factories so that they are better placed under League-ite leadership in the trade union movement. While the broad masses of women are suffering in agony from unemployment and starvation, League-ite women, for some reason, have far less trouble finding the appropriate jobs to carry on their implantationist activity in the factories and the hospitals. The League urges its cadre on to “join the class struggle” so that it can seize the power of the trade-union movement and strangle the masses of women in their thirst for Marxism-Leninism, by force when necessary. The League’s tactics against the masses of women differ in certain degree from those of In Struggle, which operates far less on the basis of social-fascism and far more on the basis of social-democracy. Whereas In Struggle manifests its male chauvinism much more by ignoring, spitting on, and neglecting the situation of the broad masses of women — as in its lack of concern for the concrete struggles in ADDS, its obsession with wage controls and other problems which cause the most concern within the aristocracy of labour, and its exclusion of women from having a voice and leadership in its organization — the League plots against women in a much more active and organized way. The League does not ignore the masses of women in their various situations throughout the Canadian working class; it pounces on them, it takes advantage of the relative youth and weakness of women’s defensive organizations, it infiltrates their struggles for democratic rights and it uses any manner on intrigue and manoeuvre to establish itself in charge of them.

We have already cited the example of ADDS. The masses in ADDS won a great victory by marshalling their democratic forces to expel the League from its ranks. The League had been spending much energy plotting a coup within ADDS, to seize the power of it and turn its leadership entirely into the hands of the League. It openly opposed

democracy within ADDS by demanding that non-welfare recipients (i.e., Leaguites) within ADDS be allowed to vote. When this manoeuvre failed, the League sent its cadre onto the welfare rolls so as to keep voting rights within ADDS. The League actually seized power in two ADDS locals and used its control of the funds to channel them into other League activities. Utterly severed from the masses within ADDS, who voted the expulsion of the League by an overwhelming majority, the League then blamed the expulsion on the “counter-revolutionary Bolshevik Union,” which it has always accused of being “isolated from the masses.” What terrified the League above all was that, despite its most valiant efforts, welfare recipients in ADDS were beginning to grasp communist ideas and participate in communist study circles. The League had always opposed study within ADDS and had put forward the position that political discussion within ADDS should be limited to discussion of the immediate reform demands of welfare recipients.

What the League wanted in ADDS was to turn it into another organization of the likes of SOS Daycare. SOS Daycare is used by League publicity agents as one of its greatest victories. SOS Daycare has carried on a long campaign for free, “worker-controlled,” co-operative daycare and has won much media coverage for its occupation of a school building and other militant activity around these questions. In fact what SOS Daycare represents is the successful attempt of the League to seize the reigns of a popular daycare movement and demand that all of the men and women who belonged to it capitulate to its “class struggle platform,” which was nothing but a demand for absolute Leagueite leadership under one or two socialist slogans. The League was able to engineer its coup with exceptional efficiency in this case because the infiltration of SOS Daycare was particularly easy — it was not necessary to find a particular job in a particular factory, to join the welfare rolls, etc. The League engineered the same kind of absolute takeover in a system of food cooperatives, which were also relatively easy to infiltrate. These two cases serve as examples of what the League would like to achieve throughout the democratic and defense organizations of the Canadian masses if it were afforded the opportunity.

Another example of the League’s conspiracy against oppressed Canadian women is the Organization to Fight for the Democratic Rights of Immigrants (OFDRI), a League front which seeks to bring the deeply oppressed and suffering domestic workers in Canada un-

der the vicious grips of the League. Very poorly organized because of the objective nature of their work, subject to the whims of the Immigration Department, living at starvation wages, exempted even from minimum wage requirements, and oppressed beyond measure, the domestic workers who come in contact with the League will be very poorly equipped to fight back against this highly-organized conspiracy of petty-bourgeois strangulation.

The League represents the politics of the petty-bourgeois and the labour aristocracy as they panic in the face of the collapse of the world imperialist system. In its panic, the League seeks its hegemony where it can, but the highly organized sections of the trade union movement usually offer too much of a challenge and cannot be broken down with sufficient ease for the League to establish the absolute control which it seeks. Therefore the League's utter fascism is exposed with far greater clarity in its activities in the more newly organized, weaker, more poorly financed, and vulnerable sections of the Canadian masses. That is why women's organizations have fallen particular victim to the absolute totalitarian designs of the social-fascist League. Its designs to smash the defenses of Canadian women, to physically block the diffusion of communist ideas to them, to render them as defenseless as possible in the face of the deepening onslaught of capital, are part and parcel of its social-fascist designs on the entire Canadian working class.

On a theoretical level, the League has nothing at all to say about the question of women. Its weekly column, "Half the Sky" (from a quotation by its idol Mao Tse-tung, who never put forward a communist line on the question of women), almost always deals with this or that reform movement among women, in the hopes that the League will be able to infiltrate it. It has made no concrete analysis of the concrete situation of Canadian women and its entire political platform on women, as put forward in its Statement of Political Agreement, consists in some babble about bringing women into the workplace and from there under the direction of the League. The League's contempt for Marxist-Leninist theory is one and the same as contempt for women, whose double oppression requires far more scientific explanation than the League's contemptuous sloganeering.

In rallying its cadre, the League often makes private appeals to the feminist petty-bourgeois instincts of various women who are drawn into its environs. There is nothing inconsistent about this; it is just an example of the collusion between feminism and economism

which accompanies its contention. But what is principal in its conspiracy, where the question of women is to be treated, is its social-fascist design upon the masses, a design which is by its very nature male chauvinist, no less so than fascism itself. An organization which exists to ensure the domination of the most reactionary sections of finance capital, to ensure by force that the working class remains an appendage of the imperialist bourgeoisie, exists to perpetuate the oppression of women. The League's conspiracies against ADDS and other organizations of women in Canada are merely the concrete realization of this.

The economists rode to fame by claiming to have made the discovery that it is the proletariat which is the leading force for revolution, and by claiming that their economism defends the interests of the proletariat. It is of course true that only the proletariat as a class can lead in the revolutionary transformation of the society, in the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the new socialist order. This is because the proletariat is the specific product of capitalism, it stands in direct antagonism to the bourgeoisie as a class, it alone is in the objective position to take leadership against the rule of the bourgeoisie. The economists warp and vulgarize this scientific truth to propagate the illusion that, because the proletariat is held by the bourgeoisie in wage slavery, therefore it is through the economic struggle for higher wages that the working class will achieve its liberation. But pitted against the lies of the economists stands the Marxist truth that the proletariat will achieve its liberation only when guided by its advanced detachment, its independent political party; that this party must be guided by a firm program, strategy and tactics which take into account the entire structure of the capitalist society and all of the theoretical and practical problems which are entailed in the struggle for socialism. Lenin is clear:

Only an objective consideration of the sum total of reciprocal relations of all the classes of a given society without exception, and, consequently, a consideration of the objective stage of development of that society and of the reciprocal relations between it and other societies, can serve as a basis for correct tactics of the advanced class. (Lenin, *On Marx and Engels*, FLP, p. 40)

Thus the proletariat does not achieve its liberation by gazing in on itself, or by only considering the problems of wages and working conditions in its struggle against wage slavery. It must grasp "the

materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata and groups of the population.” (*What Is To Be Done?*, FLP, p. 86) Even on their own turf, the workplace, the economists have nothing to offer the broad masses of proletarian women. By taking the economic struggle as their main starting point, the economists cannot but accept the basic premises of the bourgeoisie, one of which is the oppression of women. Lenin states:

...All worship of the spontaneity of the working-class movement, all belittling of the role of “the conscious element,”... means, quite irrespective of whether the belittler wants to or not, strengthening the influence of the bourgeois ideology over the workers.... The spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its becoming subordinated to the bourgeois ideology... for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade unionism... and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. (*What Is To Be Done?*, FLP, p. 46, 49)

The economists’ contempt for theory, of the need to understand **“all aspects of the life and activity”** of women, renders them utterly useless to the masses of proletarian women. Only a grasp of the double oppression of women can explain the specific position which women occupy in the labour market. Thus the economists never dare to try to explain the rigid sexual segregation of the workplace and how this is maintained through the bourgeois manipulation of the woman’s specific position in the home. They are unable to explain the link between privatized housework, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, part-time work, seasonal work, menial work, piece work, home work, rock-bottom wages, and an exceptionally high rate of unemployment. They are utterly unable to show the link between domestic slavery and the fact that the woman, more than anyone else, is used as a commodity and is subjected to merciless exploitation.

And, looking beyond the workplace, it becomes even clearer why economism must be utterly defeated by the masses of women in their struggle for liberation. Because women are doubly oppressed, they must be doubly liberated. The specific oppression of women as *women* is rooted in the private ownership of the means of production. Engels states:

The first class opposition that appears in history co-

incides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male. (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, ed. E. Leacock, NY: International Publishers, 1975, p. 129)

Thus Marxism-Leninism makes it clear that the oppression of women is not just a question of wage slavery, or of direct exploitation by the bourgeoisie at the workplace. The oppression of women has a history which is as old as class society. To uproot it means to uproot class society; and to uproot it demands a consciousness of its fundamental nature, of its every manifestation. The specific oppression of women *as women* is rooted in domestic slavery, and Lenin is clear that the oppression of women cannot be abolished until domestic slavery is abolished and housework is socialized.

The real emancipation of women, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding state power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its *wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins.* ("A Great Beginning," LCW 29:429)

The specific position of the woman in the family, domestic slavery, leaves its mark on all of her social relationships in capitalist society: sexual harassment on the street and at work, sexual assault, problems in medical care, limitations on education, and the specific inculcation of backward ideas among women. To deal with the question of the oppression of women in terms of wage slavery alone, or even the lack of certain democratic rights, is anti-Marxist; it is a malicious insult to the just aspirations of the masses of women for full liberation, for full equality, for full recognition of their vast human potential as fighters for the liberation of humanity.

The economists are the sworn enemies of the broad masses of women. They are the allies of the imperialist bourgeoisie, they work in its service, they are in the camp of counter-revolution. The struggle to rally the vanguard women to the front ranks of the active liberation army of the proletariat cannot be separated from the struggle against imperialist economism, the struggle to defeat the labour-lieutenants of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the working class.

Feminism

The Social Basis of Feminism

The other side of the coin of the oppression of women is sexual slavery. The other side of the bourgeois conspiracy to keep women oppressed and enslaved is feminism. Just as economism works to keep women enslaved at the workplace, in the name of the liberation of the working class from wage slavery, so feminism has assigned itself the task of keeping women chained to the kitchen, to the nursery, and to sexual subjugation, in the name of the great struggle against the sexual oppression of women.

Feminism has seen a major revival in the last decade, consolidating its counter-revolutionary influence with greater force than ever before in the imperialist countries. It originated in the highest strata of the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie, with spokespeople such as Betty Friedan and the National Organization of Women complaining of the “psychological burden” suffered by wealthy women who lacked their own careers. The organizers of this old-guard feminism have spearheaded the various movements to allow the most privileged women in the imperialist countries to gain jobs in corporation management, medicine, law, universities, and other areas which remain utterly closed not only to almost all women but also to almost all men.

Through the leadership and influence of this top stratum of feminists, the bourgeoisie has passed certain democratic legislation such as the liberalization of divorce and abortion laws and other changes in the formal legal status of women. However, bourgeois democracy does not eliminate bourgeois dictatorship. Lenin states:

In most cases the right of divorce will remain unrealisable under capitalism, for the oppressed sex is subjugated economically. No matter how much democracy there is under capitalism, the woman remains a “domestic slave,” a slave locked up in the bedroom, nursery, kitchen. The fuller the freedom of divorce, the clearer will women see that the source of their “domestic slavery” is capitalism, not lack of rights. (“A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism,” LCW 23:72-3)

Therefore, all the while that the bourgeoisie has loudly pointed to these new reforms as supposed evidence of progress for women,

the conditions of the masses of women have been worsening, the dual oppression of women weighs more heavily than ever before.

For representing such an extremely restricted stratum of bourgeois women, who are by no means losing the privileges of capitalism but in fact only gaining more (by winning the right to participate directly in the capitalist management of the exploitation of the working class), this top stratum of feminists has earned the jealousy and disdain even of many of the leading petty-bourgeois spokespeople of the feminist movement. NOW “conciliates with men,” they say; its tactics and strategy are too narrow. The reformism put forward by that top stratum of feminists cannot answer to the needs of those women to whom the options for privilege are not opening, but closing. Thus the feminism which has developed and consolidated itself in the last two decades has come to represent those strata of petty-bourgeois women which are panicking at the very march of capitalism itself, because through it they are losing the privileged position which they had to stay home, out of the sphere of capitalist production. These are the strata which had gained from the imperialist pillage of the oppressed peoples of the world, not by directly collecting higher wages, but by being exempted altogether from direct wage slavery. The increasingly lower value of real wages which their husbands bring home, however, together with the increasing degeneration and destruction of the family, leave them in a situation where they are battling desperately to resist the tide of the objective conditions of the world in which they find themselves. They yearn to drag back, to cling to the woman’s sheltered position in the home, to fight the inevitable knowledge which participation in social production would bring them; they despise the prospect of forsaking their narrow outlook, their petty-bourgeois individualism, their focus on exclusively women’s concerns, their privilege to remain infantile and ignorant.

Marx perceived with brilliance:

...Modern industry, in overturning the economic foundation on which was based the traditional family, and the family labour corresponding to it, had also loosened all traditional family ties. The rights of the children had to be proclaimed.... It was the capitalist mode of exploitation which, by sweeping away the economic basis of parental authority, made its exercise degenerate into a mischievous misuse of power. However terrible

and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless, modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes. (Capital, Progress, vol. 1, pp. 459-60)

And Engels stated: **“The first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry.”** (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, ed. E. Leacock, NY: International Publishers, 1975, p. 138) And Lenin, too, perceived that it was a great historical step forward for women to leave the home and enter the sphere of capitalist productive relations:

By destroying the patriarchal isolation of these categories of the population who formerly never emerged from the narrow circle of domestic, family relationships, by drawing them into direct participation in social production, large-scale machine industry stimulates their development and increases their independence, in other words, creates conditions of life that are incomparably superior to the patriarchal immobility of pre-capitalist relations. (“The Development of Capitalism in Russia,” LCW 3:547)

It is this progressive historical step which the feminist movement is sworn to battle against. Just as economism is the political expression of the labour aristocratic fear of the masses of proletarians, fear that they will rise in socialist revolution, so feminism is the political expression of the panic of the idle and parasitic petty-bourgeois woman, her fear of the working class, her fear of becoming part of the working class, her fear that the women of the working class will grasp ideas far beyond what she herself is capable of grasping, her fear that the women of the working class will become an active part of the liberation army of the proletariat.

When we state that the purpose of feminism is the perpetuation of the sexual oppression of women, we refer not only to domestic slavery but also to its inevitable complement. Domestic slavery is of course at the root of the specific oppression of women. Engels states:

...Monogamous marriage comes on the scene as the

subjugation of the one sex by the other; it announces a struggle between the sexes unknown throughout the whole previous historical period. The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male. The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife, and modern society is a mass composed of these individual families as its molecules. (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, ed. E. Leacock, NY: International Publishers, pp. 128, 137)

Yet Engels never separated his analysis of domestic slavery from its complement, the free exchange of women outside of marriage.

With the rise of the inequality of property... wage labour appears sporadically side by side with slave labour, and at the same time, as its necessary correlate, the professional prostitution of free women side by side with the forced surrender of the slave. Thus the heritage which group marriage has bequeathed to civilization is double-edged, just as everything civilization brings forth is double-edged, double-tongued, divided against itself, contradictory: here monogamy, there hetaerism* with its most extreme form, prostitution. For hetaerism is as much a social institution as any other; it continues the old sexual freedom — to the advantage of the men. Actually, not merely tolerated but gaily practiced by the ruling classes particularly, it is condemned in words. But in reality this condemnation never falls on the men concerned, but only on the women; they are despised and outcast in order that the unconditional supremacy of men over the female sex may be once more proclaimed as a fundamental law of society. (Ibid., p. 130)

Thus the modern individual family in capitalist society is founded on the domestic slavery of the woman. But domestic slavery is only one half of the reality of the sexual oppression of women; it nowhere co-exists without its complement, hetaerism, the free ex-

* “Hetaerism” is Engels’ term for the sexual exchange of women outside of monogamous marriage.

change of women. And no matter how much libertarian and Freudian rhetoric is attached to this practice, no matter how much incantation about “sexual freedom,” “the free expression of our sexuality,” “learning to love others without inhibitions,” and other advertising gimmicks, in capitalist society there is one purpose and one purpose alone for these practices; the re-assertion of **“the unconditional supremacy of men over the female sex”** as **“a fundamental law of society.”** It is the means by which the sexual subjugation of the woman is assured, whether or not she is married and whether or not she is faithful within the marriage.

The purpose of feminism is to provide the bourgeoisie with an ideological weapon to ensure the continuing sexual subjugation of the woman, during a period of ferment, during a period when the more traditional ideological weapons of the bourgeoisie are beginning to be thrown into question by masses of working people. On the one hand, feminism struggles to keep the masses of women chained to domestic slavery, to the kitchen and the nursery, through its hero-worship of housework, which in extreme form becomes a demand that housework be subsidized through wages. On the other hand, feminism struggles to perpetuate the complement of domestic slavery — the free sexual exchange of women outside of marriage — through its wholesale attack on the family and its demands for “sexual freedom” to “liberate” women from the family.

Together, these two struggles form the essence of the feminist program, its main themes, which can be perceived despite the individualism and the anarchy which prevails in the many feminist schools of “free expression.” It is to perpetuate the sexual subjugation of women in both its principal aspects that feminism exists as an ideological weapon of the bourgeoisie: to come forward during a time that the anger of the feminine masses is fermenting, in order to provide them with a false and anti-communist solution to their questions, in order to throw them back into an acceptance of sexual slavery.

We will begin by showing the role which feminism plays in the perpetuation of domestic slavery.

The Feminists: Apologists for the Domestic Slavery of Women

Feminism, of course, does not admit that its goal is the perpetuation of domestic slavery. If we were to believe the feminists, it is communists — starting with Marx, of course — who disdain the

woman slaving in the kitchen, and it is the feminists who have discovered her existence and who champion her cause.

...Marx, who, observing what happened to women working in the factories, concluded that it would have been better for them to be at home, where resided a morally higher form of life. (Lies, vile lies, slanderous lies... — BU) But the true nature of the role of the housewife never emerges clearly in Marx.¹

Marx and Lenin are constantly, arrogantly attacked for “male chauvinism,” for “agreeing on the ‘marginality’ of housework,”² or simply for being men (“Your idols are all men. Whereas **our** idols...”). The “left” (communists) is constantly accused of neglecting the question of housework, thinking only about the factory. So let us compare the outlook of Marxism-Leninism towards housework with the outlook of our feminist friends, to see who it is that really neglects the oppression of women in the home, who it is that really works to keep women enslaved in the home.

To the feminists, housework is invisible, productive work.

It is often asserted that, within the definition of wage labour, women in domestic labour are not productive. In fact precisely the opposite is true if one thinks of the enormous quantity of social services which capitalist organization transforms into privatized activity, putting them on the backs of housewives.³

...We produce the most precious product to appear on the capitalist market: labour power.... Housework and the family on which it is centered are still the pillars of capitalist production. For the availability of a stable and well disciplined labour force is an essential condition of production at every stage of capitalist development.⁴

The community is the other half of capitalist organization, the other area of hidden capitalist exploitation, *the other, hidden, source of surplus labour*.⁵

Housework as work is *productive* in the Marxian sense, that is, in producing surplus value.⁶

It is only with these hours of invisible labor that the proletariat can produce surplus-value in the economy. It can therefore be said that women’s labour in the home is transferred into the creation of surplus-value through the wage-labour force.⁷

For Marx, however, “**only labour which produces capital is productive labour.**” (*Theories of Surplus Value*, Progress, vol. 1, p. 156)

For Marx,

Productive labour, in its meaning for capitalist production, is wage-labour which, exchanged against the variable part of capital (the part of capital which is spent on wages), reproduces not only this part of the capital (or the value of its own labour-power), but in addition produces surplus-value for the capitalist.... Only that wage-labour is productive which produces capital.... Only that labour-power is productive which produces a value greater than its own. (Ibid., p. 152)

Productive labour (is) labour which is directly exchanged with capital... This also establishes absolutely what *unproductive labour* is. It is labour which is not exchanged with capital, but *directly* with revenue, that is, with wages or profit... The jobbing tailor who comes to the capitalist’s house and patches his trousers for him, producing a mere use-value for him, is an unproductive labourer.... *Productive and unproductive labour is here throughout conceived from the standpoint of the possessor of money, from the standpoint of the capitalist, not from that of the workman....* (Ibid., p. 158)

Marx is clear that housework falls into the category of unproductive labour.

The largest part of society, that is to say the working class, must incidentally perform this kind of labour for itself; but it is only able to perform it when it has laboured “productively”. It can only cook meat for itself when it has produced a wage with which to pay for the meat; and it can only keep its furniture and dwellings clean, it can only polish its boots, when it has produced the value of furniture, house rent and boots. To this class of productive labourers itself, therefore, the labour which they perform for themselves appears as “unproductive labour”. This unproductive labour never enables them to repeat the same unproductive labour unless they have previously laboured productively. (Ibid., p. 166)

Feminists claim that, because private housework is an integral

part of the capitalist system, this makes private housework indirectly productive of surplus value. Marx showed with utter clarity how totally ridiculous such an analysis is:

It is precisely this labour which participates indirectly in production (and it forms only a part of unproductive labour) that we call unproductive labour. Otherwise we would have to say that since the magistrate is absolutely unable to live without the peasant, therefore the peasant is an indirect producer of justice! And so on. Utter nonsense! (*Theories of Surplus Value*, p. 293-4)

That is, to show that a particular form of work plays its part in the functioning of the capitalist system in no way makes a commentary on the socially productive nature of that work, on its precise place in the political economy of capital. The capitalist system as an integral whole acts as a benefit to the bourgeois class. Marx states:

...The rise in the rate of profit in *one* line of industry depends on the development of the productive power of labour in *another*. Whatever falls to the capitalist's advantage in this case is once more a gain produced by social labour, if not a product of the labourers he himself exploits. Such a development of productive power is again traceable in the final analysis to the social nature of the labour engaged in production; to the division of labour in society; and to the development of intellectual labour, especially in the natural sciences. What the capitalist thus utilises are the advantages of the entire system of the social division of labour. (*Capital*, vol. III, Progress, p. 82)

What housewives allegedly produce, for the feminists, is labour-power, "the only commodity without which there can be no capitalism. It is also the only commodity for which the working class controls its own means of production."⁸ "We produce the most precious product to appear on the capitalist market: labour power."⁹ Despite their very valiant efforts to sound Marxist, their arguments have nothing to do with Marxism, because Marx is clear that in the final analysis it is the worker himself who reproduces his own labour-power, in the process of consumption. It is in the course of eating, sleeping, and other activities of replenishment that the labourer daily reproduces his own labour-power. Marx states:

Labour uses up its material factors, its subject and

its instruments, consumes them, and is therefore a process of consumption. Such productive consumption is distinguished from individual consumption by this, that the latter uses up products, as means of subsistence for the living individual; the former, as means whereby alone, labour, the labour-power of the living individual, is enabled to act. The product, therefore, of individual consumption, is the consumer himself; the result of productive consumption, is a product distinct from the consumer. (*Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, p. 179)

Of course, the housewife contributes to the training and replenishment of labour-power, insofar as she raises children, cooks meals, makes beds, and so forth. But for that matter, so do the doctor who treats illness, the schools who teach the working class those skills necessary to find jobs, the workers in the garment factories who make clothes for the worker to wear to work. The ability of the labourer to consume what he needs to train and replenish his own labour-power is dependent on innumerable factors throughout the social division of labour. Yet the garment worker is a productive worker for capital, whereas schoolteachers, doctors, and housewives are not, because productive labour is **“labour which is directly exchanged with capital.”** (Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, vol. I, Progress, p. 158) So much, too, for the bourgeois apology that in the production of labour-power “the working class controls its own means of production.”

Another, more hidden, means of defending this line is to represent housework as producing not just use-values but exchange-values, that is, marketable commodities which are offered for circulation within capitalist social relations. Such a position is here put forward by a long-time feminist who has suddenly turned “Marxist-feminist,” the better to camouflage her feminist aims.

Housework is... what women do in exchange for access to resources which are bought by their husbands’ wages. As such, it is a coin of exchange between men and women. We have to stop paying workers off in a coin called love.¹⁰

For Marx, however, **“the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of labour spent on it.”** (*Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, p. 46) Rapp is attempting to give the impression that women do housework not to create the use-values necessary for the survival of the family, but rather in order to create marketable commodities in exchange for resources or in exchange for love, analogously to the pro-

letarian working in the factory who produces shoes in exchange for a wage. The only logical conclusion to be drawn from such an argument is that the exchange-value produced by the housewife is directly proportional to her husband's wage, so that if her husband is paid minimum wage the value of her products is very low, but if he is promoted into the labour aristocracy the value of these same products is considerably enhanced. On the other hand, if her husband should be laid off from his job, then her meals, laundry, etc. lose their exchange-value entirely (but perhaps he continues to be very loving to her, and so they have exchange-value again!).

To perceive housework as productive of commodities or services for exchange-value is to miss the whole essence of what private housework involves. It involves precisely the monotonous, repetitive creation of things which are consumed only by the people who use it and not by people who will buy it for a price. As soon as a housewife creates something for exchange-value — as, for example, in baking a cake for a bake sale — the economic nature of her work changes and enters the sphere of capitalist money relations. The value of the cake is determined by the socially necessary labour put into making it; it does not vary by the wage of the person who is buying the cake. Similarly, a housewife who makes a dress to wear is creating a use-value, but if she does piece-work at home for a garment company, she is creating exchange-value. In the latter case she is paid by the piece, in the former case she is supported to survive by the wages of her husband (which are determined by his labour-time), and the amount of money which goes into her support has nothing to do with the dress she made.

Rapp's "economic theories" in fact deny Marxist economics entirely, by implying that the value of a product is determined by the buyer (by the market) rather than by the labour which went into the product. This is a total denial of the labour theory of value. There is nothing mysterious about Rapp's "economic theories," however; they are just one more attempt to glorify private housework.

They keep on trying. Wally Secombe, an unrepentant Trotskyite (and Trotskyites are long-time slaves of feminism), placed himself on the opportunist map by adapting to the obvious unviability of the feminist line that housework is productive labour. No, he admitted, housework is not productive labour, but it is "socially necessary labour," supposedly in the Marxist sense of the term.¹¹ Echoes Eli Zaretsky: "Housewives are integral to the working class and to the

working class movement: not because they produce surplus value but because they perform socially necessary labour.”¹² And states Margaret Benston: “In sheer quantity, household labour, including child care, constitutes a large amount of socially necessary production. Nevertheless, in a society based on commodity production, it is not usually considered ‘real work’ since it is outside of trade and the market-place.”¹³

Pitifully, none of these “theoreticians” ever even started to read *Capital*, because in the first chapter Marx states:

The labour-time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time. The introduction of power-looms into England probably reduced by one-half the labour required to weave a given quantity of yarn into cloth. The hand-loom weavers, as a matter of fact, continued to require the same time as before; but for all that, the product of one hour of their labour represented after the change only half an hour’s social labour, and consequently fell to one-half its former value, (p. 47)

And later:

...the labour socially necessary, i.e., the labour necessary for their production under the then existing social conditions, (p. 203)

In other words, the introduction of new means of production — such as the introduction of power-looms in England — reduces the socially necessary labour time in the production of the commodity, and therefore, those who continue to produce the same articles by antiquated techniques, techniques which have been outstripped by the growth of the productive forces, are spending their time on socially unnecessary labour. Thus, for example, if woman in a garment factory can produce 5 dresses in one day through her socialized labour, the woman who spends three days at home to make the same dress has spent most of her time in socially unnecessary labour.

The techniques for the socialization of housework are largely developed with the already existing technological capacity of capitalist society: public restaurants, public laundries, child care facilities, packaged food, ready-made clothes. Women remain slaves in the home not because the work they perform is socially necessary, but because many of these facilities in capitalist society are extremely

limited and far too expensive for the masses of workers. To expand the facilities of socialized housework to the degree that they would be needed by the masses, at costs which they can afford to pay, would be so unprofitable to the bourgeoisie as to be unthinkable. In addition to that, as we have shown at length, private housework enables the bourgeoisie to manipulate the position of women on the labour market in order to keep them in the lowest strata of part-time and full-time work, in order to keep them unemployed, underemployed, non-combative, and invisible as workers.

Capitalism has its definite uses for private housework, and will refuse to abolish it as long as capitalism exists; but this does not make the crushing drudgery of domestic slavery “socially necessary.” On the contrary, its stultifying, oppressive nature stems very much from the fact that from a social point of view it is so utterly wasteful. The struggle to abolish private housework is a struggle to abolish something which is socially unnecessary. That is the difference between the Marxist point of view and the Trotskyite-feminist point of view.

Although “wages for housework” is the logical conclusion of the feminist analysis of housework, many Trotskyites and feminists do not go so far as to demand it. Some merely feel that society should bestow more formal appreciation on the housewife, that the problem with private housework is that it is not socially recognized (for free).

It is women’s labor that underwrites the capacities of families to produce these resources. Yet this labor is socially unrecognized or accorded a subordinate status while power and prestige are vested in the public domain, which is increasingly controlled by a class of men. The crucial function of kin units in the maintenance of centralized state societies, and especially industrial capitalist ones, is hidden by its ideological submersion into privacy.¹⁴

The problem, for these more “moderate” feminists, is an “ideological” one; the oppressive nature of housework lies in people’s minds. If only they would liberate their minds to recognizing the importance of private housework, to giving it a greater “status,” it would no longer be oppressive to women. This is the same line put forward by the social reformers who, in the early days of the twentieth century, strove to drive women into a lifetime of domestic drudgery by arguing; “Certainly it (private housework) deserves to be as highly esteemed as medicine, law, or theology. What is so valuable as a good home?”¹⁵ It is also no different in essence — although no doubt the

feminists would be horrified to confront the comparison — from the line put forward by the Falange party, the fascist party in Spain in the 1930's: "True feminism should not mean that women's goal is to pursue those activities most valued by society, but that society should associate greater human and social dignity to feminine functions."¹⁶

Another variation on this theme comes from Germaine Greer, who believes that women will be liberated from oppression when they learn to whistle while they work.

The chief means of liberating women is replacing of compulsiveness and compulsion by the pleasure principle. Cooking, clothes, beauty, and housekeeping are all compulsive activities in which the anxiety quotient has long since replaced the pleasure or achievement quotient. It is possible to use even cooking, clothes, cosmetics and housekeeping for *fun*. The essence of pleasure is spontaneity.¹⁷

Germaine Greer, for those who are not aware, is widely recognized as a leading spokesperson for the liberation of women!

There is a reason why the feminists persist in representing housework in such a warped and unscientific fashion, even to the point of inventing an entire school of "Marxist-feminism" to cover the true nature of private housework in Marxist vocabulary. They seek to paint housework as productive, socially necessary, and so forth, because their goal is to keep women enslaved by private housework. They represent housework as "the pillar of capitalist production" so that they can justify its existence, elevate it, gaze in awe upon it, to the point of demanding that it be retained and institutionalized through wages. They mimic Marxist concepts the better to slander Marxism.

It is the productive work of the proletariat which forms the basis of the socialist production after the socialist revolution, under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Although the socialist revolution strips away the private ownership of the means of production, it retains and builds upon the means of production which forms the basis of the existence of the proletariat as a class. Thus, although the ownership of the means of production is transformed through revolution, socialism does not seek to abolish the basic productive structure which is operated by the proletariat; on the contrary, builds on it, and shapes it in terms of what will best serve human needs. What the feminists are trying to do is to place housework in this same category, representing it as if it were as useful to the proletariat as productive labour

in capitalist industry, so that they can claim it to be the material basis for the liberation of women.

It is necessary to clarify, however, that it is not the unproductive nature of private housework by itself which makes it so oppressive, or antiquated. Millions of women in the imperialist countries do unproductive labour for the imperialist bourgeoisie: typing, filing, keypunching, accounting, and in scores of other ways keeping track of the value produced by the productive sector, assisting their bosses in squabbling over profits, and enabling the bourgeoisie to realize more profit because their own labour is partly unpaid. Yet their work, aside from being an indispensable prop to the imperialist system, is also a very important building block in socialist construction, just as productive labour is. The nonproductive apparatuses of imperialism will not be abolished under socialist revolution; on the contrary, the work done by these workers forms the basis of workers' control of the means of production under socialism. Lenin states:

The chief difficulty facing the proletarian revolution is the establishment on a country-wide scale of the most precise and the most conscientious accounting and control, of *workers' control* of the production and distribution of goods.

...When we say: "workers' control," always *juxtaposing* this slogan to dictatorship of the proletariat, always putting it *immediately after* the latter... then workers' control *can* become the country-wide, all-embracing, omnipresent, most precise and most conscientious *accounting* of the production and distribution of goods.

...In addition to the chiefly "oppressive" apparatus — the standing army, the police and the bureaucracy — the modern state possesses an apparatus which has extremely close connections with the banks and syndicates, an apparatus which performs an enormous amount of accounting and registration work, if it may be expressed this way. This apparatus must not, and should not, be smashed. It must be wrested from the control of the capitalists; the capitalists and the wires they pull must be *cut off, lopped off, chopped away from* this apparatus; it must be *subordinated* to the proletarian Soviets; it must be expanded, made more comprehensive, and nation-wide. And this *can* be done by utilising the achievements al-

ready made by large-scale capitalism (in the same way as the proletarian revolution can, in general, reach its goal only by utilising these achievements).

Capitalism has created an accounting *apparatus* in the shape of the banks, syndicates, postal service, consumers' societies, and office employees' unions. *Without big banks socialism would be impossible.*

The big banks *are* the "state apparatus" which we *need* to bring about socialism, and which we *take ready-made* from capitalism; our task here is merely to *lop off* what *capitalistically mutilates* this excellent apparatus, to make it *even bigger*, even more democratic, even more comprehensive. Quantity will be transformed into quality. A single State Bank, the biggest of the big, with branches in every rural district, in every factory, will constitute as much as nine-tenths of the *socialist apparatus*. This will be country-wide *bookkeeping*, country-wide *accounting* of the production and distribution of goods, this will be, so to speak something in the nature of the *skeleton* of socialist society.

We can "lay hold of" and "set in motion" this "state apparatus" (which is not fully a state apparatus under capitalism, but which will be so with us, under socialism) at one stroke, by a single decree, because the actual work of bookkeeping, control, registering, accounting and counting is performed by *employees*, the majority of whom themselves lead a proletarian or semi-proletarian existence. ("Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?". LCW 26:104-106)

Thus the proletariat, in all of its work in the broad social sphere of the capitalist economy, is daily laying the basis for the socialist economy under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Factory workers producing goods, transport workers transporting them, postal workers carrying mail, service workers producing services and laying the basis for socialized housework, and unproductive workers in the banks and offices of the imperialist apparatus, are all engaged in building the material basis for the future socialist order wherein the means of production will be in their own hands. The same cannot be said of private housework. Private housework is antiquated; the means already exist, at least in embryo, of replacing it with a far more advanced and rational form

of accomplishing the same tasks. It is petty, wasteful, repetitive; housewives who spend their days on it are not working to lay the basis for a new socialist economy, but on the contrary are trapped into backward, grossly inefficient, pre-industrial methods of work because of the reactionary, moribund system of private ownership which is a fetter on all social production.

The feminists have put forward countless analyses of housework, all containing one degree or another of praise for it, or justification of it. It is “productive”; it produces “exchangeable commodities”; it is “socially necessary”; it is the “pillar of capitalist production”; it “produces the most precious commodity of all, labour power, without which there would be no capitalism”; etc. In other words, as was stated in 1916 in a book providing career guidance to “girls,” it was necessary above all to train women in the field of homemaking and childcare because in those areas “contributions made by women to the state are out of all comparison more valuable than any other.”¹⁸

Having sifted through the various dressed-up defenses of private housework which the feminists have been concocting for their counter-revolutionary male chauvinist purposes, the Bolshevik Union will stand with Lenin on this question.

Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating woman, she continues to be a *domestic slave*, because *petty housework* crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. (“A Great Beginning,” LCW 29:429)

In most cases housework is the most unproductive, the most savage and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the woman. (“The Tasks of the Working Women’s Movement in the Soviet Republic,” LCW 30:43)

The working woman and the peasant woman are oppressed by capital, but over and above that... they remain in “household bondage,” they continue to be “household slaves,” for they are overburdened with the drudgery of the most squalid, backbreaking and stultifying toil in the kitchen and the family household. (“International Working Women’s Day,” LCW 32:161)

That is why Marxist-Leninists, in contrast to the feminists, make as part of their program the abolition of private housework: because it is unproductive, wasteful, petty, antiquated, socially unnecessary, provides nothing as a basis for the construction of socialism, and, in addition to all of these things, chains women to political backwardness and brings about a situation where **“one of the hardest things in every country has been to stir the women into action.”** (Lenin, “Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women, November 19, 1918,” LCW 28:180)

In its reactionary fear of the march of capital which is drawing women out of the home and into the workplace, in its desperate struggle to keep women chained to domestic slavery and ignorant of scientific socialism, feminism devotes great energy to justifying, in one way or another, the role of private housework. In doing so the feminists pit themselves against the fundamental interests of the broad masses of women, who will be brought to equality with men only insofar as private housework is abolished. Staunch defenders of the domestic slavery of women, they are male chauvinist to the core, the sworn enemies of the masses of women, the sworn guardians of the oppression of women. But they could not fulfill their insidious tasks if they did not also devote themselves to perpetuating the other aspect of the sexual slavery of women: the use of women as sexual objects outside of marriage, the community of women. To this question we will now turn.

The Feminists: Auctioneers in the Free Exchange of Women

A. The Abolition of the Family

One of the universals of feminism is an outright hostility to the existence of the family. “One thing does seem clearer as time goes on,” Robin Morgan states in her summation of the feminist movement to date. “The nuclear family unit is oppressive to women (*and* children, *and* men).”¹⁹ But the feminists are not speaking of the bourgeois form of the family, which exists because of the private ownership of the means of production and which is based on the subjugation of the woman for that reason. The feminists do not seek to transform the family in the ranks of the proletariat to its higher form, the fighting unit for socialism, based on proletarian morality and the full equality of the woman. The feminists oppose socialist revolution;

they perceive the liberation of women as something which is supposed to occur within the capitalist order. To the family under capitalism, they therefore counterpose the abolition of the family.

This is nowhere more obvious than in the feminist hostility to the family under socialism. *Ad nauseam* the feminists express their hostility to socialist countries because they “have perpetuated the family” and do not permit “alternative lifestyles.” The Trotskyites, who adore the feminists for their position on the family and use it as weapon for their anti-communism, are particularly vocal in this regard. For the Trotskyites even the destruction of the private ownership of the means of production cannot salvage the institution of the family and make it a locus of the full equality of women. They will be satisfied with nothing less than the abolition of the family, for in their analysis it is at the basis of the suffering of the woman. States one Trotskyite-feminist:

Many feminists have concluded that the oppression women suffer through the institution of the family is not simply a wart on the nose of an otherwise healthy organism. This oppression is the very essence of the family institution... It is feminists and revolutionary socialists who want to remove the stifling economic fetters and reactionary values that under the family system distort human relations.

...The rise of the women’s liberation movement has begun a critical examination of one of society’s most sacred institutions.... Women, including women in the USSR, can see that there are alternatives to the savagery of the individual household. There is a massive, and international feminist movement on the rise, demanding control by women over their lives.²⁰

For the feminists and the Trotskyites, then, the alternative to the family is “control by women over their lives,” which is supposedly impossible as long as they live in families. Not only that, but some Trotskyites — the more radical wing, the ones who include socialism in their vocabulary — accuse the family of blocking the possibilities for socialist revolution altogether.

Both religion and the family are bourgeois institutions of false consciousness.... Under capitalism no substitute for the family is available.... The family as an economic and social institution is a shackle on the consciousness of the men workers as well as that of women.²¹

Just as the rallying of the vanguard workers depends on their divesting themselves of religious superstition, so it apparently also depends on their divesting themselves of their families — under capitalism!

The aim of all of these feminist and Trotskyite agents is the same — to rob the working class of its defensive unit, the proletarian family, in order to make the broad masses more vulnerable to capitalist rape and murder. And it is in the goal of the destruction of the family that the feminists seek to realize their goal of auctioning off the masses of women on the market of free sexual exchange.

For a small stratum of women, of course, the breakdown of the family may hold certain advantages. Engels is clear that the origin of the oppression of women lies in the necessity of the propertied men to pass on their property to their children, and so within the echelons of the ruling classes the subjugation of the woman is an aspect of the privilege of the class. The upper stratum of bourgeois feminism is seeking to liberate bourgeois women from this fetter on their privilege, by enabling them to enter independently into the direct management of the exploitation of the working class and hence divest themselves of the need to be subordinated in the family in order to gain their privilege. To the extent that the petty-bourgeois women can maintain their class privilege and social decadence without being dependent upon the incomes of men, the breakdown of the family serves their personal interest by allowing them the “freedom” to live on the backs of the working class without the confines of the bourgeois family, its moral hypocrisy and its domestic slavery.

For the broad masses of women, however, the situation is different. We have already shown the many important roles which the family can play in the ranks of the people, whether as a defense against the onslaughts of capital, as a unit with which to reproduce the working class in great numbers, or as a conscious fighting unit for socialist revolution. The feminist campaign against the family is a plot to assist the bourgeoisie in its ability to attack the proletariat, through increasing the vulnerability of the entire class, particularly the women. And this plot has particular implications in terms of the sexual subjugation of women.

Women who must support themselves, or their children as well, suffer extreme economic hardship under capitalism. Women are forced into the poorest paying work and part-time work, or else no work, not only because of the unavailability of jobs but also because

of the unavailability of adequate day care which they can afford. Under such circumstances, more and more women are forced into one form or another of prostitution, which first appeared alongside wage slavery and which will continue to exist as long as wage slavery exists.

Lenin states:

Millions upon millions of women... live (or, rather, exist) as “domestic slaves,” striving to feed and clothe their family on pennies, at the cost of desperate daily effort and “saving” on everything — except their own labour.

It is these women that the capitalists most willingly employ as homeworkers, who are prepared for a monstrously low wage to “earn a little extra” for themselves and their family, for the sake of a crust of bread. It is from among these women, too, that the capitalists of all countries recruit for themselves (like the ancient slave-owners and the medieval feudal lords) any number of concubines at a most “reasonable” price. And no amount of “moral indignation” (hypocritical in 99 cases out of 100) about prostitution can do anything against this trade in female flesh; so long as wage-slavery exists, inevitably prostitution too will exist. All the oppressed and exploited classes throughout the history of human societies have always been forced (and it is in this that their exploitation consists) to give up to their oppressors, first, their unpaid labour and, second, their women as concubines for the “masters.” Slavery, feudalism and capitalism are identical in this respect. It is only the *form* of exploitation that changes; the exploitation itself remains. (“Capitalism and Female Labour,” LCW 36:230)

According to Lenin, then, the sexual exploitation of women for their bodies is one of the two basic forms of the exploitation of the working class. While the economists are busy ensuring the perpetuation of the first (wage slavery), the feminists are at work ensuring the perpetuation of the second, ensuring that the capitalist masters are supplied with concubines. They do this above all through attacking the proletarian family, because women are the most likely to offer their bodies as an object of exchange if they are torn away from the protective structure of a family.

This can take many forms. Unable to survive or support their children through wages earned in other forms of labour, many women find that prostitution is the only work sufficiently remunerative for their needs. Selling themselves in the sexual act for a fee is only one form of prostitution; to compensate for the problems of illegality which prostitution poses, the bourgeoisie has developed a huge legal pornographic magazine and cinema industry which subjects thousands upon thousands of women to extreme, unbelievable, humiliation. Many others can find quick employment as strip-tease dancers, masseuses, etc., jobs which pay just above the wage which a woman can anticipate in full-time public industry, just enough to lure her away from other jobs and to make it worthwhile for her to humiliate herself in this fashion. Many prostitutes report that jobs such as these were the first stepping-stone to their careers. As the crisis of imperialism is intensifying, and more and more women are unable to support themselves, it is no coincidence that the entire pornography complex is growing by leaps and bounds.

Capitalism also profits by creating various money-making outposts of casual sexual exchange. During this period of the degeneration and breakdown of the family, a tiny handful of capitalists have enriched themselves as proprietors of “swinging singles” clubs and gay bars, which profit from the obsessive search of the petty-bourgeoisie for new sexual partners.

These industries, however, have one disadvantage to their patrons: they cost money. Not contented to have a steady supply of paid sexual concubines who will offer almost any “pleasure,” the bourgeoisie has been using the imperialist crisis to go on an active campaign to convince the masses of women that the free offering of their bodies is to their own advantage, a path to their liberation; that promiscuity and sexual decadence are the road away from oppression. Lenin correctly perceived it as **“an extension of the good old bourgeois brothel”** (from *The Emancipation of Women*, p. 106). And that is at the root of the feminist campaign to destroy the family — to extend the good old bourgeois brothel.

B. Feminism Rallies to Sigmund Freud

We have already shown that the feminist theory of abolishing the family has nothing in common with the ideas of Marx or his followers on the question of the family. What ideologue, then, can we say the feminists draw from, above all others? It is none other than Sigmund

Freud (a man!).

It was Freud above all who posited that the source of all human suffering and oppression can be traced to the family — not the family as organized in class society, but the family on the grounds of its very existence. It was the mother and the father, rather than the bourgeoisie, who allegedly caused all of the lifetime problems of their offspring, and particularly the mother. As for the mother herself, her biggest problem, aside from the fact that she was not male but a mere female, was that she strove to be a human being (i.e., male). Women continually were striving, for example, to go out to work, or to express their opinions. Freud stepped in to remind women to accept their proper role within the family, and at the same time to remind the whole working class that the family is the root of all suffering. Remarkably similar to the feminist program!

The feminists themselves are not unaware of the contributions which Freud made to their philosophy of life. Here are the words of feminist Shulamith Firestone:

Freudianism is so charged, so impossible to repudiate because Freud grasped the crucial problem of modern life: Sexuality.... Freudianism and Feminism grew from the same soil. It is no accident that Freud began his work at the height of the early feminist movement. Both movements signified awakening; but Freud was merely a diagnostician for what Feminism purports to cure.

Freudianism and Feminism are made of the same stuff.

Freud's achievement was the rediscovery of sexuality.²²

So Freud merely diagnosed the root of all evils as the family; but Firestone has the cure, the abolition of the family. She accuses Freudianism of "patching up with band-aids the casualties of the aborted feminist revolution"²³ against the family. The solution: "A therapy that has proven worse than useless may eventually be replaced with the only thing that can do any good: political organization."²⁴ Women are now supposed to organize to effect the destruction of the family.

How are they to do this?

So that just as to assure the elimination of economic classes requires the revolt of the underclass (the proletariat) and, in a temporary dictatorship, their seizure of the means of *production*, so to assure the elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass (women) and the seizure

of control of *reproduction*: not only the full restoration to women of ownership of their own bodies, but also their (temporary) seizure of control of human fertility — the new population biology as well as all the social institutions of childbearing and childrearing. And just as the end goal of socialist revolution was not only the elimination of the economic class *privilege* but of the economic class *distinction* itself, so the end goal of feminist revolution must be, unlike that of the first feminist movement, not just the elimination of male *privilege* but of the sex *distinction* itself: genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally.* (A reversion to an unobstructed *pansexuality*—Freud’s “polymorphous perversity” — would probably supersede hetero/homo/bi-sexuality.) The reproduction of the species by one sex for the benefit of both would be replaced by (at least the option of) artificial reproduction: children would be born to both sexes equally, or independently of either, however one chooses to look at it; the dependence of the child on the mother (and vice versa) would give way to a greatly shortened dependence on a small group of others in general, and any remaining inferiority to adults in physical strength would be compensated for culturally. The division of labour would be ended by the elimination of labour altogether (cybernation). The tyranny of the biological family would be broken.²⁵

A disciple of Firestone’s agrees that Sigmund Freud provides the

* As far as Firestone’s ideas about socialist revolution are concerned, apparently her idea of “abolishing economic class distinction” means that the differences between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie would “no longer matter culturally.” The two classes, apparently, could at last live together in joy and love, without antagonism, without fighting!

That is one possibility. The other possibility is that Firestone understands that the Marxist-Leninist goal of abolishing class distinction means the abolition of the bourgeoisie as a class. To carry her analogy to its conclusion, this would mean that the goal of feminism should be to abolish men as a sex. But of course Firestone did not really mean that; we all know that such an idea is the farthest thing from the mind of every feminist!

key to understanding the oppression of women: "The place to began to unravel the system of relationships by which women become the prey of men is in the overlapping works of Claude Levi-Strauss and Sigmund Freud."²⁶ We will be showing in our analysis of the origin of the oppression of women that Claude Levi-Strauss is exemplary of male chauvinism in the field of anthropology. The feminists certainly know how to pick their heroes!

Rubin continues:

Freud's theory of femininity has been subjected to feminist critique since it was first published. To the extent that it is a rationalization of female subordination, this critique has been justified. To the extent that it is a description of a process which subordinates women, this critique is a mistake. Since psychoanalysis is a theory of gender, dismissing it would be suicidal for a political movement dedicated to eradicating gender hierarchy (or gender itself).²⁷

And her use of Freud is the same as that of Firestone's: in providing an exit from the structure of the family, it can open the way to "sexual liberation" and "free love." Freud was, for Rubin, correct in locating the family as the origin of oppression/repression. From the analysis comes the cure: "Ultimately, a thorough-going feminist revolution would liberate more than women. It would liberate forms of sexual expression, and it would liberate human personality from the straightjacket of gender."²⁸ Rubin's "thorough-going feminist revolution" would "liberate" women for prostitution, paid and unpaid.

Feminists everywhere complain that the family is evil because it limits the sexual availability of women. Here is another example of the Freudianism which lies at the root of the feminist goal, written by one of the pioneers of the "Marxist-feminist-wages-for-housework" school:

The frustrations of monotonous and trivial chores and of sexual passivity are only separable in words. Sexual creativity and creativity in labour are both areas where human need demands we give free scope to our "interplaying natural and acquired activities." For women (and therefore for men) natural and acquired powers are repressed simultaneously. The passive sexual receptivity of women creates the compulsively tidy housewife and can make a monotonous assembly line therapeutic. The trivia of most housework and the discipline which is required to perform the same work over every

day, every week, every year, double on holidays, destroys the possibilities of uninhibited sexuality.²⁹

Notice here that Dalla Costa does not separate housework from work in a factory. Both, for her, are bad, because they “inhibit sexuality.” Not only that, but it is repressed sexuality which is supposedly at the cause of the willingness to work in either field. If Dalla Costa were to achieve her goal, “uninhibited sexuality,” then it would undermine people’s willingness to work in either area. This, for Dalla Costa, is a very positive development, in fact the key to revolution (her revolution, the one which would remove a tiny stratum of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois women from all labour and from all social obligation, the better to express their “uninhibited sexuality”). For Dalla Costa, work in a factory is evil because it interferes with the free sexual availability of women, the key to their liberation: “To make love and to refuse night work to make love, *is in the interest of the class*.”³⁰ And for Germaine Greer, who published a treatise on “the liberation of women” with a picture of a naked female body on the cover, the solution to the oppression of women is as follows: “...the emphasis should be taken off male genitality and replaced by human sexuality. The cunt must come into its own.”³¹ Such, in a word, is the feminist plan for the future of women.

Some of the leading propagators of feminist ideals are the wealthy chieftains of the pornography industry. Hugh Hefner is a principal example in this regard. For years, before feminism was even in great vogue, Hefner’s principal magazine, *Playboy*, was publishing a column to complement the photographs: “The Playboy Philosophy.” It answered letters complaining of sexual problems, and its solution was always the “free expression of uninhibited sexuality.” Hefner’s models are always smiling cheerfully, appearing delighted with the social services which they are providing. *Playboy* has always advocated the abolition of laws restricting abortion, drug use, contraception, and all other inhibitions to the “free expression of sexuality.” Today it puts itself forward as explicitly feminist and several of its writers and photographers are committed women feminists, as is its new owner, Hefner’s daughter.

There are also several organizations of prostitutes which are springing up. In Canada, BEAVER (Better End All Vicious Erotic Repression) was founded by an ex-prostitute who gave up her remunerative job to “commit myself to the woman’s movement” by propagating the virtues of prostitution. She explains to women facing

prostitution that it should not be seen simply as a business endeavor, an economic transaction, but as a new avenue to explore human relationships. "What kind of relationship can you establish with a client when you suspect he's a cop trying to trap you?" she asks. "To me, the really interesting part of the job was a relationship between the man and woman involved, how the sale of sex affects the quality of it."³² BEAVER was welcomed as a contingent in the feminist International Women's Day March in Toronto in 1978.

But it is not enough for these feminists to work to persuade women to offer up their bodies, for free or for sale, to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois men. We have shown that the feminist movement is driven by women who are seeking to carve out a place of their own in the exploitation of the working class, or in hegemony over the working-class movement. This quest realizes itself in a very personal way. In their campaign to persuade women to "liberate themselves" as sexual objects, they want to ensure that they are being provided with sexual objects of their own. Often men will not serve this purpose, since — as they have stated many times — the sexual relationships with the men they have known are exploitive of women. Therefore, in their search for their own "sexual freedom" such as the ruling classes have always demanded, they work to ensure themselves a supply of available women. Thus it has become impossible to separate the feminist movement from the active propagation of female homosexuality, of lesbianism.

The feminists perceive that the contradiction between men and women in capitalist society is antagonistic (hence an autonomous women's movement), and more fundamental than class contradictions. Men are the principal oppressors of women, in the feminist analysis; the root of the oppression of women is sexual, and lies in the family; the solution to the oppression of women can be achieved under capitalism, right now, in the bedroom. The conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is obvious.

Lesbianism is one road to freedom — freedom from oppression by men.

...The Lesbian, through her ability to obtain love and sexual satisfaction from other women, is freed of dependence on men for love, sex and money. She does not have to do menial chores for them (at least at home), nor cater to their egos, nor submit to hasty and inept sexual encounters. She is freed from fear of unwanted pregnancy and the pains

of childbirth, and from the drudgery of child-raising.

...A woman who is totally independent of men — who obtains love, sex, and self-esteem from other women — is a terrible threat to male supremacy. She doesn't need them, and therefore they have less power over her.

...Lesbians, because they are not afraid of being abandoned by men, are less reluctant to express hostility toward the male class — the oppressors of women.

...If hostility to men causes Lesbianism, then it seems to me that in a male-dominated society, Lesbianism is a sign of mental health.³³

Such is the logical conclusion of the entire feminist "theory." Lesbianism is not only an escape from men, but also an escape from children, the other component of the family which is said to oppress women. It even provides an escape from some of the natural biological functions of womanhood, such as "the pains of childbirth." It is an ideal solution for women of the petty-bourgeoisie who only wish that they were men of the petty-bourgeoisie, in desiring a freely available pool of women to exploit. The "radical lesbians" needed only to organize a movement of women, and to take leadership of it, in order to increase the socially acceptable character of what they were doing and persuade increasing numbers of frightened and vulnerable women that the solution to their oppression lies in one bedroom rather than in another one.

Lesbians are women who survive without men financially and emotionally, representing the ultimate in an independent life-style. Lesbians are the women who battle day by day to show that women are valid human beings, not just appendages of men. Lesbians are the women whose relationships attempt a true break with the old sexual-emotional divisions. Lesbians are the women who are penalized for their sexuality more than any other woman on earth. Thus, it is no wonder that lesbians are attracted to the women's liberation movement, are active in it, and feel that they are in the vanguard of it. If women's liberation does mean liberation from the dominance of men, lesbians' opinions should be actively sought out, for in many ways the lesbian *has* freed herself from male domination.

...In terms of their experience, lesbians have a great deal to offer the women's liberation movement since they live in-

dependently of men and form bonds based on much more equitable relations.

...Lesbians are the women who potentially can demonstrate life outside the male power structure that dominates marriage as well as every other aspect of our culture. Thus, the lesbian movement is not only related to women's liberation, it is at the very heart of it. The attitude towards lesbians is an indicator by which to measure the extent of women's actual liberation.³⁴

It is entirely consistent with the feminist logic. If the cause of the oppression of women is domination by men, and the solution is independence from men, should not the masses of women follow the lead of lesbians, who have so clearly found the solution to this problem?

To the extent that an aim of the feminists has been to provide a larger pool of women available for them to seduce, they may certainly boast of some success. Brags one, with an audacity to be admired by locker-room athletes:

...A changing attitude on the part of so-called straight women — about our own sexuality, about the necessity and joyousness of loving other women *and* ourselves, whether emotionally or physically, about the commitment and support our lesbian sisters require and deserve of us.... During that struggle, many an anti-lesbian woman conquered feelings of threat, or terror, and “came out” in fact, learning proudly to love another woman.³⁵

These same women who have such utter contempt for the masses of women chained to double slavery, who show no interest in socialist revolution even though they know that socialist revolution will liberate millions of women, and who physically attack communist women who rise to express their views, have “learned proudly to love another woman” whom they have been able to seduce into the bedroom.

Such ideas are totally consistent with the whole train of feminist thinking. If the goal of the feminist movement is “the uninhibited expression of our sexuality,” how can the masses of women hope to achieve this goal if they are “inhibited” by their preference for the opposite sex? Does not heterosexuality stand as *proof* that a woman has not fully liberated herself from the sexual inhibitions which oppress her?

Clearly, sexual freedom of all kinds would limit women

from guilt about sexual activities (heterosexual or homosexual), from performing on demand, and from the kind of sexual disappointment that comes from being held largely responsible for fulfilling sexual pleasure, as well as for conception, childbearing, and childrearing.³⁶

No wonder the debate rages at “meetings of the woman’s movement” over the question of whether a woman can be a feminist but yet not a lesbian. Such an argument, sparked at a Montreal meeting of feminists in December 1978, overshadowed all other arguments in intensity and duration that evening. The poor lone heterosexual housewife who strove to participate in the liberation of women despite her “unfortunate sexual inhibitions” was resoundingly discouraged for her incorrect views. One cannot, in fact, frequent the circles of the women’s movement in Canada and many other imperialist countries without being constantly assaulted by their pornography and their utterly male chauvinist, bourgeois obsession with the bedroom. One cannot enter a feminist bookstore without being assaulted by prominently displayed propaganda urging its readers into sexual seduction. In the purpose of promoting the free sexual exchange of women, only the pornography industry itself outflanks the feminist movement in lack of subtlety.

Firestone and Rubin, the two feminists whom we have already cited as making the explicit positive link between Freudianism and feminism, both perceive homosexuality as a living expression of the “feminist revolution,” as the living solution to the problem posed by Freud. Firestone states: “A reversion to an unobstructed *pansexuality* — Freud’s ‘polymorphous perversity’ — would probably supersede hetero/homo/bi-sexuality.”³⁷ Rubin’s entire defense of Freud exists for the purpose of justifying “the feminist and gay revolts,” whose aim for her is “to dismantle the apparatus of sexual enforcement.”³⁸ Rubin wants no holds barred whatsoever on the free community of women. The problem with Marxism for her is that it would “only” eliminate the oppression of women, rather than encouraging the world to become obsessed with sex. “...Marxism, as a theory of social life, is relatively unconcerned with sex.”³⁹

But we are not only oppressed *as* women, we are oppressed by having to *be* women, or men as the case may be. I personally feel that the feminist movement must dream of even more than the elimination of the oppression of women. It must dream of the elimination of obligatory sexualities and

sex roles. The dream I find most compelling is one of an androgynous and genderless (though not sexless) society, in which one's sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does, and with whom one makes love.⁴⁰

Of one thing we can be sure: Rubin does not dream of a "sexless society." Rubin's "most compelling dream" is of a free pool of women in a capitalist society where she does not have to admit that she is a woman so that nobody will notice anything strange in her use of the good old bourgeois brothel. The root of her problems in realizing her dream is the existence of the family: "Compulsory heterosexuality is the product of kinship."

It is not, of course, that Rubin is *against* Marxism; her interests merely lie elsewhere. "Their work (Levi-Strauss and Freud)... suggests a conception of the women's movement as analogous to, rather than isomorphic with, the working-class movement, each addressing a different source of human discontent."⁴¹ Indeed. The working-class movement is discontented with wage slavery and all of its correlates, including the oppression of women. Gayle Rubin and her "friends," however, are discontented with the too-limited availability of bourgeois brothels to satisfy their physical urges.

The lesbian logic has permeated all of the feminist literature and the entire women's movement. One of those who put it forward was Simone de Beauvoir, a feminist spokesperson of more than two decades ago:

If nature is to be invoked, one can say that all women are naturally homosexual. The lesbian, in fact, is distinguished by her refusal of the male and her liking for feminine flesh; but every adolescent female fears penetration and masculine domination, and she feels a certain repulsion for the male body; on the other hand, the female body is for her, as for the male, an object of desire.⁴²

In the gay movement is repeatedly seen the key to the women's movement as a whole.

...We can see the validity of the explosion of tendencies within the women's movement in which women want to conduct the struggle against men as such and no longer wish to use their strength to sustain even sexual relationships with them, since each of these relationships is always frustrating.... The gay movement is the most massive attempt to disengage sexuality and power.

...The explosion of the gay tendencies have been and are important for the movement precisely because they pose the urgency to claim for itself the specificity of women's struggle and above all to clarify in all their depths all facets and connections of the exploitation of women.⁴³

It is no coincidence that the propagation of homosexuality, the utter denial of the family and of stable heterosexual relationships, is carried on nowhere louder than in the Wages for Housework movement.

All women, women who are called lesbians and women who are called straight, are existing under capitalism for the same purpose — to serve capital through serving the family and men. Until we have completed this fight against our subjugation, no woman is free of it. Lesbianism is part of that fight.⁴⁴

We are all housewives, we are all prostitutes and we are all gay.⁴⁵

It is no coincidence because the link between the domestic subjugation of the woman within the family and the sexual community of women outside of the family are two expressions of the same phenomenon, the specific oppression of women. It makes perfect sense that the movement for the defense of both forms of sexual slavery is indivisible. "Homosexuality is workers' control of production."⁴⁶

We have shown at length that ruling-class monogamy demands its correlates outside of the marriage relationship, correlates which reinforce the subjugation of women where it cannot be sufficiently ensured by bourgeois monogamy alone. Engels specifies prostitution, adultery, and hetaerism. Homosexuality belongs in this category as well. It is a complement of monogamy which exists to subjugate women in the contexts where they are not subjugated within a marital relationship. Historically, homosexuality arose at the same time as the oppression of women, to express and reinforce the oppression of women.* The first groups of lesbians appeared within the harems kept for the kings of ancient Egypt and Babylon, for they obviously had no satisfactory sexual alternatives. The term "lesbian" derives from the Isle of Lesbos, an island off the coast of Greece where homosexuality was practiced secretly. Male homosexuality among the Greek

* This question will be dealt with in greater detail when we publish our position on the origin of the oppression of women.

aristocracy was highly respected as an expression of the “pure” sentiments of ruling-class idealism, and has since been a prominent practice among the writers and artists who propagate the ideology of the ruling classes in all class societies. It has been through homosexuality that many of these servants of the ruling class have best been able to live life styles consistent with the aristocratic and bourgeois sentiments and thoughts which they express in their art, including the degradation of women. As to the role which male homosexuality plays in the oppression of women, it is well expressed in the statement by one writer:

Greek men held a contemptuous view of the opposite sex; even the best-endowed hetaerae had a difficult time competing with their clients' male lovers. Even in Sparta, where women enjoyed more prestige and influence than in the rest of Greece, Aleman could pay no greater compliment to his women companions than to call them his “female boy-friends”! The poet-politician Critias stated that girls were charming only to the extent that they were slightly boyish — and vice versa. Homosexuality was both a cause and a consequence of this steady downgrading of the female of the species; and rave against it as they might, the hetaerae proved unable to curb it. At any rate, the Greek example makes it plain that the prevalence of male homosexuality in any given society is tightly linked with increasing misogyny and the social repression of woman; a kind of horror feminae pervades the social atmosphere, springing from the fact that the typical feminine attributes — maternal procreativity and sexual-libidinal endowments — are no longer appreciated.... Woman is rejected, even as a sex object.⁴⁷

Engels perceived homosexuality the same way, as one of the complements of the domestic subjugation of the woman:

The men, who would have been ashamed to show any love for their wives, amused themselves by all sorts of love affairs with *hetaerae*; but this degradation of the women was avenged on the men and degraded them also till they fell into the abominable practice of sodomy and degraded alike their gods and themselves with the myth of Ganymede.... And to the classical love poet of antiquity, old Anacreon, sexual love in our sense mattered so little that it did not even matter to him which sex his be-

loved was. (The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, ed. E. Leacock, NY: International Publishers, pp. 128, 140)

Homosexuality is not an escape from the oppression of women and it is not a solution to the oppression of women. Homosexuality as a social phenomenon reinforces and perpetuates the oppression of women because it perpetuates the antagonism and the division between the sexes, an antagonism and division whose roots are the oppression of women. It is ironic that those who crow the loudest about “pan-sexuality,” the “free expression of sexuality,” and “it should not matter what the sex is of the person to whom you make love” find the sex of the person with whom they work politically to be of paramount importance. They are the loudest propagators of an autonomous women’s movement, which exists to split the political unity of the sexes and thereby to reinforce the oppression of women. Homosexuality, as an extreme expression of the antagonism of the sexes born of class society, is praised and propagated by the women’s movement in order to reinforce and perpetuate the division between the sexes and hence the sexual oppression of women. As such, it is part and parcel of the entire Freudian-feminist movement to liberate the bodies of women for use by the bourgeoisie for prostitution, paid and unpaid.*

Lenin found the bourgeois complement to monogamy, the practice of sexual decadence, utterly unacceptable in the ranks of the communists. He perceived the role of Freudianism in encouraging sexual decadence, in derouting people from revolution, in convincing them that the central problem of their lives was sexual.

Freud’s theory has now become a fad. I mistrust sex theories expounded in articles, treatises, pamphlets, etc. — in short, the theories dealt with in that specific literature which sprouts so luxuriantly on the dung heap of bourgeois society. I mistrust those who are always absorbed in the sex problems, the way an Indian saint is

* We want to make it clear that our position on the social role of homosexuality, and the ideology of “gay liberation,” in no way implies that we support the repression of homosexuals. The Bolshevik Union opposes the repression of homosexuals in their search for equal opportunities in housing, jobs, and education, as well as the physical attacks against them by the bourgeois state.

absorbed in the contemplation of his navel. It seems to me that this superabundance of sex theories, which for the most part are mere hypotheses, and often quite arbitrary ones, stems from a personal need. It springs from the desire to justify one's own abnormal or excessive sex life before bourgeois morality and to plead for tolerance towards oneself. This veiled respect for bourgeois morality is as repugnant to me as rooting about in all that bears on sex. No matter how rebellious and revolutionary it may appear to be, it is in the final analysis thoroughly bourgeois. Intellectuals and others like them are particularly keen on this. There is no room for it in the Party, among the class-conscious, fighting proletariat. (The Emancipation of Women, p. 101)

Freudianism and its “revolutionary” solution, feminism, exist for the purpose of ensuring **“that the unconditional supremacy of men over the female sex”** (Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, p. 130) is perpetuated both within and outside the family under the capitalist system.

Feminism vs. Socialist Revolution

We have seen feminism at work to perpetuate both domestic slavery and its complement, the free exchange of women. We have seen the feminists and the Trotskyites use Marxist categories and phraseology to conceal their anti-Marxism, their bourgeois designs on the masses of women. To conclude our exposure of bourgeois feminism, we are going to unmask in further detail the function which it plays in sowing anti-communism among the masses of women, for the purpose of persuading them that communism is inimical to their interests of liberation and that only by following the leadership of the feminists can they end their oppression.

A. The “Psychic Unity” of Women

The first tool of their anti-communism is to “prove” that the fundamental contradiction of modern society is not one of class but one of sex.

Some see the enemy as the System solely.... Men can't get off that easily, since they created the System and preserve it Capitalism, imperialism and racism are *symptoms* of male supremacy — sexism.⁴⁸

And from Shulamith Firestone, who makes a habit of pitting herself against the universe:

Feminists have to question, not just all of *Western* culture, but the organization of culture itself, and further, even the very organization of nature.⁴⁹

For Firestone, as for the Catholic Church and various religious fundamentalists, the oppression of women stems not from the private ownership of the means of production but from the very nature of things, from the “God-given truths of Adam and Eve.”

In proposing, however, that the fundamental contradiction in class society is sexual, the feminists run into a serious problem: Marxism-Leninism, which cannot be defeated by force or by trickery but which, as scientific truth, rises again and again despite all attempts to combat it. Thus the feminists have been forced to respond to Marx, rather than ignoring him. So modern feminist “theory” decided that, yes, class contradictions are fundamental; but, you see, it is *women* that are really the oppressed *class*, and the men are the oppressor *class*.

Heaping false praise upon the brilliant Friedrich Engels, the better to mock and slander him, Firestone decides to render his work more “profound” by putting forward the most vulgar and disgusting form of revisionism which feminism has yet dreamed up:

Historical materialism is that view of the course of history, which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all historic events in the dialectic of sex: the division of society into two distinct biological classes for procreative reproduction, and the struggles of these classes with one another; in the changes in the modes of marriage, reproduction and childcare created by these struggles; in the connected development of other physically-differentiated classes (castes); and in the first division of labour based on sex which developed into the (economic-cultural) class system.⁵⁰

Coming to the defense of her “class sister” Shulamith, Gayle Rubin explains: “We can imitate Engels in his method rather than in his results.”⁵¹ Engels, you see, hit upon the right method, but used it incorrectly, and so botched up his results; now Shulamith Firestone and Gayle Rubin have at last come along to straighten him out in his results!

Feminism represents the interests of petty-bourgeois women.

The petty-bourgeoisie is the class caught between the two major classes of our epoch, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It rebels against the discomforts and loss of opportunity which is brought about by the rule of the bourgeoisie, but it at the same time gains privilege from the capitalist system and fights the discipline and the loss of individualism which would be imposed upon it if it were to cast its lot in with the proletariat. It is a dying class, being destroyed daily by the march of capital which is throwing petty bourgeois day in and day out into the ranks of the proletariat, and it fights to maintain its privilege against this inevitability. Torn between two classes, the feminists play at Marxism and weave their chauvinist theses in Marxist terminology.

Hence, to resolve their crisis of being caught between two classes, they use the Marxist idea of “class” but they use it to negate class, that is, to replace it by a “principal” contradiction between men and women. For the fundamental contradiction between the socialized means of production and its private appropriation under capitalism, they substitute the socialized means of reproduction (the free community of women) and the private ownership of the woman by the man. In their schema, based on their mutilation of Marx (a figurative mutilation of men?), they resolve this contradiction by seeking to abolish the private ownership of the woman by the man and seeking the rule of the socialized means of reproduction: the free community of women. Marx described this as the essence of the vulgarity of utopian socialism when he stated:

...This movement of opposing universal private property to private property finds expression in the brutish form of opposing to *marriage* (certainly a *form of exclusive private property*) the *community of women*, in which a woman becomes a piece of *communal* and *common* property. It may be said that this idea of the *community of women* gives away the secret of this as yet completely crude and thoughtless communism. Just as woman passes from marriage to general prostitution, so the entire world of wealth (that is, of man’s objective substance) passes from the relationship of exclusive marriage with the owner of private property to a state of universal prostitution with the community. (Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, MECW 3:294-6)

Such a “socialization” resembles nothing so much as the revi-

sionist thesis of “self-management” which today the Chinese revisionists are taking up from Tito. An historical connection is possible in Alexandra Kollontai, who was a member of the “workers’ opposition” in Soviet Russia in the early 1920’s, and who herself had feminist leanings. The platform of the “workers’ opposition” opposed the Leninist line on the necessity of a highly centralized state control over the economy, and instead advocated an anarcho-syndicalist “self-management.” Feminist “self-management” is the escape of women from the family, from men and children, and even from their own bodies, as can be seen in their various programs for the artificial propagation of the species. Thus feminism, with its “men are a class” theory, is not only anti-male, but in the final analysis is anti-female as well. The feminist analysis actually finds that it is the bodies of women which oppress women; Firestone’s analysis of the origin of the oppression of women explains it, in the final analysis, in terms of the biological realities of being a woman.

Thus men become the new oppressor class. States Germaine Greer, a very high-classed feminist obsessed with her own personal “freedom”: “Women represent the most oppressed class of life-contracted unpaid workers, for whom slaves is not too melodramatic a description. They are the only true proletariat left...”⁵² Women, in other words, are a *substitute* for the proletariat, their struggle (against men) a *substitute* for the proletarian revolution.

From a “radical lesbian” comes the solution to the oppression of the “female class”:

Lesbians, because they are not afraid of being abandoned by men, are less reluctant to express hostility toward the male class — the oppressors of women.⁵⁹

And from Margaret Benston, whose feminist piece made a hit in various anarcho-syndicalist circles, we read:

...On the one hand, classes are generally defined by their relation to the means of production, and on the other hand, women are not supposed to have any unique relation to the means of production. The category seems instead to cut across all classes; one speaks of working-class women, middle-class women, etc.⁵⁴

But this is unacceptable to Benston, who will not agree that women are not a class but a sex which is found in all economic classes. Thus she re-defines class to show that sexual categories supersede class categories, or rather can be used as a new set of class cat-

egories.

This assignment of household work as the function of a special category “women” means that this group does stand in a different relation to production than the group “men.” We will tentatively define women, then, as that group of people who are responsible for the production of simple use-values in those activities associated with the home and family.⁵⁵

Biology is destiny! A woman by definition is chained to the kitchen; it is for this that she was born! Such is the “liberating” ideology of Margaret Benston.

For the feminists, women are fundamentally united in their class antagonism to men. What unites women, apparently, is their common relationship to the means of production: i.e., their role in doing housework. Quietly ignoring the obvious fact that **“the bourgeois ladies dump all housework and the care for their children on the hired help”** (Lenin, as quoted in *The Emancipation of Women*, p. 114), quietly ignoring that the burdens of housework weigh the heaviest on working-class women and that working-class women in addition must suffer wage slavery, quietly ignoring the social and economic privilege which comes to the members of all oppressor classes, quietly ignoring the fact that the bourgeois woman would sooner stay chained to the kitchen every day of her life than struggle for socialist revolution, the feminists see only what they want to see: “All women are *first of all* housewives.”⁵⁶

No woman can escape this work. We have some room to manoeuvre over how much housework we will do, but none of us can avoid it altogether.

ALL WOMEN ARE HOUSEWIVES. Single or married, young or old, with or without children, lesbian or straight, that housework is our first job. But that job of work is so identified with being female, so tied to what’s expected of us from birth, that it’s hard to see where work ends and we begin.⁵⁷

And, since we have seen that the central efforts of feminism go not only to the perpetuation of private housework but also to the perpetuation of the free community of women, we might add that another thing all women have in common for the feminists is their potential availability as sexual objects. This is not a new observation. Marx and Engels noted:

Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives

and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each others' wives.

Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common.... (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, FLP, p. 54)

Thus, to the feminists, what all women share in common is extremely important, far more important than what divides them in terms of their social class, in terms of their struggle for liberation. They are all potentially objects of bourgeois seduction. "We are all housewives, we are all prostitutes and we are all gay."⁵⁸ A fine basis for the psychic unity of the female sex! "Women know each other so well that they can talk to a perfect stranger and be sure of being understood."⁵⁹

Goodbye to all that shit that sets women apart from women; shit that covers the face of any Weatherwoman *... which is the face of me which is the face of Pat Nixon....In the dark we are all the same — and you better believe it: we're in the dark, baby.⁶⁰

Even Pat Nixon, then, becomes a beloved "sister." (Mao Tse-tung could not agree more.) So do fascist Indira Gandhi and Zionist Golda Meir, whose pictures have both been prominently displayed in the Toronto feminist bookstore. Women are expected to stay so infantile, so ignorant of the world around them, that they are to know nothing but what is selected for the woman's page by the feminist elite. In this way, the feminist movement hopes to draw the masses of women into support for the reign of the imperialist bourgeoisie and its lackeys throughout the world.

"Sisterhood" comes from the anatomy a woman was born with. All political, social, economic, and theoretical contributions are irrelevant; the class stand and class commitment which a woman has made are also irrelevant. Her only value to the society, the only criterion by which women are supposed to judge her role in the world, is anatomical. Or, as Stokely Carmichael is known to have said, "The only position for women in our political organization is prone."

The purpose of this male chauvinist analysis of the role of women in society is to force working-class women to submit to the hegemony of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women in an autono-

* "Weatherman" was the sadly famous American terrorist group of the late 1960's.

mous women's movement. That is the basis of the "analysis" that all women belong to one class. "Women... will make the transition to revolutionary feminism based on a redefinition of class,"⁶¹ that is, a denial of class and its replacement by sex. The presence of class distinctions within the women's movement is denied...

The women's movement is a non-hierarchical one. It does things collectively and experimentally. It is also the first movement that has the potential of cutting across all class, race, age, economic, and geographical barriers — since women in every group must play essentially the same role, albeit with different sets of costumes: the multiple role of wife, mother, sexual object, baby-producer, "supplementary-income statistic," helpmate, nurturer, hostess, etc.⁶²

... or else it is understated.

In the home the social function and the psychic identity of women as a group is found. Class differences at work (which anyway never produce class-consciousness) are here obliterated for status differences: "wealthy", "middling", "poor". This is not to underestimate these. But the position of women as women takes precedence: oppressed whatever their particular circumstances. Hence the importance of feminist consciousness in any revolution.... Hence Women's Liberation.⁶³

Class distinctions — excuse me, status distinctions, because class isn't very important anyway — should not be "underestimated," but "the position of women as women takes precedence" over class — excuse me, status. Such is the "great step forward" which the very posh "Marxist-feminism" represents over the older feminist currents.

B. Feminism Allies with Economism

One supposed justification for the class collaboration of an autonomous women's movement is the male chauvinism found throughout the "left." The feminists quite rightly perceived that they were being subjected to male chauvinism in the various anti-imperialist and nationalist currents of the "New Left" in the 1960's. But rather than turning to Marxism-Leninism as an alternative, and struggling to expose the opportunism of the "New Left" on all fronts to show that the source of the male chauvinism of its leaders was bourgeois ideology, the feminists fled like terrified, shrieking cowards and established their own little cliques where their power on their

own turf would be unchallenged. Unable to win the power for their petty-bourgeois individualism and careerism within the terrain of the economists, they split to build their own careers on the backs of the masses of working women. Only in this way could they struggle to keep the masses of women chained down not only by wage slavery and national oppression, but by sexual slavery as well. The other opportunist groups did not allow them the “freedom” to make their “contributions” in this domain.

The autonomous women’s movement, then, is the counterpart of the economist movement, not only from the point of view of its counter-revolutionary goals but also historically. Both are offshoots from the same branch. Like the economist movement, its goal is anti-communism, to keep the knowledge of scientific socialism from the masses of working women. By demanding that women keep their outlook narrowed to questions concerning women exclusively, by demanding that the masses of women abandon a class outlook and a class perspective and replace it with class collaboration and class betrayal, the feminists are active propagators of anti-communism, agents of the bourgeoisie in the ranks of the oppressed masses of women, standing as a barrier to prevent working-class women from grasping Marxism-Leninism.

The twin sibling of the economist movement, the feminist movement often uses the simple-mindedness of vulgar economism and revisionism to attack Marxism-Leninism and put forward its own petty-bourgeois decadence as an alternative. Playing on the fact that the economists tell women to find jobs in factories and “join the class struggle” to liberate themselves, the feminists retort:

Ironically, their profound ignorance of the specific relation of women to capital they have translated into a theory of women’s political backwardness which can only be overcome by our entering the factory gates.⁶⁴

...It is absurd to compare the struggle of women for wages to the struggle of male workers in the factory for more wages. The waged worker in the struggle for more wages challenges his social role but remains within it. When we struggle for wages *we struggle unambiguously and directly against our social role.*⁶⁵

We in Modern Times came to doubt the viability of our primary organizing perspective: the “mass revolutionary organization at the workplace.” ...traditional left politics based

on class struggle trade-unionism. To locate the vanguard of the working class in the already more powerful or more easily organized sectors of the class is to base one's strategy on the divisions within the class rather than on their destruction. To base a revolutionary strategy on the trade unions is to base one's strategy on an even narrower layer within the working class — that layer which is still willing to channel its energy through the unions — mainly white males.⁶⁶

Once again we are told that serious politics is not kitchen business, and that our struggle to liberate ourselves as women — our struggle to destroy our work in the home, our relations in the family, the prostitution of our sexuality — is definitely subordinate, or at best auxiliary, to the “real class struggle” in the factory.⁶⁷

Manarosa Dalla Costa considers the community as first and foremost the home, and considers the woman as *the central figure of subversion in the community*. Seen in this way, women are the contradiction in all previous political frameworks, which had been based on the male worker in industry. Once we see the community as a productive center and thus a center of subversion, *the whole perspective for generalized struggle and revolutionary organization is re-opened*.⁶⁸

To “the ‘real class struggle’ in the factory,” i.e., the spontaneous struggle of the (overwhelmingly male) industrial proletariat, is not replaced *consciousness*, the struggle to rally the vanguard of the *whole* proletariat (male and female) to Marxism-Leninism; but is replaced, instead, another form of vulgar spontaneism, which bases itself not on the factory but on the home, on the spontaneous revolts of non-working women, who are still guided by bourgeois ideology.

The challenge to the women's movement is to find modes of struggle which, while they liberate women from the home, at the same time avoid on the one hand a double slavery and on the other prevent another degree of capitalist control and regimentation. *This ultimately is the dividing line between reformism and revolutionary politics within the women's movement*.⁶⁹

The struggle for wages (for housework — BU) becomes a direct attack on capital's profit and its capacity to extract surplus labour from us. Thus the struggle for the wage is at the same time the struggle against the wage, for the power it

expresses and against the capitalist relation it embodies.... We do not say that achieving a wage is the revolution. We say, however, that it is a revolutionary strategy, for it undermines the role we are assigned to in the capitalist division of labor and consequently changes the power relations within the working class in terms more favorable to us and to the unity of the class.⁷⁰

Our strategy is to disrupt the social factory, to develop the power of the class as a whole so that it can choose to act according to its own needs, and not those of capital: to withhold its labour, to refuse its functions in the social factory, to destroy capital's plans.

...Money demands by the unwaged are... extremely subversive in that they allow *workers* to make the choice to refuse to work for capital.

... Wages for housework would fundamentally disrupt the social factory.... And women would have the choice of refusing to be pushed into the second job. outside the home, whenever it suited capital.⁷¹

Feminism thrives on economism, on the counter-revolutionary subversion which the economists continuously plot against Marxism-Leninism. By so vulgarizing Marxism-Leninism, by in fact reducing it to "the class struggle in the factory" and "the struggle of the male factory worker for more wages," the economists only drive more dissatisfied petty-bourgeois into another wing of counter-revolution and spontaneism, which focuses its strategy on "the class struggle in the kitchen" and "the struggle of the female housewife for wages." It is, of course, the same social stratum which feeds both tendencies, and it is clear how each one feeds the other one in a conspiratorial attack to conceal the correct Marxist-Leninist line on the need to build a party which is guided by the most advanced theory, which has grasped **"the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata and groups of the population."** (*What is To Be Done*, FLP, p. 86) Both tendencies need each other; both detest Marxism-Leninism with equal fervor. The working class needs neither one, however, for they are the twin agents of anti-communism in the ranks of the people.

C. Feminists Attack the Proletarian Party

It is no wonder that the feminists fled from the economists in the

interests of their own careerism and spontaneism rather than in the interests of the construction of an authentic Marxist-Leninist party which alone could lead the struggle to abolish the oppression of women. Feminists hate the proletarian party. In the proletarian party they see a terrible challenge to their petty-bourgeois individualism, to their “right” to act according to their own inclinations and to heap disdain on the needs of the masses of women. For the feminists, the existence of the party, by demanding the subordination of individualism to the interests of the revolution, demands the subordination of women to the interests of men, because they make no distinction between the interests of the broad masses of women and their own bourgeois interests (remember, all women supposedly have the same class interests). Thus the proletarian party becomes not a threat to the bourgeoisie, but a threat to women (represented by them); it becomes not the party of the working class, but a party of men (because it opposes them).

For many feminists, the autonomous women’s movement is an ideal focus for the expression of their vilest, most intimate fantasies of petty-bourgeois individualism. For Marx they substitute Freud, the psychoanalytic search to probe deep into their inner feelings, the better to cultivate themselves and establish to themselves a solid sense of self-importance. They perceive the “free expression of their sexuality” as the key to their “liberation as women.” Thus from Robin Morgan again: “There is a certain kind of linear, tight, dry, boring, male super-consistency that we are beginning to reject.”⁷² “We” is all women, represented by Robin Morgan. “Super-consistency,” or the single correct line which reflects the single correct interpretation of an objective world, which reflects the consistency and organization of the proletariat as a class, is very “boring” to Robin Morgan, who prefers to live in her own fantasy world of idealism and self-constructed reality. Not only is proletarian consistency “boring,” it is also “male,” since Robin Morgan, along with every other male chauvinist, finds women flighty, erratic, irresponsible and inconsistent, not at all suited to the disciplined demands of the socialized workplace, much better suited to the four walls of the kitchen.

She continues: “Women’s liberation is the first radical movement to base its politics — in fact, create its politics — out of concrete personal experiences. We’ve learned that those experiences are *not* our private hang-ups. They are shared by every woman, and are therefore political. This theory, then, comes out of human feeling, not out

of textbook rhetoric. *That's* truly revolutionary, as anyone knows who's ever listened to abstract political speeches. "⁷³

Anyone familiar with the bitter struggle waged by Marxist-Leninists to build an authentic communist party in Canada will recognize this language. It is the same language which poured out of the mouths of the economists who feared and hated Marxist-Leninist theory, who held so much contempt for the proletariat that they could not conceive that the working class could grasp Marxist-Leninist knowledge. Just as the economist disdain for Marxist-Leninist theory is utterly male chauvinist, since only Marxist-Leninist theory can explain the double oppression of women, so the feminist disdain for "textbook rhetoric" and "abstract political speeches" is equally contemptuous of the needs of the masses of women in their struggle for liberation. We grant that Marxism-Leninism is well above the heads of the likes of Robin Morgan, but that is no excuse to withhold it from the masses of women workers.

Such an attitude to scientific knowledge is found throughout the feminist literature. Women are asked to wade through five-volume treatises of the subjective personal experiences and metaphysical intuitions of lesbians, but Marxist-Leninist education is strictly male, taboo.

Resistances to consciousness: *Thinking you can educate the people.* (When we all know the people are impossible to educate! — BU) This implies you are educated and you will get a revolution going by teaching other people what you know. Education does not bring on revolutions; but consciousness of our own oppression and struggle might. Unfortunately formal education and political consciousness do not usually coincide. Even formal education in Marxism-Leninism tends to make people think that they know more than they really know. When we think of what it is that politicizes people, it is not so much books or ideas but experience.⁷⁴

The good old economist "practice." Lenin responds: **"No wonder people say that practice marches ahead of theory (especially in the case of those who are guided by a false theory)."** ("Bourgeois Intelligentsia's Methods of Struggle," LCW 20:457) The feminists dread that the masses of proletarian women will learn from the experiences of the international proletariat, as correctly summed up by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. Instead, they want the masses of

women to learn from the experiences of the feminists. Anyone who has frequented the feminist movement has sat through long, interminable meetings which center on the self-described personal history of the most bourgeois woman in the room. These, of course, are supposedly far closer to the “experiences shared by every woman” than anything which Marxism-Leninism could possibly offer.

Communists perceive that, because of the fundamental contradictions of class which pervade every aspect of class society, the petty-bourgeois who choose to be committed to revolution have a very different starting point, in their very consciousness, than the proletarians. The feminists, however, in propagating that there are no fundamental differences in the life-experiences of women belonging to different classes, demand that their own life-desires and life-goals be perceived as coincident with those of the broad masses of oppressed women. Their political activity, rather than being in part a struggle to destroy the class arrogance and class outlook of their past, becomes the very expression of it. Explaining her departure from the “left,” one feminist describes her “personal experience”:

Not only are women losers, but for a woman to think of herself is bourgeois subjectivity and inherently counter-revolutionary. No dear, of course you find your work dull. What the Movement needs is more discipline and less middle-class concern with one’s itty-bitty self!⁷⁵

“Concern with one’s itty-bitty self” is what the feminist movement is all about. For all the rhetoric about women as “sisters,” and women as “class,” it is clear that the primary concern of the feminist is erecting a theoretical justification for her petty-bourgeois individualism, that far from wanting the liberation of the masses of the women, she wants the “liberation” of only one woman, herself. And this is purely and simply the mentality of the small shopkeeper.

Not much more needs to be said about why the petty-bourgeois feminists so detest the proletarian party. It is only an expression of the fear and hatred borne by the bourgeoisie for the proletariat as an organized and disciplined class.

D. The Feminists Attack the Proletariat

States Mariarosa Dalla Costa, darling of the very chic “Marxist-feminism”:

Now it is clear that not one of us believes that emancipation, liberation, can be achieved through work. Work is

still work, whether inside or outside the home. The independence of the wage earner means only being a “free individual” for capital, no less for women than for men. Those who advocate that the liberation of the working-class woman lies in her getting a job outside the home are part of the problem, not the solution. Slavery to an assembly line is not a liberation from slavery to a kitchen sink. To deny this is also to deny the slavery of the assembly line itself, proving again that if you don’t know how women are exploited, you can never really know how men are.⁷⁶

Now, no Marxist could disagree that the liberation of the working-class woman does not lie simply in her getting a job outside the home. No Marxist could disagree that countless economists have sought to represent it as such, in order to keep ever more women chained to wage slavery. But does Dalla Costa put forward this argument in order to show the urgent necessity for the defeat of economism, the urgent necessity of the struggle for the proletarian party, to lead the struggle for socialism which alone can liberate women from their dual slavery? Of course not. To Dalla Costa, work on the assembly line is slavery, under no matter what system. Her struggle is to keep women *away from the assembly lines*. “For too long political parties, especially of the left, and trade unions have determined and confined the areas of working-class struggles. To make love and to refuse night work to make love, *is the interest of the class*.”⁷⁷ Her struggle is to exempt women from the need to go to work. “We also want choices... to have time to be with children, to be with old people, with the sick, when and where we choose. To ‘have time’ means to work less.”⁷⁸ Dalla Costa of course is not talking about a communist society, where the long struggles of the proletariat toward a classless society have liberated all of humanity from much unnecessary and senseless drudgery. She is talking about cultivating petty-bourgeois, personal time in opposition to the march of capital, which is calling women to the workplace. “Our struggle is a struggle against work.”⁷⁹ Work is beneath the dignity of the likes of Dalla Costa. But so are those who work, i.e., the working class itself. Here are her feelings about the proletariat:

The woman is the slave of a wage slave, and her slavery ensures the slavery of her man. Like the trade union, the family protects the worker, but also ensures that he *and she* will never be anything but workers.⁸⁰

Imagine, never be anything but workers, mere workers! “And that is why the struggle of the woman of the working class against the family is crucial.”⁸¹ There may be those who do not perceive the link between the attack on the family and the attack on the working class, but Dalla Costa is not one of them. This, in fact, is a very common feminist-Trotskyite line attacking the proletarian family: that the proletarian family is bad because it enables the working class to keep on going to work.

...Given the factory, capital needs the family, or more specifically, the discipline of the former is premised on the discipline of the latter, and vice-versa. Nobody is born into this world a worker. That is why, whether dressed up in star-spangled banners or in hammers and sickles, at the heart of capital we always find the glorification of family life.⁸²

And it is in the refusal of petty-bourgeois like Dalla Costa to work that they see the key to realizing their own petty-bourgeois individualism in the face of the advance of capital. “Refusing to produce, refusing to *work*, is a fundamental lever of social power.”⁷⁸³

This pathetic rag sheet put out by two European feminists has been referred to over and over again by the tiny handful of feminists who cannot bear the thought of either work or the working class. It has in fact formed the basis of the loud counter-revolutionary bands of “Wages for Housework” feminists, who have made it clear that work and the working class are the targets of their struggle.

Only when men see our work as work — our love as work — and most important *our determination to refuse both*, will they change their attitude towards us.... And we don’t have to prove that we can “break the blue collar barrier.” A lot of us broke that barrier a long time ago and have discovered that the overalls did not give us more power than the apron; if possible even less, because now we had to wear both and had less time and energy to struggle against them.⁸⁴

That is, work is tiring. How can we “do our own thing,” which is by definition revolutionary (since it expresses ourselves, and we are women, and women are the revolutionary class), if we have to work?

This handful of counter-revolutionaries has not the smallest interest in the liberation of women from domestic drudgery. It is a scientific fact, well known to all of them, that the liberation of women will begin **“only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the state power) against the petty housekeeping, or**

rather when its *wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins.*" (Lenin, "A Great Beginning," LCW 29:429) Only when domestic work is taken out of the privatized realm of the home, where it is the responsibility chiefly of the individual woman, and made a large-scale public industry on a par with all other social industries, will women be liberated from the nerve-racking drudgery of housework. And what is their attitude when confronted with Marxism-Leninism on this question?

...The Russian experiment demonstrated that once the goal is production, work, the socialization of housework can only be a further regimentation of our lives — as the examples of schools, hospitals, barracks, etc. continuously teach us— If this type of 'revolution' occurs, we will be the first to struggle against it.^{es}

Thank you, mesdames, it is not often that self-professed revolutionaries make such an open declaration of counter-revolution as you have been kind enough to admit. Imagine, a revolution which provides schools and hospitals for the masses! Imagine, a revolution which has an army so that the proletariat can defend itself against the hostile imperialist encirclement!

The charge that Wages for Housework would institutionalize women in the home has come from every left bank. Meanwhile they rejoice that we are being institutionalized in the factory.⁸⁶

Imagine, perceiving that the participation of women in broad-scale social production is the wave of the future for masses of women! Next thing you know, those rotten communists will be telling us that the women should have equal status with the men in those factories, or in political organizations!

What the feminists hate is the organization and discipline of the proletarian class, which is the principal threat to their class privilege, to their bourgeois individualism. What the feminists hate is the hard work, the long struggle and difficult sacrifices demanded by the proletariat in building the party and constructing a socialist society. What the feminists hate, is the proletariat.

...The left are totally identified with the capitalist viewpoint. The left, in all its varieties, is not interested in destroying capital....

Oh, no! Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin had no interest in destroying capital! Only Cox and Federici have an interest in destroying

capital!

...the surplus labour we are forced to do, but in making it more efficient. Their revolution is a reorganization of capitalist production which will rationalize our slavery rather than abolish it. This is why when the working class (i.e., Cox and Federici — BU) refuses work they immediately worry about “who will clean the streets.”⁸⁷

Cox and Federici have no worries about “who will clean the streets.” The workers can keep on cleaning the streets. The working class can keep on peopling the factories which Cox and Federici need to manufacture their waterbeds and other accoutrements of their decadent, work-free, parasitic lifestyles. The only work which Cox and Federici are sworn to pursuing is counter-revolution: “If this type of ‘revolution’ occurs, we will be the first to struggle against it.” After all, they wouldn’t want to spend the rest of their lives being “nothing but workers”!

E. Feminists Against the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

With their fundamental hatred of the proletariat, of course the feminists will always be the sworn enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They demand that women withdraw from the revolutionary struggles which affect the entire working class, and indeed all of humankind, so that they can then turn around and make the accusation that the communist movement is run by men.

A male-dominated socialist revolution in economic and even cultural terms, were it to occur tomorrow, would be *no* revolution, but only another coup d’etat among men.⁸⁸

The so-called revolutions to date have been coups d’etat between men, in a half-hearted attempt to prune the branches but leave the root embedded — for the sake of preserving their own male privileges.⁸⁸

Socialism, it is claimed, is no solution at all because the oppression of women is unchanged. Just as the oppression of women supposedly springs from the origin of the species, so it supposedly cannot be eradicated by the most violent of social upheavals.

The hell with the simplistic notion that automatic freedom for women — or non-white peoples — will come about ZAP! with the advent of a socialist revolution.⁸⁰

The subjugation of women is a fact of our daily existence, yet it neither began with modern capitalism nor auto-

matically disappears in socialist societies.⁸¹

Entirely true statements, both of these! The subjugation of women originates in the private ownership of the means of production, and the struggle against it — like the struggle against *all* forms of oppression — is a part of the conscious class struggle against the bourgeoisie, which is an ongoing struggle throughout the period of socialist construction. Was this the point which Morgan and Reiter were trying to make? Were they struggling against vulgar revisionism, which sees class struggle as “automatic” and unconscious, in order to put forward the alternative, the arming of the proletariat with class consciousness to destroy all vestiges of the old order? Of course not. Morgan and Reiter decided that the subjugation of women, since it does not “automatically disappear in socialist societies,” is therefore best waged by the “struggle against sexism in our own society,”⁹² i.e., the struggle for a change in the attitudes of men towards women within the framework of the capitalist system. Needless to say, this “struggle against sexism” is supposed to be led by petty-bourgeois feminists the likes of Morgan and Reiter.

What do the feminists mean when they say that the socialist countries do not go “far enough” in the emancipation of women? Do they mean that there are still women who are chained to backward prejudices, that the socialization of housework has not reached the stage of full completion, that women have not yet become fully one-half of the political leadership of the socialist society? Of course not. These truths are obvious, and clearly admitted by great Marxist-Leninists who have led socialist revolutions in their own countries. If this were at the basis of the feminist attack on the socialist countries, we would see many more feminists abandoning their counter-revolutionary stands and entering the struggle for the party, the better to uplift the masses of working women from their backwardness and draw them into the most active possible social and political participation in the construction of a socialist society, to hasten the day when all women are enlightened by Marxism-Leninism and when domestic work is as fully socialized as all other industries.

When the feminists sow their counter-revolutionary mistrust of socialist revolutions which have taken place, they are seeking to attack the very basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the very foundations of socialist society. They hate that the construction of socialism puts the interests of the proletariat as a class to the forefront, to which the interests of the individual are subordinated. They hate that

the ideas of the petty-bourgeoisie are struggled against and that proletarian ideology is defended. They hate that the family is perceived from a class point of view, on the political level, as a fighting unit for socialism; they perceive this as a terrible threat to the free exchange of women, and indeed it is. The opposition to the family among the feminists is fundamentally Trotskyite, and in fact was led by Trotsky himself, in order to attack Stalin and socialist revolution.

The leaders are forcing people to glue together again the shell of the broken family, and not only that, but to consider it, under threat of penalties, the sacred nucleus of triumphant socialism.⁹³

Singing the praises of the sexual decadence of the early days of the Bolshevik Revolution, a decadence firmly opposed by Lenin, a decadence which was defeated by the masses of Soviet women in the context of their struggle for socialism, Trotsky continues;

The revolution made a heroic effort to destroy the so-called family hearth — that archaic, stuffy, and stagnant institution in which the woman of the toiling classes performs galley labor from childhood to death.⁹⁴

Echoes a Trotskyite-feminist:

The family system was shaken to its roots, and all kinds of experiments were tried out in new forms of communal living, especially by young people. But the program of the Bolsheviks was not fully realized, and during the 1930's a complete reversal occurred in the Soviet attitude toward women and the family. The perspective became one of maintaining the family rather than replacing it.⁹⁵

Says another feminist-Trotskyite on the question of the Soviet Union:

In the 1930's official policy rehabilitated the family. Concern to stabilize Soviet society, the threat of war, operated as further incentives. Nobody talked any more about the family withering. Instead the official attitude was that it should be as secure as possible.... Individual pleasure had to be subordinated to the needs of the state.⁹⁶

Alexandra Kollontai, a leader making feminist errors in the ranks of the Bolsheviks who wanted sexual questions placed to the forefront and whose principal political struggle in this area was against marital fidelity, becomes a feminist hero. Two feminists have declared that women in socialist Russia were not emancipated because

the family was retained and women did not have an autonomous armed women's movement, but that Kollontai was "an emancipated woman" because "she raised her child alone."⁹⁷

Thus emancipation for the feminists is not a social question, but an individual one. The emancipation of women for them is not a class struggle to lift the weight of double oppression from the masses of women, but is a struggle of individual women to extricate themselves from their families so that they can better express their petty-bourgeois individualism and their demand for hegemony and power over the political struggles of the working class.

Socialist revolution is the greatest threat to the petty-bourgeois individualism of the feminists, and it is the inevitability of socialist revolution which is at the root of the feminist panic.

"Well, equal pay for equal work, yes, but a woman learning karate, a woman raising a child with her lesbian lover, a woman brain surgeon or priest or astronaut or architect or President — now *that's* going too far.

At last. At last we seem to be understanding that there *is* no "too far"⁹⁸

"There is no 'too far' " if we are only talking about women winning certain economic reforms, degrading themselves with homosexuality, propagating religion, entering bourgeois careers, or replacing Jimmy Carter in striking up an alliance with imperialist China. But socialist revolution— well, that's going too far. "The so-called revolutions to date have been coups d'états between men."⁹⁹

It's a thoroughly terrifying subject to explore: what *are* our alternatives?... Living alone? Living in mixed communes with men and women? Living in all-women communes? Having children? Not having children?... Homosexuality, or bisexuality, as a beautiful affirmation of human *sexuality*, without all those absurd prefixes? Test-tube births? Masturbation? Womb transplants?¹⁰⁰

A "thoroughly terrifying subject to explore," but she proceeds to explore it. But the question of socialist revolution she does not explore; it is a bit too terrifying. "A male-dominated socialist revolution... would be *no* revolution."¹⁰¹ Homosexual communes would be "a revolution, definitely worth exploring," but socialist revolution would be *no* revolution, certainly not worth exploring!

To examine the feminist program in lieu of socialist revolution, we find only more of the above: an infinite listing of petty-bourgeois

decadent lifestyles as “alternatives” for petty-bourgeois women to their ultimate dread: being drawn into the ranks of the proletariat. Robin Morgan, Germaine Greer, Shulamith Firestone, and countless other feminists, when they finally pose their solutions, can only come up with weary variations on old petty-bourgeois themes such as homosexual communes. They perceive the futility in these alternatives, but they cling to them as preferable to the true liberation of women through socialism.

As for the proposal of socialisation and collectivisation of housework, a couple of examples will be sufficient to draw a line between these alternatives and our perspective. It is one thing to set up a day care centre the way we want it, and demand that the State pay for it. It is quite another thing to deliver our children to the State and ask the State to control them, discipline them, teach them to honour the American flag not for five hours, but for fifteen or twenty-four hours. It is one thing to organize communally the way we want to eat (by ourselves, in groups, etc.) and then ask the State to pay for it, and it is the opposite thing to ask the State to organize our meals. In one case we regain some control over our lives, in the other we extend the State’s control over us.¹⁰²

The feminists perceive the main danger to “regaining some control over our lives” “the way we want it”: the danger that the proletariat, as an organized class, will gain control over their lives. Feminism is the desperate battle of the petty-bourgeoisie, particularly petty-bourgeois women, against the inevitability of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The feminists howl over and over again about how revolutionary they are because they do not want the masses to perceive the truth about them, which is that they are useless, counter-revolutionary scum which will be swept away by the organized wrath of the proletariat and the people. And it is the women of the proletariat, and the women of the labouring masses, who will take leadership in the utter defeat and destruction of feminism.

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Economism and Feminism

Converge

Usually the economists and the feminists express rabid hatred for each other, in the hopes of winning people away from one tendency and into the other one. But struggling to divide up the masses of toiling women between them, they not only contend but also collude when the situation is opportune. There is in fact a strong basis for this collusion, because both tendencies merely express a different aspect of spontaneity: the economists gazing in awe upon the spontaneous struggle of the workers in the context of their day-to-day battle against their employers, and the feminists gazing in awe upon the spontaneous frustration and anger of women against their specific sexual oppression. Both seek hegemony over these spontaneous movements in order to ensure that they are not raised to the level of the conscious, communist political struggle against the rule of the bourgeoisie. Where it is convenient to combine the two expressions of spontaneity, the opportunists do not hesitate to do so.

One example of feminist economism which is becoming more and more prominent is the kind of organization springing up to take charge of the defensive economic struggles of women in the workplace. Women have always been poorly organized, and now that they are beginning to organize themselves in the workplace, it was historically inevitable that a set of petty-bourgeois women would step in to ensure that this organization does not overstep the bounds of bourgeois ideology. The Comité de condition féminine de la CSN (CSN Committee of Women's Conditions), in Quebec, is an example of this; it seeks to organize working women around specifically women's issues such as maternity leave and day care, and it is furiously opposed to all attempts to introduce Marxist-Leninist ideology to women workers.

Another outstanding example of the collusion of feminism and economism can be seen among the Trotskyites. Trotskyites regularly rally to the feminist cause, always seeking to hitch petty-bourgeois feminist movements to their bandwagon. They are the staunchest champions of the "gay liberation movement," which is not only a movement to secure democratic rights for individual homosexuals but which also has an ideology of its own akin to the Freudian-feminist ideology, putting forward the family as the root of all evil and

perceiving the destruction of the family as the key link to creating a thoroughly bisexual society. The Trotskyites received the following endorsement from the “gay liberation movement”:

Although there exist important political differences between male and female homosexuals, women (read: feminists — BU), Trotskyists and anarchists, they all struggle for sexual liberation.¹

Trotskyism and feminism are entirely consistent with one another, because Trotskyism came into existence as an organized opposition to the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a petty-bourgeois rebellion against the discipline and organization of the proletarian class. Its howls against the “Stalinist bureaucracy” are only howls against the monolithic Bolshevik unity of the party of the proletariat which enables the proletariat to exercise its iron dictatorship over the bourgeoisie.

Yet Trotskyites are at the same time thoroughly economist. Their work in the working class consists in sending cadre into factories, dressed up with lunch-buckets and prepared to lead picket lines. Their reportage in the newspapers is a mixture of praise for any petty-bourgeois current in existence and worship of whatever strike has occurred the most recently. Opportunist to the core, Trotskyites will tail *any* form of spontaneity which they can find, and represent the sum total of all spontaneous movements as the revolution itself.

The right of a small minority of wealthy individuals to rule by exploiting and oppressing the overwhelming majority of the world’s people is today being challenged on many fronts. We (women — BU) are adding our voices to those of the discontented throughout the world — to the Black and Chicano liberation struggles, the international antiwar and student movements, and the struggles of the Vietnamese, the Palestinians, the Irish, and all other peoples who are in motion against their oppression. Our combined impact can achieve the liberation of humankind.²

The Spartacist League, which represents itself as the most radical wing of the Trotskyites and which even claims to struggle against economism, constantly attacks other Trotskyite groups for not seeking to “rally workers to a revolutionary program.” But the “revolutionary program” of the Spartacists, like the “revolutionary program” of all Trotskyites, has nothing in common with a revolutionary analysis and strategy but is only a “transitional program” which contains

a list of reforms demanded within the capitalist order. "Workers' government" is tacked onto the end, as if to erase all suspicion that the Spartacist League might be another band of reformists seeking hegemony over the spontaneous struggles of the working class. The purpose of the "transitional program" is to ask the working class to submit to the leadership of the petty-bourgeois Trotskyites in the course of its spontaneous struggle, while waiting for everybody else in the world to engage in the world revolutionary uprising.

In Struggle, which historically has been a tendency of rancid economism, is inching more and more towards Trotskyism, and with this gradual drift has more and more begun to show feminist tendencies. The first sign of this was in its commentaries to its "Draft Program," where it states (in one of its only references to the specific oppression of women):

The great majority of Canadian women are also subjected to a specific oppression. In their role as domestic slaves they shoulder in isolation the essential tasks of taking care of the family and raising children and the social value of this essential work is not recognized.³

This, of course, is the same line as that of a wide spectrum of feminists, who appeal to the bourgeoisie to "recognize" the "social value" of housework, whether through a wage or some "ideological status." In Struggle has never done a Marxist analysis of private housework, so it has nothing to say about what the "social value of this essential work" is, except to fall into the various bourgeois currents which are circulating around. For those women who enter the workplace, they are to "join the class struggle," but for those who "choose" not to do so, the "social value of this essential work" should be "recognized."

Feminist buds began to flower in In Struggle when it began to make its preparations for International Women's Day. Interviewing two "former" feminists, In Struggle proudly parades their views that the problem with the feminist movement has been that it is too "dogmatic"! "We certainly weren't advocating unity,"⁴ they declare, as if the problem with the feminist movement is that it has not been open-minded towards a broad enough range of counter-revolutionary ideas. In Struggle is trying to build Trotskyite alliances with as many sectors of petty-bourgeois spontaneity as it can, and so it sends signals to the feminist movement that In Struggle is no longer its arch-enemy (as it supposedly had been during its days of "pure" economism). This is

In Struggle's way of "preparing for International Women's Day." To In Struggle's question, "Now that you are sympathetic to Marxist-Leninist ideas, how do you fight for women's demands?", one "former" feminist replies: "We must beware of becoming aggressive towards feminists, for this could lead us to throw the baby out with the bath-water."⁵ The following week, In Struggle alerts feminists that in preparation for IWD it *particularly* will welcome commentaries from "the women's movement." In Struggle's preparations for IWD, 1979, have changed from those of its former years; whereas before it "prepared for International Women's Day" by putting forward the most putrid male-chauvinist economism on the question of women, now it is "preparing for International Women's Day" by treating contradictions with the autonomous women's movement as "contradictions among the people" and urging "comradely polemics" towards it *as a movement* (rather than demonstrating that individuals become the friends of the proletariat only to the extent that they *desert* and *demarkate against* the autonomous women's movement).

With the feminist movement, of course, comes the "gay liberation movement," because the "uninhibited expression of our sexuality" (i.e., the free exchange of women) is too "inhibited" if it is limited only to heterosexuality. So it is no coincidence that in the same issue as the Gagnonites caution their followers against being too "aggressive" against the feminists, we find In Struggle's first overtures to the "gay liberation movement." First there is a letter printed by a "liberated gay" whose hostility to the Leninist party oozes out of every sentence, with not a word of response from In Struggle to combat his anti-communism.⁶ But, worse yet, In Struggle's real response to this letter comes in a full-scale, typically Trotskyite defense of the filthy pornography published by the "gay liberation movement" in one of its magazines, the *Body Politic*. In Struggle has one sentence disavowing "support" for homosexual "pedophilia (sex between adults and children)," and then hurries on to say that it supports the struggle of *Body Politic* against police repression "despite this disagreement."⁷

When In Struggle attacks the Bolshevik Union, it does not just have "disagreements." For In Struggle, the Bolshevik Union is a band of splitters, saboteurs, parasites, agent provocateurs, and neo-Trotskyite counterrevolutionaries. With *Body Politic*, however, which uses its press to propagate homosexual activity between male adults and boys, In Struggle has "disagreements."

The Bolshevik Union opposes the raid by the police on *Body Politic*, simply because under conditions of bourgeois democracy we oppose police repression of the freedom of the press, and it is not the bourgeois army which will lead the way to proletarian morality. But in defending the right of counter-revolutionaries and anti-social pornographers to publish their views at this stage of the struggle, we use the opportunity to show the vile and despicable content of what has been published, to point to the difference between bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy, and to clarify beyond any doubt that no such propaganda will be permitted or tolerated in a socialist society. In Struggle is so busy cultivating its Trotskyite alliances with any ragged band of petty-bourgeois which walks the picket line that it has not the slightest interest in using such an incident of police repression to further communist education, *not only* about the nature of police repression *but also* about the nature and purpose of homosexual pornography. To the “gay liberation movement,” the spread of sodomy between men and boys is a component of the “freedom” which they seek. To the masses of workers and oppressed people, however, freedom is not only freedom from police repression but also freedom from the propagation of disgusting anti-social filth and all ideologies which exist to reinforce the oppression of women and the working class in general.

So economism and feminism are not separated by a Chinese wall. Trotskyism is the finest example of their fusion. But it is not only the Trotskyites and the neo-Trotskyites who manage to combine economism and feminism. The “Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist)”, the franchised dealer of Maoism and Chinese revisionism in Canada, is on the one hand obsessed with factories and so blinded by its industrial trade-unionism that it launched its newspaper by declaring, “Rare indeed are workers who have never participated in a strike at one time or another.”⁸ Yet in its work to rally petty-bourgeois women to its ranks, the League has no hesitation in using the most vulgar of feminist tactics. It patronizes women in the most insulting fashions, talking to them only about women’s issues as if they are incapable of understanding anything else, assuming that it is the question of women which above all interests them.

The “Communist” (Soviet revisionist) parties are also thoroughly economist, thoroughly implanted into the trade-union movement of the industrial proletariat and often into the established leadership of it. Yet this does not stop them from using feminist appeals in their

work whenever they can. Ideally they, like the Trotskyites, would like to unite the working-class movement with all other spontaneous bourgeois movements which they can, in order to ensure that communist ideology reaches none of them and diverts none of them into socialist revolution. As Gus Hall, chief American revisionist, says:

We Marxists fight for the dominance of a working-class ideology. In all struggles and movements we push for a working-class approach. We must do this in the movement for women's liberation. Our emphasis is on the working class, because that's where it's at, that's where the meaningful action is.⁹

And, of course, the American revisionist party always has to be "where it's at, where the meaningful action is!"

Eleanor Leacock, another member of the American revisionist party, uses a particularly vicious form of anti-communism in a frantic attempt to unite the masses of women under the leadership of a combined economism and feminism. Defending her reformism, she attacks

...the extreme economic determinist — and generally masculine — view that since all basic changes ultimately depend on the revolutionary restructuring of society, it is both illusory and diversionary to focus on ameliorating the special problems of women.¹⁰

For Leacock, those who do not focus principally on reforms within the capitalist order are not only "extreme economic determinists" — i.e., authentic communists, who put revolution and the struggle for the party to the forefront — but they are also holding a view which is "generally masculine." Revolution, Marxism-Leninism, is portrayed as "masculine"; limiting the vision of the masses to reforms, however, emphasizing the "amelioration" of the specific oppression of women within capitalism rather than its elimination through socialist revolution, becomes "feminine." Revolution for Leacock is unfeminine. For the revisionist parties, which have usually found revolution to be only "dogmatic," "sectarian," and "ultra-leftist," Leacock has provided a new bourgeois-feminist, male chauvinist twist. Her proposal instead of revolution is that the spontaneous working-class movement fuse itself with the middle-class women's movement.

Economism and feminism contend and collude, in their conspiratorial struggle to carve up the spontaneous movement of angry

women between them. Both put reforms to the forefront, in order to make capitalism appear more attractive to the privileged strata of the working-class and the petty-bourgeoisie; both are dedicated to blocking the diffusion of Marxist-Leninist knowledge into the ranks of the working class. The struggle to liberate the masses of women from their double slavery entails a fierce battle against all manifestations of economism and feminism, the dual conspiracy to keep women trapped in the double burden of sexual servitude and capitalist misery.

Notes

1. Gai(e)s du Quebec, 1:8.
2. Linda Jenness, "Introduction," *Feminism and Socialism*, ed. L. Jenness, p. 6.
3. In *Struggle, Draft Program*, p. 60.
4. In *Struggle*, no. 141, p. 9.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 2.
7. Ibid., p. 7.
8. *The Forge*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 2.
9. Gus Hall, *Working Class Approach to Women's Liberation*, NY: New Outlook Publishers, 1970, p. 9.
10. Eleanor Leacock, "Introduction" to Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, NY: International Publishers, 1975, p. 44.



**Collection of Articles
on the
Question of Women
Published in
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Quebecois Feminists:

A Mouthpiece of Clerical-Bourgeois Culture in Quebec

Proletarian Revolution, Vol. 1, No. 1, May 1, 1978

One of the most striking political links which was made during the feminist celebrations, the week of March 8, was the strong historical bond between feminism and narrow Quebecois nationalism.

One of the panelists during the feminist panel discussion of March 1, stated flatly that the birth of the feminist movement in Quebec was inseparable from the rise of Quebecois nationalism in the late 1960's. And, at the close of this rabidly feminist gathering, several women rose with clenched fists to chant their slogan: "Quebecois women, arise!"

What, then is the precise historical link between narrow Quebecois nationalism and feminism?

We know from our studies of narrow Quebecois nationalism that it is at this time a reactionary tendency, designed to drag the Quebecois nation back into isolation and block the masses of Quebecois proletarians from moving forward to the struggle for socialism, hand in hand with the proletariat of English Canada. Quebecois nationalism is a profoundly isolationist current, deeply influenced by the clerical and bourgeois culture of rural Quebec and very fond of chauvinist and reactionary values which work toward the oppression of the Quebecois nation.

With these facts in mind, let us look at the history of the Quebecois nationalist currents in regards to its attitudes to the question of women.

Wartime Quebec: A Broad Campaign to Keep Women at Home

As elsewhere in North America and the rest of the Western world, the period after World War II was marked by a reactionary offensive by the bourgeoisie to stamp out all glimmerings of communist ideas among the working class, all sympathy for the Soviet Union and for the great victories of the socialist camp after World War II, and all thoughts that women belonged anywhere else but in

the home.

Although after World War II the objective historical tendency was the increasing movement of women into the workplace, the bourgeoisie nevertheless mounted a vicious and widespread ideological campaign to persuade women that their natural role was at home and that, if they were forced to work, they should segregate themselves into jobs so “feminine” that one would almost not notice that they were working. Thus women provided the needs of both cheap labour and housewifely docility at the same time; the bourgeoisie had all bases covered on the question.

In Quebec this campaign was particularly intense, because added to the general reactionary onslaught of the bourgeoisie was the influence of Quebecois nationalism and the Catholic Church. And the history of this campaign in Quebec can be traced not only to the postwar period but actually to the war period itself.

Says one author:

The period from the beginning of the war to the beginning of the 1950's is characterized by a unanimous refusal to let women work outside the home, especially married women. This negative attitude is rooted in French-Canadian family traditions and in Christian morality which had sanctified the women in her role of “queen of the home.” Thus it is in the name of the preservation of the most deeply rooted moral and family values in the Quebecois mentality that the most diverse social groups engaged in a common struggle against the general entry of women into the work force. (Francine Barry, *Le travail de la femme au Québec: l'évolution de 1940 à 1970*, Montreal 1977, p. 43 — our translation)

The aristocracy of labour in Quebec was particularly hostile to the idea that women should leave the home to participate in the workforce. Catholic labour organizations took unanimously strong positions supporting the woman's role “assigned by God” (ibid., p. 44). The Church stated: “...the supreme national requirement is to respect, to protect and to defend the very cell of the nation: the family.” (Gonzalve Poulin, “Rendre les mères au foyer”, *Relations*, no. 21, September 1942, p. 238, our translation), and with this position the Church took the maintenance of the woman's role at home to be the very gage of the continuity of the Quebecois nation. The Saint-Jean Baptiste society took the position that taking the woman away from her role in the home and the family by sending her to work would sap the very

basis of French-Canadian society and provoke its slow disintegration. (*Le Devoir*, April 16, 1942, p. 5) It was during the war effort against fascism that many of these ideas were struggled for with great effort by these forces of reaction. The goal was to keep women at home in order to prevent them from pouring into the workplace to support the war effort to defeat German, Italian and Japanese fascism, and to ally with the Soviet Union in this great and victorious effort.

The Catholic Church in Quebec always opposed the great effort of progressive elements throughout the world, led by the glorious socialist camp with Comrade Stalin at its head, to defeat world fascism. Dimitroff showed the close link between world Catholicism and world fascism when he said:

The fascist movement was continuing to develop absolutely freely, with the active support of monopoly capital, the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie, the general staff of the French army and the reactionary leaders of the Catholic church — that stronghold of all reaction... The Catholic Church (is) one of the most important strongholds of French fascism. (Georgi Dimitroff, *The United Front*, Proletarian Publishers, San Francisco, 1975, pp. 46-47)

The Catholic Church in Quebec was no exception to this. Engaging in secret alliances with world fascism, the Catholic Church spared no effort to sap the enthusiasm of the Quebecois masses for struggling to defeat fascism. To undermine the war effort and keep the Quebecois masses isolated from this great struggle of the world proletariat and the progressive forces of the world, the Catholic Church made deep appeals to the national sentiments of the Quebecois people. And, as fascism everywhere linked national sentiments with the most malicious male supremacist demagoguery to keep women at home, so did the Catholic Church in Quebec.

Thus, just at a time when women throughout the Western world were pouring into the factories to contribute to the war effort, just at the time when women were being allowed to leave the home in order to make this great social contribution, just at the time when even the Canadian federal government was going out of its way to provide daycare facilities to make this possible, the Catholic Church and Quebecois nationalism were battling bitterly to drag women back *in the name of the sanctity of the Quebecois nation*.

Wages for Housework in Quebec: A Church plot against Quebecois Women

It is in the context of this history that the “wages for housework” movement in Quebec finds its origins.

It should surprise no one to learn that the Parti Québécois has included a proposal for “wages for housework” in its party program. “Wages for Housework” and reactionary Quebecois nationalism have gone hand in hand for many years.

The origin of the “Wages for Housework” movement in Quebec is to be traced to a demand put forward by the Ligue ouvrière catholique (Catholic Workers’ League) in 1943. The LOC demanded that payments be made to women for staying home. The purpose of this was to ensure that women stayed out of the war effort, out of productive social labour, and chained to the stultifying drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery.

Their demand was designed to give feed to the worldwide plot of the Catholic Church to sabotage the struggle of the peoples against fascism. As a part of this, it was a plot to maintain the Church’s concept of the “sanctity of the Quebecois nation,” a concept which demanded the oppression of women and the maintenance of her role as “assigned by God.”

To accomplish these goals, the LOC did its part to sabotage the war effort and keep women at home.

Today’s Feminists Continue in the Clerical Tradition

The feminists who arose the evening of March 1, 1978, chanting “Quebecois women, arise!” with clenched fists, were carrying on in the infamous tradition of reactionary clerical-bourgeois culture which has sought to drag the Quebecois nation back into the fog and mist of reaction, isolation and oppression.

What was the political line of these feminists?

(1) The oppression of women does not come from the private ownership of the means of production and cannot be abolished by destroying the private ownership of the means of production. The oppression of women comes from the very nature of sexual differentiation of the female body and cannot be changed by any violent upheaval in the social system. In other words, the role of the woman as an inferior to man is “assigned by God.”

(2) Women should be paid to stay home and do housework. The

bourgeoisie should drag out every tool, tax the working class to any degree necessary, to discourage women from entering the wider world of political, social and economic life, particularly now that the struggle for socialism is being taken up by increasing numbers of working people. For these feminists, accomplishing this task is even more urgent now than it was during the war effort against fascism.



(3) The isolation of women, as manifested in a politically autonomous women's movement, is pivotal to the survival of the Quebecois nation. The best way to maintain this isolation of women from men is to keep women at home, paid for doing the housework, for it is this isolation which will create the social basis for the autonomous women's movement. In other words, preserve the Quebecois nation by "sending the mothers back home." The massive participation of women in political and social life, in the struggle to build the party, in the struggle for socialism, would threaten the isolation of the Quebecois nation such as the clerical-bourgeois culture in Quebec has plotted against the masses of oppressed Quebecois, and this threat is a mortal danger to the Quebecois feminists.

The Quebecois feminists are the tool and the agent of the reactionary clerical-bourgeois culture of the Quebecois bourgeoisie. They are the agent of those reactionary forces in Quebec which are struggling to drag the Quebecois masses back into the fog and mist of rural Church culture, completely vulnerable to the rapacious designs of U.S. imperialism, ignorant of the wider issues of the world at large and weaponless in the struggle to overthrow the Canadian bourgeoi-

sie and American imperialism in Canada. The Quebecois feminists are using women as a tool in their struggle to realize the victory of reaction in Quebec, by urging them to stay home and separate themselves from the life-and-death struggles which confront humankind. The Quebecois feminists are using women to maintain the Catholic ideal that the Quebecois nation is best maintained when women stay home and fulfill their “natural feminine roles,” perpetuating the antagonism between the sexes.

That is what the feminists meant when they stood with clenched fists screaming, “Quebecois women, arise!” That is what they meant when they stomped and booed the communists who rose to speak to urge that women take their places in the wider world, as equals besides men. That is what they meant when they stomped on and destroyed communist literature on Saturday, March 4, even to the point of attacking communist women physically, in the finest of fascist traditions. The feminists in Quebec are one more tool of anticommunism and reaction, a “left” wing of the PQ and the agents of U.S. imperialism and the Quebecois Catholic Church. What they have to offer has nothing whatsoever in common with the liberation of women.

TO LIBERATE QUEBECOIS WOMEN:

JOIN IN THE STRUGGLE OF THE CANADIAN WORKING
CLASS TO OVERTHROW THE CANADIAN BOURGEOISIE
AND AMERICAN IMPERIALISM!

TAKE UP THE STRUGGLE FOR THE PARTY!



Native Women Oppose the Separation of Quebec

Proletarian Revolution, Vol. 1, No. 4, August 1, 1978

The Association of Native Women of Quebec — a section of the National Association of Native Women — has written a letter to Prime Minister Levesque demanding that the province of Quebec not separate from the rest of Canada.

Representing Native women throughout Quebec — whether Status Indians, non-Status Indians, Metis, or Inuit — the Quebec Association stated that the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada would only aggravate the situation of Native people in Quebec by preventing them from uniting with other Native people in Canada in order to realize their demands.

The letter stated:

Since the arrival of... the Europeans, you have not stopped dividing our land, and you are still trying to divide our people. You formed the United States and Canada. In Canada, you divide our lands into 10 provinces and 2 territories. Now, you want to make another division. As Native women of Quebec, we totally reject your initiative. We do not accept that the Europeans... should make such a decision about our lands. After you established yourselves on our lands, you then succeeded in pulling off the worst real estate swindle in all of the history of humanity.

...We want to be eternal in our country. Taking our land away from us is like taking our life away. Let us live.

We have spoken.

The National Association of Native Women is a democratic movement whose unity cuts across status and tribal barriers and includes a wide variety of tribes. In Quebec alone, it includes Abénakis, Attimatek, Algonkin, Cree, Inuit, Mic-mac, Huron, Mohawk, Montagnais and Neskapis women.

This association — and the letter which it has written — is further evidence that tribal differences are disintegrating throughout Native Canada as Native people are uniting in a great historical movement to achieve their just demands and their national unity, in a great historical movement against imperialist pillage and exploitation.

The letter from the Native women showed a deep awareness that the reactionary PQ separatist plot is, as far as Native people in northern Quebec are concerned, only one more act which is designed to deepen the colonial dependence and enslavement of northern Quebec to the imperialist masters. It showed a deep awareness that only in the broadest possible unity against imperialist pillage and rape can the Native people win their liberation and their independence from colonialism and exploitation.

The PQ, for its part, has lost no time in planning "joint ventures" with various mining corporations to deepen the rape of northern Quebec. The mining companies which are participating in these "joint ventures" include Noranda Mines, an English Canadian corporation, and Falconbridge, a huge monopoly of US imperialism. This is further testimony to the fact that reactionary Quebecois separatism has nothing to do with the protection of the just democratic demands of the Quebecois nation but is a plot to increase the national oppression of both Native Canada and the Quebecois nation, by subjugating both further to finance capital.

By seeking to divide Native people from each other, through the separation of Quebec, the PQ is only proving once more that it stands in opposition to the just aspirations of the peoples and that it exists to serve imperialism and prevent revolution.

The division of Native people in northern Quebec from the rest of Native Canada would visit a particularly deep isolation upon them because of the language barrier. Already several Native groups, notably the Inuit, in northern Quebec have protested bitterly against the reactionary PQ language legislation because they have already struggled at length to adapt themselves to the demand to learn English. The PQ language legislation would force them now to acquire a third language. Often Native young adults in the north leave home temporarily to go to school or acquire jobs in other provinces because they cannot speak French. If the province of Quebec were to separate into a distinct country, the political barrier which would separate these young people from their homes would be nearly insurmountable.

Just Demands of Women Strengthen the Revolutionary Struggle

The Quebec Association has also raised a number of just demands which address themselves to the specific problems of Native women. These demands illustrate that, to realize its reactionary and

malicious plot of genocide against the Native people, the imperialist bourgeoisie takes a particular glee in exploiting the vulnerable position of women and in perpetrating the specific oppression of women.

For example, the imperialist bourgeoisie sterilizes Native women without their consent and without their knowledge, in order to keep a reign on the Native population, which is the fastest-growing population in Canada. In their revolutionary struggle the Native people will find strength in their numbers, and so to stem the tide of revolution in the north the bourgeoisie must directly attack Native women. This is also done indirectly by the deliberately poor health care and health conditions which continue in the North, because the widespread alcoholism, tuberculosis, malnutrition and venereal disease are particularly dangerous from the point of view of childbirth, infant mortality and infant diseases. All of these forms of oppression have been raised as grievances by the Association of Native Women of Quebec, as has been the lack of adequate family planning programs and the particular problem of the adoption of Native children. The Association has been struggling to ensure that a Status Indian child is adopted by Status Indian parents as first choice, and, if this is not possible, that such a child adopted by non-Indian parents is able to retain his/her full rights as a Status Indian. This is a great problem in a community where wretched poverty forces many women to give up their own children because they know that these children cannot survive in health and decency. This problem is gleefully used by the imperialist bourgeoisie to deprive ever more children of their Indian status and to seek to assimilate them and destroy the Native people as a nation.

Colonialist and imperialist invasion of Native Canada have also visited a particularly intense form of oppression upon Native women because it overturned the centrally important position which women had occupied in primitive Native society. Because the colonizers made the gratuitous assumption that the male was everywhere supreme, or should be, they always related to the society through the men and gave men the "important" positions where such positions were to be given. This was part of the shattering upheaval of the entire social structure which Native people suffered as colonialism and imperialism penetrated and destroyed their way of life.

The statement of the Quebec Association stands as testimony both to the growing unity of the Native nation in Canada and to the progressive role which the struggles of women can play in reinforcing the just revolutionary struggles of the masses. Because they are

an oppressed sex within an oppressed nation, Native women feel the oppression of Native people as a whole with a particular intensity and suffering. When they band together to demand their just democratic rights, they are making demands which are not only for themselves as women but also for themselves as Native people, and for the masses of Native people as a whole — men and women — who suffer under the cruel yoke of colonialism and imperialism.

Whereas bourgeois feminism seeks to pit the masses of women against the masses of men, splitting the revolutionary unity of the sexes, diverting the attention of the masses of women from their main enemy, and sowing anti-communism, the just democratic demands of women can only serve to reinforce and deepen the active revolutionary movement of the masses, and to deepen the understanding which all of the masses can gain of the nature of their oppression. Wherever there is oppression, the women are doubly oppressed; for that reason, it is impossible to uproot all oppression until the specific oppression of women is uprooted. That is why there can be no real revolutionary movement without the active participation of the women.

Soviet Social-Imperialism: Malicious Agent of the Dual Oppression of Women

***Proletarian Revolution*, Vol. 1, No. 6, October 1, 1978**

Twenty-five years ago, socialist Russia stood as a beacon of inspiration to the international proletariat and all of the oppressed peoples of the world. Under the glorious leadership of Comrade Stalin, she had proved that the socialist system was superior to the capitalist system, that it could transform a country from a backward feudal autocracy into a strong industrialized country which could vanquish the fascism of Adolf Hider. Whereas the United States, Great Britain and France have since claimed that it was the armies of the Western countries which laid world fascism in its grave, the peoples of the world know the truth that it was the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Stalin and with the limitless devotion and determination of the Soviet people, which stopped the fascist powers from subjugating the peoples of the globe under its ruthless terror.

Socialist Russia was a beacon of inspiration to the peoples, it beckoned the masses to make revolution in their own countries, it showed the way — as socialist Albania does today — to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and to the greatest freedom and democracy for the masses of people. Because its shining example beckoned the masses to make revolution, the bourgeoisie everywhere has gone to the greatest efforts to slander and lie about socialist Russia. We are told that socialism in Russia was a fluke, that the Bolshevik Revolution came about as a series of coincidences, that it did not truly have the support of the masses; we are told that the masses of people have been forced to labour as slaves and have been forced into silence; we are told that Stalin persecuted national minorities and oppressed nations; we are told that women were chained to a particularly harsh and onerous existence. But the bourgeoisie is merely looking in the mirror when it says these things. These things are excellent descriptions of life in the capitalist countries. But life under socialism is the exact opposite of these tales of horror.

Today capitalism has been fully restored in the Soviet Union. The revisionist clique, which seized state power after the death of

Comrade Stalin, now derives power and luxury on the backs of an increasingly immiserated and increasingly suffering proletariat. The gap between rich and poor widens every day, people stand in unemployment lines while in other parts of the Soviet Union there is a labour shortage; prices are inflating and production is in chaos. Profit is in command and the managers fire whom they please, all the while making the act of going out on strike a punishable offense. Nations are denied their rights as nations, minorities are especially exploited, and the spiraling military buildup — giving the Soviet Union fleets and troops in many parts of the world — brings no benefit to the masses but only throws them further under the yoke of capital. In the meanwhile, the counter-revolutionary revisionist clique lives in luxury. Strip away the rhetoric about the “party of the whole people” and “socialism is giving way to communism,” and the truth is revealed: it is a capitalist, imperialist society in all of its essentials.

What does all of these mean in terms of the oppression of women?

Social-Imperialism: The Restoration of the Oppression of Women

In the socialist Russia of Joseph Stalin, women were drawn into the workplace in unprecedented numbers. As an integral part of the effort of the party to draw women out of their peasant backwardness and conservatism and into the struggle to build socialism, women were constantly encouraged to embrace the collective farm movement as their own and to see in this movement the path to their own liberation as women, to their own equality with men. Stalin said:

As for the women collective farmers themselves, they must remember the power and significance of the collective farms for women; they must remember that only in the collective farm do they have the opportunity of becoming equal with men. Without collective farms — inequality; in collective farms — equal rights. Let our comrades, the women collective farmers, remember this and let them cherish the collective farm system as the apple of their eye. (in *The Woman Question*, NY: International Publishers, 1951, p. 87)

In the struggle to liberate women, Stalin placed great emphasis not only on the economic tasks of women but also on their political education and their assumption of positions of authority and leader-

ship in socialist construction. The Communist Party in socialist Russia saw the enormous importance of the political development of women in the overall construction of a classless society.

We must note as a pleasing fact and as an indication of the progress of culture in the rural districts the increased activity of the women collective farmers in social and organizational work. We know, for example, that about 6,000 women collective farmers are chairmen of collective farms, more than 60,000 are members of management boards of collective farms, 28,000 are group leaders, 100,000 are branch organizers, 9,000 are managers of collective farm dairies and 7,000 are tractor drivers. Needless to say, these figures are incomplete; but even these figures are sufficient to indicate the great progress of culture in the rural districts. This fact, comrades, is of tremendous significance. It is of tremendous significance because women represent half the population of our country; they represent a huge army of workers; and they are called upon to bring up our children, our future generation, that is to say, our future. That is why we must not permit this huge army of working people to linger in darkness and ignorance! That is why we must welcome the growing social activity of the working women and their promotion to leading posts as an indubitable indication of the growth of our culture. (Ibid., p. 85)

Our country has a population of nearly 140 million and no less than half are women, mainly working class and peasant women, backward, downtrodden, and with little political consciousness.

If our country has begun the construction of the new Soviet life in earnest, then surely it is clear that the women of this country, constituting half its population, would act as a drag on any advance if they remained backward, downtrodden, and politically undeveloped in the future also.

The woman worker stands shoulder to shoulder with the man worker. She works with him in the common task of building our industry. She can help the common cause if she is politically conscious and politically educated. But she can ruin the common cause if she is downtrodden and

backward, not, of course, as a result of her ill-will, but because of her backwardness.

The peasant woman stands shoulder to shoulder with the peasant man. She advances together with him the common cause of the development of our agriculture, its successes, and its flourishing.

She can make an enormous contribution in this cause if she frees herself of backwardness and ignorance. And the contrary is also the case; she could act as a brake on the whole cause if she remains a slave to ignorance in the future also.

Working class and peasant women are free citizens on an equal footing with working class and peasant men. The women elect our Soviets and our co-operatives and can be elected to these organs. Working class and peasant women, if they are politically literate, can improve our Soviets and co-operatives, strengthen and develop them. Working class and peasant women, if they are backward and ignorant, can weaken and undermine these organizations.

Finally, working class and peasant women are mothers who bring up our youth — the future of our country. They can cripple the spirit of a child or give us youth with a healthy spirit, capable of taking our country forward. All this depends on whether the woman and mother has sympathy for the Soviet system or whether she trails in the wake of the priest, the kulak, or the bourgeois.

That is why the political education of working class and peasant women is a task of primary importance, a most important task for real victory over the bourgeoisie today, when the workers and peasants have set about the building of a new life. (Ibid., pp. 64-65)

In addition to this, women were drawn into the workplace in the cities very rapidly and they took on new occupations and professions with great pride and enthusiasm. Barrier after barrier was broken as women entered jobs such as medicine, construction, and coal-mining. Their entry into the labour force was so massive that, between 1932 and 1937, 82% of the workers who were coming into the labour force were women. Between 1941 and 1950, when many men were fighting in the war effort, the figure jumped to 92%. By 1945, 55% of the

workers and employees in socialist Russia were women¹. No country in the world could boast of anything resembling this in terms of the struggle to provide economic independence to women, the struggle to provide the material basis for the complete liberation of women. The massive participation of women was so obvious, so impossible to hide, that the bourgeoisie had to resort to its malicious propaganda tricks such as tales about “manly, unfeminine, domineering” Soviet women in order to intimidate the world’s women from socialist revolution.



Women sorting bricks—the construction of the first great metallurgical complex at Magnitogorsk, the Urals. (May, 1931)

To facilitate the entry of women into the workplace, socialist Russia embarked on a huge effort to build nurseries, kindergartens, laundries, and dining facilities. In the short period of 1927 to 1932, the number of children attending kindergartens (caring for children from age three to age six) increased ten times — from 107,500 to 1,061,700!² Socialist Russia had many crucial tasks during this period to accomplish in terms of the overall industrialization of the economy, but the struggle to socialize housework was not neglected; on the contrary, it was an integral part of the construction of socialism itself. And, in addition to these things, Marxism-Leninism took great strides forward in socialist Russia as standards of proletarian morality and the socialist family were set. Such standards came about as the result of the determined struggles of millions of working and peasant

women against the various petty-bourgeois feminist tendencies which had gained popularity just after the Bolshevik Revolution. The feminists, in conspiracy with the bourgeoisie, wanted to ensure that women become available as sexual objects, to prove that they were “liberated” from the old ways and from patriarchy. It was because of the massive refusal of the woman of Russia to be sexually exploited, because of their determination to become productive workers and Communists rather than sexual objects, that proletarian morality became insisted upon. The proletarian family, based on the equality and the economic independence of the woman and on proletarian consciousness, was declared to be the “fighting unit for socialism.”

The USSR Today: “Femininity” Re-established

Today’s counter-revolutionary revisionist traitors in the Soviet leadership are using all of the tools and lies of the bourgeoisie to slander the great work of Comrade Stalin and to slander socialist Russia. Now, it appears, the economically productive women must stand on guard against the loss of her “femininity.” Women are now delicate things; they participate in beauty contests but must take care not to compete with men for jobs. And, in order to justify limiting the creation of childcare services, Soviet propaganda has dragged out all of the bourgeois lies about the necessity of the mother of young children to stay home. These lies are couched in the pseudo-psychology of the bourgeoisie which declares — particularly during postwar recessions and other times of surplus labour — that young children will die from lack of love if their mothers are holding jobs. States one Soviet writer: “It is necessary not to forget the moral-ethical significance of the spontaneous participation of mothers in the care and upbringing of their own children.”³ And another one chimes in: “Nurseries were a necessity in their own time, but now we are wealthy enough not to deprive a child of its mother’s affection.”⁴ In other words, under socialism the masses were supposedly starved and depraved, and women were *forced* to be independent, productive beings, so efforts were made towards the socialization of housework, but now that we are on the road to “true communism,” the bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy can afford to have household slaves and women can once again be trapped in the four walls of the home where they belong. “Now we are wealthy enough.” But this “we” obviously does not include the masses of Soviet women today, because, as the first writer confessed, the children who attend nurseries “are mainly from the

least prosperous families and from families where only the mother is present.”⁵ So maybe the revisionist propagandists and their friends are “now wealthy enough” to keep domestic slaves, but masses of Soviet women must still work, must still search for child care in a country where it is increasingly difficult to find adequate childcare, and must at the same time go to every effort to preserve their “femininity” while in the workplace or on the unemployment line.

In two outlying Soviet districts — Novosibirsk Oblast and Krasnoyarsk Krai — 75% of the women from 16 to 35 were found to be staying home because they could not find adequate placement for their preschool children. 46.1% of Lithuanian women who sought part-time work were quoted as saying that they were working part time instead of full time because of the burdens of childcare. Today, in Moscow, nurseries have been turning away children under the age of one.⁶ This is a great saving for the bourgeoisie, which in any case underpays its childcare workers and must cope with a disgustingly high turnover in the area of childcare.⁷ And the medical profession has stepped into line to endorse the bourgeois psychology of the new bourgeoisie and to plant sentiments of guilt and confusion into the minds and hearts of working mothers. “A fine child, very healthy — it’s a pity he’s in a nursery,” is a common remark of Soviet pediatricians.⁸ The plot of the Soviet revisionists is clear: to pit the sexuality of women against their desire and right to be active, productive, participating human beings, thereby confusing them, disorienting them, and weakening them in their struggle for socialist revolution.

Does this mean that the Soviet revisionists are striving to exclude the masses of women from the labour force? Not at all. Like in all imperialist countries, the number of women who are part of the labour force (employed *or unemployed*) has been increasing in the last twenty years in the USSR.* Imperialism as a system has drawn women out of the home, and off of the farm, and into the workplace in steadily increasing numbers. Soviet Russia is no exception to the

* A person who is actively looking for work is considered a part of the labour force even though (s)he is unemployed. When people give up looking for work, as in the case of a woman who returns home and resigns herself to being a housewife for a while, she is not considered a part of the labour force. Thus the labour-force participation of women can increase while the unemployment of women is also increasing. This is a very widespread situation in the capitalist countries, in fact.

objective laws of the imperialist system.

But the cult of “femininity” in the Soviet Union, as in all imperialist countries, serves very specific purposes. By propagating the idea that women belong in the home, waiting on their husbands and tending their children, the bourgeoisie is carefully teaching women that they have a proper “place.” The oppression of the proletariat as a class forces the masses of women to seek work. But by teaching that the role of women in the workplace takes back seat to their role in the home, the bourgeoisie is able to justify the underemployment of women, in part-time work and cottage industry, both of which have been used by the bourgeoisie throughout the world to intensify the exploitation of women and both of which are now being formally encouraged by the Soviet state.⁹ It is able to justify the high unemployment rates of women, who can always “return home” when they are laid off, so that their unemployment becomes less visible in the eyes of the masses (since their role at home is supposedly so noble). It is able to justify why women are used for the cheapest labour, since their paycheques are supposedly less important than their husband’s paycheques. It is able to justify why women are not competing for the same jobs as men have — what an “unfeminine” thing to do! It is able to justify the economic dependence of the woman upon the man — 73% of the women in an Odessa sample were paid less than their husbands, and in only 7% of the cases were they paid more.¹⁰ It is able to perpetuate these various myths despite the reality that one out of three Soviet marriages ends in divorce and many, many women are the sole supporters of families.

In addition, the Soviet revisionists are now shedding crocodile tears that women in the workplace have less “ambition” than do the men. The problem, it seems, in this society which is “on the verge of communism,” is that women by their very nature are somewhat distracted by their household tasks. When they are at work they are therefore less capable of concentrating on mind-taxing and creative work. So the new bourgeoisie “accommodates” to this psychological “weakness” of women by giving them the most menial and repetitive tasks and by closing off jobs which require long training and mental concentration. Explain two Soviet apologists:

Women, especially if they are mothers, strive continuously to spend more non-work time fulfilling their many domestic responsibilities. Moreover, many female workers stated that when at work they cannot put the house and chil-

dren out of their mind. The women value jobs requiring simple automatic responses that can be performed adequately despite these mental distractions.¹¹

And so, the new bourgeoisie, ever compassionate, ever compelled by its magnanimous heart and concern for the people to satisfy the stated desires of the masses, “obliges” the “natural wishes” of working women by providing them with the menial positions which they so deeply crave!

The Soviet bourgeoisie is not above using the basest and most vulgar methods to propagate its bourgeois ideology of male supremacy in order to achieve its reactionary aims. Thus in the Soviet press can be read “letters to the editor” stating views which the imposters and pretenders dare not express directly, views which would never have been tolerated for a minute in the socialist Russia of Comrade Stalin:

“Everybody agrees that it is necessary to liberate women from hard physical labour,” Comrade Nebitov from Gatchina wrote, “but why separate a woman from the kitchen? Why deprive her of additional opportunities to manifest love and consideration for her husband? If only you could see with what tender attention my wife follows the trajectory of my first probing spoon from a plate of soup!”

...Here is the view of Comrade Vanyushin from Kaluga province: “...Free a woman from the kitchen and you give her freedom to be a silly hen. Who needs such a woman? Woman is supposed to adorn the family hearth, just as flowers adorn the meadows.”¹²

Women: A Tool of Cheap Labour in the USSR

One of the key tools which is found in all imperialist countries to ensure the oppression of women is the segregation of the workplace. Certain jobs are “women’s work.” This includes, first of all, factory work which is the most menial and labour-intensive — such as garment work. 94.6% of Soviet garment workers are women.¹³ In the Soviet Union the same industry will divide its labour by sex such that the women are doing the unmechanized work and the men are doing the mechanized work.¹⁴ Even though the unmechanized work often involves strenuous labour and much lifting of heavy objects, it is paid much less because it is more labour-intensive.

Then there are other sectors which are reserved for women, such

as the clerical sector. 99% of typists and stenographers in the Soviet Union are women.¹⁵ The huge expansion of the clerical sector, in response to the needs of the weighty Soviet bureaucracy, has paralleled the huge expansion of the clerical sector in all imperialist countries, as various capitalists squabble over their profits and need much paper work to carry on their squabbling. It is women who pour into the clerical sector, and the clerical sector is invariably paid poorly. Clerical workers, moreover, are forced to intermediate between the bourgeoisie and the public, and thus bear the brunt of the public's anger when the anger should actually be directed to the bourgeoisie itself. Clerical workers are expected to respond to the public with charm and "femininity" allegedly appropriate to the character of women, whose minds, of course, are supposedly fixed upon their problems of housework and childcare (problems which the bourgeoisie makes sure do not go away).

Other sectors which employ women in the Soviet Union include the service sector. We have already shown that childcare is a job which is poorly paid and has a high rate of turnover. The result is that once again the childcare system is not actually satisfying the needs of Soviet working women, and that childcare workers are forced to bear the brunt of the anger of other working mothers at the intolerable situations. Women in the cities have also poured into waitressing and sales work, as they have in all of the imperialist countries. 94.6% of all public dining workers are women.¹⁶ Once again it is these women who must confront the public in the satisfaction of everyday needs, and it is they who must bear the brunt of the anger when the bourgeoisie cuts funds for such services and the needs of the people are not satisfied. Hospital workers are also overwhelmingly female. Women who work at laundries and food stores — and these are mostly older women, paid as poorly as could be and the victims of speed-ups and overwork — are also made to suffer in this regard. According to Soviet statistics themselves, these services expanded only 66% in the period 1960-1965, whereas the need for them expanded 197%.¹⁷ The practical reality of this discrepancy has been long lines, short tempers and exasperation. It is the women behind the counters who must bear the brunt of the anger of the working women who stand in line in front of the counters. Friction between different sections of the female proletariat is thus created while the new bourgeoisie is laughing all the way to the state bank.



Moscow, 1941. Volunteers on the way to the front.

In the meanwhile, sectors of the economy where wages have risen relatively rapidly — transportation, construction, and factory work — have been gradually and systematically excluding women. More high-level sectors where women have been employed, such as science and teaching, have seen their wages sink because many women are employed in them.¹⁸ And Soviet women are deeply loaded down with the double burden: time-budget studies show that when they return home at night they devote an enormous amount of time to petty housework, particularly its most menial tasks.

The new czars in the Kremlin prove every day that the plight they have in store for Soviet women is no different, in its essence, than the plight of oppressed women in all imperialist countries. Poor childcare facilities and other services, poorly paid menial work, high unemployment concealed by the “woman’s role in the home,” segregation of the workplace to keep women from competing for more highly paid men’s jobs, and the active propagation of male chauvinism — all are tools to maintain women in the weakest and most vulnerable sections of the labour force.

The existence of capitalism in any country means the existence of the inevitable laws of the capitalist system. One of these inevitable laws is the dual oppression of women. Is it any surprise that there is a new manufacture of colourful flowered skirts for women in China,

so that women can once again decorate the sidewalks with their “femininity”? Is it any surprise that “man-in-the-street” interviews coming out of China now express delight that Chinese women are now “allowed” to be “freer” in their attitudes towards sexual morality? The strivings of the Chinese revisionist clique to transform China into a superpower will not be able to be separated from its designs on the masses of Chinese women, because the ability of imperialism to carry out its plunder and exploitation of the world rests on its ability to subjugate its own proletariat and to ensure that the masses of women in its own country are saddled with the double burden of domestic slavery and capitalist misery.

There is only one avenue for Soviet women to once again re-establish their equality, their dignity, their full participation in the construction of a humane society, their liberation: socialist revolution. The USSR is an imperialist superpower and no amount of socialist rhetoric can transform the inevitable laws of imperialism — including the double oppression of women. The path to the liberation of women in the USSR is the same as the path in Canada and every other imperialist country: the overthrow of the imperialist bourgeoisie by violence and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to build a socialist society which alone can ensure the equality and the liberation of the masses of toiling women.

Notes:

1. Michael Paul Sacks. *Women's Work in Soviet Russia*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976, p. 74.
2. Ibid., p. 43.
3. P. P. Litvyakov. *Demograficheskie problemy zanyatosti*, Moscow, 1969, p. 97.
4. B. Uralnis, “Babushka v sem'e,” *Literaturnaya gazeta*, March 3, 1971, p. 11.
5. Litvyakov, p. 97.
6. Sacks, p. 45
7. A. Pazina, “Serious Talk About the Little Ones,” *Pravda*, December 14, 1974, as translated in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 1975, 26 (50), p. 24
8. “Ovchinnikova, “Problems of Upbringing: Children from Birth to Three,” *Izvestiya*, April 28, 1973 as translated in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 1973, 25 (17), pp. 11-12.
9. Sacks, p. 53, 78.
10. V. B. Mikhailyuk, *Ispol'zovanie zhenskovo truda v narodnom khozyaistve*, Moscow, 1970, p. 68.

11. A. T. Kharchev and S.I. Golod, "Proizvodstvennaya rabota zhenshchin i sem'ya," in *Sotsialnye problemy trudai proizvodstva*, ed. G. V. Osipov and Y. Shchepan'sky, Moscow, 1969, p. 442.

12. Quoted in L. Kuznetsova, "Whose Job is the Kitchen," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, July 12, 1967, p. 12, as translated in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 1969, 19 (33), p. 7.

13. Sacks, p. 82.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

15. *Ibid.*, 97.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

Women in “Communist” China

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We are now engaged in a struggle to build an authentic communist party in Canada, a party which will be based on a clear line of demarcation from all forms of revisionism and counter-revolution, including Chinese revisionism. It is in the struggle against revisionism that a correct program for revolution will be elaborated, a program which will define the tasks of the Canadian proletariat in its historic mission to build a socialist society in Canada on the ruins of bourgeois rule.

In the struggle against Chinese revisionism, many questions must be posed, because the vacillations and inconsistency in the Chinese Communist Party have sown great confusion in the minds of workers and progressive people throughout the world. Nowhere is this clearer than when we examine the question of women in China. The reason for this is that the masses of women in China have made great gains out of the pit of feudal misery and the most abject kinds of human bondage. Before the anti-imperialist revolution, countless Chinese families were forced to sell their daughters into prostitution so that the rest of the family could pay the rent to the bloodthirsty landlord. Countless women were crippled from foot-binding, countless infant girls were killed to protect Confucian family norms, countless women lived daily nightmares in pre-arranged marriages which they could only escape through suicide. The anti-imperialist victory ushered in a period where many independent and militant women bravely sacrificed their lives and dedicated all their strength towards the liberation of the Chinese people, and their heroic and determined struggles have brought about great gains for millions of women in China.

It is precisely for these reasons that the agents of Chinese revisionism throughout the world have been able to sow such great confusion in the minds of millions on the question of the emancipation of women in China. They have used the great gains and great struggles brought about by the masses of Chinese women to cover for the vacillations, the hesitations, the inconsistency and the anti-communism in the Chinese leadership itself. They have therefore sought to represent as authentically socialist a regime which has never been authentically socialist. They have sought to sow confusion in the minds of the masses by representing as Marxist-Leninist a leadership

which was factionalized, marked by “two-line struggles” within the Party and demanded the resolution of antagonistic contradictions in the spirit of “unity-criticism-unity.” In short, they have sought to capitalize upon the authentic efforts and successes of the masses to spread anti-communism, defend imperialist reaction throughout the world and sabotage the building of authentic Marxist-Leninist parties in various countries.

To struggle for a correct political line on the question of women in Canada, we must analyze and understand the nature of Chinese revisionism on the question of women.

The Two Views of Women

In the struggle for liberation from Japanese imperialism, Chinese women poured great self-sacrifice and effort into the cause of the fatherland. Women took over many aspects of agricultural production while men marched on the front, and many women themselves were active in the liberation army, as the famous Chinese opera *The Red Detachment of Women* so vividly depicts. However, there is another Chinese opera, *The White-Haired Girl*, which depicts another side of the story. In *The White-Haired Girl* the soldiers are depicted as arriving to liberate a Chinese village and the woman are shown playing the traditional feminine role of offering the soldiers food and drink in celebration and gratitude. These two views of women are reflective of the “two-line struggles,” or in reality the many-line struggles, which the factionalized Party was waging throughout its history in China. Just as revolutionaries contended with revisionists, the revolutionary line on women — as active participants in the liberation army of the proletariat — conflicted bitterly with the revisionist line on women which tried to drive them back into traditional domesticity. This conflict continued through to the illegal seizure of state power by the current leadership in China, as now *The Red Detachment of Women* has receded into the background and *The White-Haired Girl* is receiving international promotion as a great example of art suppressed by the so-called “Gang of Four.”

The line of the Party on women went through twists and turns and seesaws for years. For example, the resolutions on women issued by the Central Committee in February 1943 laid its greatest emphasis on “building up the economy of the base areas.”¹ The purpose of this was to “give women the material conditions which will enable them gradually to escape from feudal oppression. This is the essence of

village women's special interest in all mass work...." Production was seen as the key to the liberation of women. In this document is also to be found the seeds of the "production co-operatives and all forms of production (e.g., weaving etc.) as ways of organizing women." Later these seeds were to flower into forms of organization in rural areas which organized housewives on a separate basis apart from the general planning of the social economy as a whole. Throughout this period the principal emphasis for women was their participation in production, and the task of organizing an economy such that women's burden at home would be lightened was not seen in the proper light. The building of nurseries was seen as a task "in order to assist with their special difficulties."² We shall see later that this attitude towards the socialization of housework was perpetuated far beyond the Cultural Revolution, that is, that the regime was doing women a favour by "assisting" them with their "special difficulties" rather than taking leadership in the large-scale socialization of the domestic economy as an indispensable characteristic of a socialist regime.

In the 1950's, after the great steps forward brought about by the new Marriage Law, the Party began to place great emphasis on the contributions women could make towards building the new China through their role as housewives. The women who could not get jobs in the cities were organized into dependants' associations which defined its members in terms of the identity of their husbands. Their purpose was to inculcate these women with an understanding of the role which they played in providing a harmonious home atmosphere so that the men could do their best possible work as communist cadre. At the second congress of the All-China Democratic Women's Federation in 1953, great stress was laid upon the fact that no woman should ever be "forced" to take a job outside the home.

In 1955 the Party even descended so low into the pit of male chauvinism that it launched a "clothes reform" campaign. The slogan was "Let's be pretty." Women were urged to wear prettier clothes, flowered rather than plain cloth, skirts or dresses rather than trousers, and even to put on make-up. The official women's magazine began to feature regular fashion articles. Women were seen principally as nurturing and decorative. The Party changed its mind on this score a year later because the decoration of women was in obvious contrast to the campaign for "household thrift." In the third congress of the Women's Federation, held in 1957, the slogan was put forward:

“Build Up the Country Economically, Manage the Household Thriftily, Struggle for Socialist Construction.” The report stated: “Thrifty household management is of great and basic importance to the cause of our socialist construction. The family is a microcosm of society, all workers who are taking part in socialist construction live in families. If the family is well run those of its members who are taking part in socialist construction don’t ‘look back over their shoulders,’ but devote themselves wholeheartedly to raising production; if the house is badly run this will influence their production and thus the fulfilment of the state and cooperatives’ plans to raise output. A very large proportion of the articles needed in daily life produced in our country is consumed within the family and the degree of economy practised by families has a great influence on the national supply of consumer resources.... Thus thrifty household management can greatly promote an increase in the national production and can further the national, collective, and family interests.”³

The Party went on an avid pro-housework campaign stressing “wu hao” — five things to be done well — in which the thrift and hard work of housewives were raised into the highest of revolutionary virtues. Sometimes articles in the women’s journal resembled the defeatism propagated by *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Chatelaine*, such as the one entitled “What Should You Do When You Can’t Manage a Job on Top of the Housework?”⁴ The goals of this period were clear: build up production and, at the same time, whip up the enthusiasm [for domestic slavery, i.e., to crush the women of China under a double burden.

It is worth mentioning that the 1957 slogan, “Build Up the Country Economically, Manage the Household Thriftily, Struggle for Socialist Construction” comes from a speech by Mao Tse-tung in 1957 in which he stated that China relied particularly on women’s organizations to “manage the household thriftily.”

The Great Leap Forward (1958-59) attempted to throw overboard many of these backward ideas that were prevalent about the proper place of women. Not only were women mobilized massively for production, but there was also a great effort to provide dispensaries, daycares, laundries and communal kitchens. Women were greatly relieved of many domestic burdens during this period, although there was a widespread sense of discontent about the communal kitchens, as many people sought the privacy of the family meal.

The Great Leap Forward was brief and ended in failure. It was

not based on a long-term program carefully planned by the Chinese Party to build a socialist economy and work for the full emancipation of women, but was a brief display of energy that preluded a long period of reaction during which the forces of Liu Chao-shi and Teng Siao-ping unleashed their counter-revolutionary venom virtually unhindered. Once again, the place of women was considered as having to be in the home, even though “a hundred flowers were allowed to bloom” on this fundamental question of Marxist principle. T'oung Pien, the publisher of *China's Women*, published the following articles during this period: “For women, working in companies is like flying kites under the bed,” “Women live to raise children,” “Women should do more domestic work.”⁵

T'oung Pien was of the opinion that “happiness is a good material life” and that “children, a husband and a beautiful little family, that is happiness”. There was a lot of confusion and verbiage that “women should devote themselves to their husbands,” an idea borrowed from the dusty works of Confucius in order to keep women away from participating in the active political life of society.

During the Cultural Revolution, the struggle against Liu Chao-chi's ideas on the question of women was undertaken, calling on women to participate not only in production but also in active political life in order to defeat the forces of reaction. During this period, the venomous work of Liu Chao-chi and his clique was largely exposed to women, whose political voice had been suppressed for years because of the vacillations and factionalization of the Chinese “communist” party. This period was the most progressive and “radical” in Chinese history, from the point of view of the struggle for women's emancipation. Furious attacks were made on the reactionary ideas of “domestic bliss,” and the question of women was regarded as a question of class rather than as a question of sentiment or a question posed “from the point of view of women.” Love was seen as having to be based on a common struggle and a common political commitment. To show how confused even this very progressive period was, we need only look at the fact that women were advised: “It should no longer be a question of who is supposed to]” speak and who is sup-

* The page with the text in square brackets, [], p. 208 in the original edition, was omitted in the English edition. Although this could have been a simple formatting error, it could also be that the B.U.'s position, particularly on the Cultural Revolution, had changed by the time

posed to obey in the family, but a matter of whose words are in line with Mao Tse-tung Thought “⁶ Since, as we have seen, “Mao Tse-tung Thought” on the question of women included the dictum, “manage the household thriftily,” it should not surprise us that the most radical idea to come out of the Cultural Revolution on the subject of housework was that men should “help in the household chores.” It was not until 1973 that the formulation of “sharing the household work” appeared in a *People’s Daily* editorial,⁷ but this is a relatively isolated statement and did not set a new thrust of policy for the decade. “Mao Tse-tung Thought” on women apparently did not include the Leninist line that there can be no emancipation of women without the socialization of housework. In that 1973 editorial, women continue to be seen as peculiar creatures with “special difficulties” who need “assistance”: “Attention should be paid to women’s specific characteristics and to showing concern for and solving their special difficulties.”⁸ And millions of women in the countryside continued to receive lower pay than men because they had to spend more time at home doing household chores and were therefore able to accumulate fewer work-points in their agricultural work.

The picture which we have drawn of women in China, up to the illegal seizure of state power by the most reactionary wing of the Party in 1976, is one which finds much echo and parallel throughout the capitalist world. When women were needed in production, great campaigns were launched to whip up their participation in social labour; when jobs were scarce, women became “prettier” and better at “household management.” And, although many great strides were made in the area of inexpensive restaurants, day care centres, laundries and the like, the socialization of housework was never the political line of the Chinese Communist Party. Thus, while it is impossible to deny the great gains which the masses of Chinese women have made to extricate themselves from illiteracy, starvation and feudal bondage, it is also impossible to assert that the Chinese Communist Party has carried a communist line on the question of women.

Feminists and Trotskyites Pursue Their Counter-Revolutionary Aims

In their frantic efforts to propagate anti-communism and to spew

this was printed. The text here was translated from the French edition – *transcriber’s note*.

their counter-revolutionary venom, feminists and Trotskyites have for years tried to capitalize on the errors and the failures of the Chinese Communist Party in the struggle to liberate women. Precisely because China called itself socialist and the Party claimed to have a communist line on the question of women, the feminists and the Trotskyites have been able to ride their anti-communism and to confuse the masses for their own petty-bourgeois gain.

For example, Trotskyites often pointed to the vacillations in the leadership of the Party on the question of women. But Trotskyites are masters of the art of factionalization; for every ten Trotskyites in the world, there are twelve factions. Thus, instead of using the Chinese Communist Party as an outstanding example of the tragedy of not adhering to a single Marxist-Leninist line within the Party, the Trotskyites somehow try to point to the factionalization of the Chinese Party as an excuse to justify their own adherence to factions as a matter of principle.

Feminists point to the fact that there are occupations which are still exclusively female or almost exclusively female in China, or to the fact that there are very few women in the upper hierarchies of Chinese leadership. But when they present their analysis as to why these failures are true, they will explain that it is because the women in China did not achieve their own independent control of the army in order to turn the anti-imperialist struggle into a sex war. Liberal sympathizers of China are then able to reply: "But, in the realities of the real world, if the Chinese Revolution had had to wait for women to achieve the leading military role... Chinese women might still be forced to solve their problems by jumping down wells."⁹ A false debate is set up between liberal academics and feminists, a debate which does nothing to clarify the differences between the real gains achieved by Chinese women and the failure of the Party to lead women in a true struggle for socialist revolution.

Feminists and Trotskyites particularly like to use the failures of the Party in China as an excuse to slander and malign the family. These counter-revolutionaries see the family as the source and the basis of the oppression of women and they are united in their struggle to smash the proletarian family in order to undermine the defense of the proletarian class against capitalist onslaught. China, they will therefore tell us, is a bourgeois regime "because they have families there." By gleefully mixing their own petty-bourgeois prejudices with some legitimate questions about the failures of the Chinese lead-

ership to guide a struggle for socialism, the feminists and the Trotskyites have been able to create endless confusion on the question of women and to sow doubt and fear in the minds of Canadian women against Marxism-Leninism and socialist revolution.

Women Since the Coup d'Etat

One wonders why, after the inconsistent and vacillating history of the Chinese Communist Party on the question of women, the reactionary wing now in power has embarked on a broad campaign not only for the massive participation of women in production but also for the "socialization of housework." A recent article in the revisionist *Peking Review* (no. 39) lays great stress on these things. But such a broad campaign is actually not in essence different from the great spurts of effort which various bourgeoisies have undertaken to draw women into production in preparation for war and during wartime, both drawing women into production and making certain provisions in the direction of the socialization of housework in order to facilitate the war effort. China is going on a concentrated drive for world hegemony, a concentrated effort to build itself up and to foment war between the US and USSR in order to itself become a great power on the rubble of a third world war. In this effort it needs all of the human cannon fodder which it can mobilize. For that reason it has no hesitation in tapping its greatest labour reserve, the masses of Chinese women.

Peking Review, after summarizing Chairman Mao's less-than-communist line on the question of women, then introduces its "brand-new stage" in the struggle for the "emancipation" of women. This "brand-new stage" matches the needs of the "new period," the most concentrated drive in Chinese history towards world hegemony in alliance with the imperialist camp. These needs are the "four modernizations": agriculture, industry, national defence and science and technology. Women are to be drawn in a massive way into these areas because "the struggle for production is the central link in bringing about the four modernizations."

It is clear that the Chinese revisionist leadership clique is stopping at nothing in its "struggle for production." Arms deals with Great Britain, anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles purchased from France, a "let bygones be bygones" treaty with Japan — all are acceptable in the new "socialist" China. It is no surprise that the revisionist clique is putting the question of "national defense" and "sci-

ence and technology” on a par with the modernization of agriculture and industry. China is mobilizing its vast resources of human labour towards its bloodthirsty imperialist ambitions. The great stress which the revisionists are laying on the role of women in science and defense is very reminiscent of the braggadocio which the Soviet revisionists have long used about women in science and defense in the Soviet Union.

The “socialization and modernization of housework” which the revisionists in China have proposed are an adjunct to their program to draw women into the “four modernizations.” In fact, they are referred to as “the supportive services for realizing the four modernizations.” Socializing housework “will in turn progressively free women for production work and continuously provide reinforcements for realizing the four modernizations.”

Just as Canada, the United States, and many European nations provided “supportive services” to free women for wartime production, China is doing the same thing. Of course it is using communist terminology to justify what it is doing — this can be of no surprise. But the economic laws of the imperialist system are objective and can be undone by no political legislation. A capitalist system cannot provide the true socialization of housework to liberate women. Shortly after the death of Mao Tse-tung, Li Hsien-nien set forward the dictum of the regime: “It is honourable to make a profit, it is shameful to be in debt.” Revolutionary committees have been abolished, university examinations have been reinstated, competition among workers was formally instituted almost before Hua Kuo-feng had made his first address to the international bourgeoisie by Telstar satellite. Such a system, capitalism, demands that women be used as a vulnerable and cheap labour force to be manipulated according to the cyclical patterns of capitalist boom and bust.

Thus, now that China is preparing for war, women are being mobilized for production and the state is making its “supportive” provisions towards its militarist ends. But what is principal is not whether these “supportive” provisions exist — important as it is for women to have day care centres, laundries and restaurants. What is principal is the laws of the economic system and the way in which human needs are provided for under the economic system which exists. China is a capitalist country and an imperialist country. By that fact alone we can know without doubt that the truly permanent and full participation of women in production, the true socialization of house-

work, the true liberation of women, cannot be accomplished without the overthrow of the ruling bourgeoisie by violence and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in China.

Notes

1. Della Davin, *Woman-Work*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, p. 199.
2. "Decisions of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Woman- Work at Present in the Countryside of the Liberated Areas" (1948), in *ibid.*, p. 207.
3. "Build Up the Country Economically, Manage the Household Thriftily, Struggle for Socialist Construction," Congress Documents p. 26, as quoted in *ibid.*
4. *People's Daily*, January 22, 1958.
5. Titles quoted in *China's Women*, no. 8, 1966.
6. As quoted in J. W. Salaff and Judith Merkle, "Women and Revolution: The Lessons of the Soviet Union and China," in *Women in China*, ed. Marilyn B. Young, Ann Arbor, 1973, p. 172.
7. "Working Women are a Great Revolutionary Force," *Peking Review*, March 16, 1973. See Devin, p. 181.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Nancy Milton, "A Response to 'Women and Revolution,'" in Young, p. 191.



The Chinese Communist Party never had a coherent line on the woman question. This is reflected in culture as in all other matters. In "The Red Detachment of Women," women are presented as strong fighters but in "The White-Haired Girl" they are only those who bring food to the men. Although the Chinese women have gained some reforms, they were never able to liberate themselves from their double oppression — wage slavery and domestic slavery.

Women Are Murdered by the Bourgeoisie for Profit

Proletarian Revolution, Vol. 1, No. 9, January 15, 1979

The capitalist system engages in a wholesale attack on the physical health and safety of the working class. Dangerous chemicals in factories bring cancer and other diseases to workers who have no choice but to sell their labour power to the bourgeoisie in order to survive. Work-related diseases other than cancer also attack the working class, and problems such as air pollution and poisonous food additives are introduced to save the bourgeoisie money but in fact are massive murder weapons against the entire population.

Just as the masses of women suffer capitalist oppression with a particular intensity, because their oppression as workers is compounded by their specific oppression as women, so the masses of women suffer a particularly intense degree of physical suffering under the capitalist system. The bourgeoisie has always dumped its filth and waste the most gleefully upon the most vulnerable sections of the working class, particularly women and children. Thus the history of female suffering at the hands of capitalist pollution goes back many years.

Marx and Engels, the first great masters to systematize the knowledge of the capitalist mode of production and to formulate the science of proletarian revolution, directly linked the birth of modern industry with the physical attack by the bourgeoisie against women and children. In *Capital*, Marx goes on at length about the dirty work of modern industry in breeding tuberculosis and other diseases in the course of utilizing cheap and immature labour for capitalist profit. He talks of the violence with which capitalism breaks down social morality: **“Whether members of his family or not, the men, boys, and girls all sleep in the cottage, which contains generally two, exceptionally 3 rooms, all on the ground floor, and badly ventilated. These people are so exhausted after the day’s hard work, that neither the rules of health, of cleanliness, nor of decency are in the least observed. Many of these cottages are models of untidiness, dirt, and dust The greatest evil of the system that employs young girls on this sort of work, consists in this, that, as a rule, it chains them fast from childhood for the whole of their after-life**

to the most abandoned rabble. They become rough, foul-mouthed boys, before Nature has taught them that they are women. Clothed in a few dirty rags, the legs naked far above the knees, hair and face besmeared with dirt, they learn to treat all feelings of decency and of shame with contempt.” (*Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 436-7) And Engels saw that the miserable conditions in the English factories were directly attacking the reproductive systems of women. He states: **“The influence of factory-work upon the female physique also is marked and peculiar. The deformities entailed by long hours of work are much more serious among women. Protracted work frequently causes deformities of the pelvis, partly in the shape of abnormal position and development of the hip bones, partly of malformation of the lower portion of the spinal column That factory operatives undergo more difficult confinement than other women is testified to by several midwives and accoucheurs, and also that they are more liable to miscarriage. Moreover, they suffer from the general enfeeblement common to all operatives, and, when pregnant, continue to work in the factory up to the hour of delivery, because otherwise they lose their wages and are made to fear that they may be replaced if they step away too soon. It frequently happens that women are at work one evening and delivered the next morning, and the case is none too rare of their being delivered in the factory among the machinery. And if the gentlemen of the bourgeoisie find nothing particularly shocking in this, their wives will perhaps admit that it is a piece of cruelty, an infamous act of barbarism, indirectly to force a pregnant woman to work twelve or thirteen hours daily (formerly still longer), up to the day of her delivery, in a standing position, with frequent stoopings. But this is not all. If these women are not obliged to resume work within two weeks, they are thankful, and count themselves fortunate. Many come back to the factory after eight, and even after three to four days, to resume full work.... Naturally, fear of being discharged, dread of starvation drives her to the factory in spite of her weakness, in defiance of her pain.”** (“The Condition of the Working-Class in England,” MECW 4:452) And Engels says further: **“The influence of the warmth of the factories is the same as that of a tropical climate, and, as in such climates, the abnormally early development revenges itself by correspondingly premature age and debility. On the other hand, retarded development of the female**

constitution occurs, the breasts mature late or not at all. Menstruation first appears in the seventeenth or eighteenth, sometimes in the twentieth year, and is often wholly wanting. Irregular menstruation, coupled with great pain and numerous affections, especially with anaemia, is very frequent, as the medical reports unanimously state.” (Ibid., p. 453)

It is clear from these passages from Engels that the founders of scientific socialism never separated the question of capitalist oppression from the question of the specific oppression of women. Marx and Engels talked of women not only as workers, but also in terms of the fact that capitalism made specific attacks on them because of their vulnerable relationship to the capitalist system, a vulnerable relationship which comes from the fact that it is women who bear and suckle children. In talking of the clear reality that modern industry draws women into the workplace, Engels stated: **“The employment of women at once breaks up the family; for when the wife spends twelve or thirteen hours every day in the mills, and the husband works the same length of time there or elsewhere, what becomes of the children? They grow up like wild weeds; they are put out to nurse for a shilling or eighteenpence a week, and how they are treated may be imagined.... That the general mortality among young children must be increased by the employment of the mothers is self-evident, and is placed beyond all doubt by notorious facts. Women often return to the mill three or four days after confinement, leaving the baby, of course; in the dinner-hour they must hurry home to feed the child and eat something, and what sort of suckling that can be is also evident.”** (Ibid., p. 437) And Engels continues his observations of the effects of capitalism on women and children by observing its long-term effect on the proletarian family: **“A mother who has no time to trouble herself about her child, to perform the most ordinary loving services for it during its first year, who scarcely indeed sees it, can be no real mother to the child, must inevitably grow indifferent to it, treat it unlovingly like a stranger. The children who grow up under such conditions are utterly ruined for later family life, can never feel at home in the family which they themselves found, because they have always been accustomed to isolation, and they contribute therefore to the already general undermining of the family in the working-class.”** (Ibid.) And Marx stated quite precisely that the mothers were **“confiscated by capital.”** (Capital, vol. 1, p. 373)

The attacks by the capitalist system against the health of women and children have never ceased. An early outrageous horror was a disease called "phossy jaws," an erosion of the jaws caused by the phosphorus in matchbook factories. Many women provided the labour for these factories. Although some legislation in the early twentieth century finally prohibited the manufacture of phosphorus matches, there is no other occupational disease which capitalism has created which has been completely eliminated.

Women who worked in factories making metal objects were exposed to the toxic and sometimes deadly fumes of molten metal as it was cast in dies. Their working hours were long and their factories were unventilated. Women who work in textile factories — and the bourgeoisie has always concentrated women in this occupation — are subjected to brown lung (byssinosis) because they are exposed to large quantities of cotton dust. They also develop dermatitis from exposure to the formaldehyde used to make the finish in permanent press fabrics. Women who work in laundries pick up a wide variety of diseases from contact with poisons from the clothes of others, poisons contracted when these others have gone to work in their own factories. Women who work in laundries have developed asbestosis from laundering the clothes of asbestos factory workers (and women whose husbands work in asbestos factories have developed asbestosis as well, from the contact with asbestos dust). Laundry workers also develop lung diseases from pottery dust on the clothing of pottery workers. In addition, laundry workers are often subjected directly to danger from improperly grounded laundry equipment or from poorly maintained washing machines, mangles, and extractors. Women who work in hospitals are subjected to innumerable health hazards, including undue exposure to radiation, back injuries from tilting heavy patients, exposure to any number of diseases in the hospital environment, and exposure to anesthetic gases. Women who work as operating-room technicians are subjected to inhaling anesthetic gases at work and hence have a higher rate of miscarriages and still births than the normal range of the female population.

Although less dangerous than factory work, work in the huge sales, service and clerical sectors which have been drawing women into production under imperialism present their own health hazards to women workers. Women employed in huge department stores at the beginning of the century were forced to stand for fifteen hours at a stretch and fired if they sat down. If the working class won laws



stating that chairs had to be provided, the store would buy chairs but forbid women to sit in them. If the law stated that women were allowed to sit in these chairs, the company would provide two chairs for 85 women. Toilet facilities would be so poor that women would develop kidney ailments from the simple fact of being sales clerks in the department stores.

A study of 1,530 office workers in Montreal's Desjardins Complex reveals that modern office work, the occupation which employs more women than any other, is very hazardous to the health. Almost half of all women who work in offices suffer chronic eye fatigue, aggravated by fluorescent lighting; headaches, varicose veins, hemorrhoids, poor blood circulation, stomach and intestinal problems, sleeplessness, and exposure to noise and toxic chemicals of office machines are other health hazards which accompany office work. In addition, there is a great deal of social and psychological pressure in the environment of a capitalist office, and this takes its toll by whittling away at the strength and stamina of millions of women.

The working class has battled valiantly for laws to protect itself from the health hazards of capitalism, but the bourgeoisie has always found a way to manipulate these laws in the interests of its own profit. For example, the bourgeoisie brags a great deal about its legislation limiting the right of women to work in lead factories if they are of childbearing age. Yet, on the other hand, in the pottery industry where

there is also lead exposure, women are not restricted from working, because the wages are so much lower. Hospital work and laundry work, which also pay desperately low wages and which both present serious health hazards, are also notably immune from protective legislation. Women are generally “protected” from jobs which are hazardous but where the pay is high.

Even when they are not at the workplace, women are constantly attacked by the thirst of the capitalist system for its maximum profit. Let us begin with the question of housework, which, as Lenin clearly stated, **“is the most unproductive, the most barbarous and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the woman.”** (“The Task of the Working Woman’s Movement in the Soviet Republic,” LCW 30:43) This petty, isolating nightmare of domestic drudgery takes a heavy physical toll on women: it involves lifting heavy packages, moving appliances, and doing many other thing which women are often considered too frail to do when they are seeking high-paying work. Moreover, women who do not work outside the home — and that still includes more than half of all women in Canada — are extremely vulnerable to the “mental illness” which the isolation of housework can breed. By far the highest rate of psychological disorder is found among full-time housewives. The recent report of the Quebec Council on the Status of Women reported that twice as many women as men went to hospital psychiatric wards with neurotic disorders in 1976, that twice as many women as men underwent psychotherapy, that alcoholism is rising very sharply among women, and that women take nearly twice as many prescription drugs as men. The medical profession takes particular glee in profiting from the vulnerable physical situation and from the specific physical needs of women and children. Doctors dispense massive quantities of tranquilizers to housewives in order to shut them up when they weep about the nightmare of stultifying drudgery into which they are trapped. During pregnancy and childbirth women are pumped with needless and unwanted chemicals and anesthetics which are known to harm the health of the newborn baby, because these are more profitable and “efficient” for anesthesiologists and other doctors.

Women who have jobs outside the home can rarely breastfeed their children because appropriate day care systems for infants would be much too expensive for the bourgeoisie — systems which are

available in socialist countries such as the Soviet Union of Lenin and Stalin. The huge industry of artificial baby milk which has mushroomed in all of the capitalist countries also discourages breastfeeding. Children are filled with useless, health-damaging, high-profit “foods” such as candy and soda pop, which have been proven to cause hyperactivity and behaviour problems in children. Then the school authorities and doctors pump these children full of amphetamines and other liver-damaging drugs to control the behaviour problems. And there has been increasing scandal about needless hysterectomies, mastectomies and other surgery which is performed on women, but the surgeries continue while the doctors are laughing all the way to the bank. A recent report even stated that women actually enjoy hysterectomies!

Socialist Revolution: Only Road to the Liberation of Women

The capitalist system is daily murder against millions of proletarians and oppressed toilers. Women, being victims of double oppression, suffer the pain and agony of the capitalist system with particular intensity. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the only tool to abolish the oppression of women, not only as a particularly oppressed stratum of workers but also as women. When socialism cleans up the textile factories and eliminates dangerous chemicals from food, it will protect the health of all workers but it will also particularly protect the bodies and reproductive systems of those who give birth to and suckle children. Because socialism has no room for a wealthy and elitist medical or pharmaceutical profession, it will not seek to profit from pumping women full of anesthetics or tranquilizers in the interests of making a few extra dollars. Medicine under socialism will have no interest in useless surgery against women or in substituting drug therapy in children for decent, socialized child care. Only under socialism can the masses of women work in clean, safe environments, which will protect their own safety and the safety of their children, born and unborn. The dangers which capitalism has always posed to the life and health of the masses of women can be abolished only through the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist party.



International Women's Day: Struggle for the Construction of the Bolshevik Party!

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“International Women’s Day is a token of the invincibility of the working-class movement for emancipation and a harbinger of its great future.” (Stalin, “International Women’s Day,” SCW 7:48)

International Women’s Day was proclaimed on March 8, 1910, when Clara Zetkin supported a motion of American militant women in Copenhagen to honour the heroic struggles waged by garment and textile workers against their oppression.

The history of defensive resistance by textile and garment workers to the daily attacks against them by capital is as old as their organization into mills and factories. In 1815 the first North American factory of textile manufacture was opened in Waltham, Massachusetts. Nine years later was the first strike by women mill workers, protesting not only their poor wages and working conditions but also moral supervision, required church attendance, and the denial of the right to talk on the job. The resistance of women to their oppression as textile workers only grew as their ranks swelled and textile work became the commonest form of wage work for women (outside of domestic service). Although the young bourgeoisie did everything to humiliate them and crush their resistance, although their strikes failed and they were sent back to work sometimes with cuts in pay, their determination only grew stronger as their struggle was strengthened by the addition of garment workers to their ranks.

Garment workers, like textile workers, congregated into the factories to follow their work which they could no longer continue doing at home. The invention of the sewing machine transformed the lives of thousands upon thousands of women who had sewed at home to support themselves and their families, always keeping their children under their watchful eye. Like the textile workers, the garment workers now brought their children into the factory with them, and child labour became a fact of nineteenth century capitalism. Marx called the sewing machine **“the decisively revolutionary machine, the**

machine which attacks in an equal degree the whole of the numberless branches of this sphere of production, dressmaking, tailoring, shoe-making, sewing, hat-making, and many others.” (*Capital*, vol. 1, Progress, p. 443)

Only ten years after the invention of the sewing machine, on March 8, 1857, the brave resistance of garment and textile workers in New York City to the 12-hour day, pitiful wages and intolerable working conditions was brutally crushed by the police. Yet once again this did not silence the anger of the workers, and thirteen years later they were able to form their own union.

International Women’s Day was proclaimed to honour the bravery and determination of these angry women, who will always stand to the international proletariat as a reminder of **“the invincibility of the working-class movement for emancipation and a harbinger of its great future.”**

The struggles of working women have been sold out, their demands denied, their unions broken. Yet working women have never stopped resisting the onslaught of capital. In Canada, as the twentieth century opened, striking women at Eaton’s, Bell Telephone, Dominion Textile, Canadian Cotton, Toronto Carpet, and many other companies demonstrated determination to hold out against odds, to resist police attacks, to stand in solidarity with striking male workers, and to resist the pressure of feminine moral reformers and social workers to deroute their demands into supposedly questions of purity and virtue.

The dawn of imperialism saw a particularly conscious and intense campaign by the imperialist bourgeoisie — and their agents, the feminists — to extol the virtues of the home in order to justify the massive unemployment of working-class women. Bourgeois psychology became a monster of its own, to proclaim with the authority of pseudo-scientific truth that children would die for lack of love if their mothers were holding jobs. The ideology that a married woman belonged inside of a kitchen has been used throughout the twentieth century to keep women paid poorly, to manipulate them in and out of the labour market in accordance with the cyclical needs of the bourgeoisie, to throw them into the bottom rungs of the labour market, and to break their defensive resistance to capital by undermining their long-term commitment to participate in social labour.

Thus, as women have been drawn out of the home and into the labour market to serve the specific needs of imperialism — for ser-

vice work at rock-bottom pay, for sales work in the huge monopoly department stores, for clerical work in the insurance companies and the banks, for the filing and accounting demanded by the system of monopolies — they have been everywhere weighted down with the ideology that where they really belong is not at their jobs, but at home. Their commitment to their work is said to be transient, and their unionization and militancy is said to be “unfeminine.” But the plot of the bourgeoisie to break the resistance of working women by pitting their sexuality and their family loyalties against their basic rights, the right to work and the right to strike, has been doomed to failure. Everywhere, factory workers, service workers, telephone operators, and clerical workers are organizing and striking. When they fight for their demands, they inevitably find that they are fighting their oppression not only as workers but also as women, because it is by manipulating the specific subjugation of the woman that the bourgeoisie is able to keep women so downtrodden.

Curing the Malady

Yet International Women’s Day is not limited, and must not be limited, to honouring the defensive resistance of women workers to their oppression in the workplace. Marx states: **“The working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these every-day struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady.”** (Wages, Prices and Profit, FLP, pp. 77-78)

The oppression of women originates with the private ownership of the means of production. With the fall of primitive communism, the woman became one more instrument of production privately owned. This is an ineradicable reality of every society which is based on class antagonisms. The domestic slavery of the woman within the home, and the sexual subjugation(s) of the woman outside of the home (the free community of women — public and private, paid and unpaid, willing and unwilling), are as much a part of the structure of capitalist society as wage slavery itself. The defensive resistance of working women to the daily assault of capital, a resistance which demands a better deal in terms of the sale of female labour power to the bourgeoisie, does not transform the nature of a system in which the double oppression of women is woven into the very fabric of its ex-

istence. Just as much as the heroic struggles of working women for self-defense have stood as testimony to the invincible will of the working class in its struggle for emancipation, so they also stand as proof that even the most limitless determination of the working class for self-defense cannot end the oppression of women as workers and cannot liberate women from their specific oppression, as long as the working class remains guided by the bourgeoisie and bourgeois ideology.

Thus International Women's Day stands as more than a remembrance of the defensive struggles of working women against the misery of their working conditions. International Women's Day is a revolutionary day; it is not a day to drag at the tail of the spontaneous movement, but a day to build the leadership which alone can divert the spontaneous movement from bourgeois ideology and guide it along the path of Marxism-Leninism. International Women's Day stands to the international proletariat as a call for the entire working class to socialist revolution, the only way to overhaul the private ownership of the means of production which lies at the root of the double slavery of women.

International Women's Day must become a means of **“making the two sections of the oppressed masses, which are still unequal in status, a single army of fighters for the abolition of all inequality and all oppression, for the victory of the proletariat, and for the building of a new, socialist society.”** (Stalin, “International Communist Women's Day,” SCW 8:114)

The new, socialist society can abolish the oppression of women, because it abolishes the material basis for the double oppression of women. The formal, legal inequality of women can be abolished immediately upon the smashing of the bourgeois state apparatus. Yet this is only the beginning. Lenin states: **“The second and most important step is the abolition of the private ownership of land and the factories. This and this alone opens up the way towards a complete and actual emancipation of woman, her liberation from ‘household bondage’ through transition from petty individual housekeeping to large-scale socialized domestic services.”** (“International Working Women's Day,” LCW 32:162)

The abolition of the private ownership of the means of production is not put forward as an automatic cure for the liberation of women; what it can accomplish is to **“open up the way”** for the emancipation of the woman, because it creates the material basis for

the destruction of their subordinate position within the home and for the socialization of housework. To undertake this task is to strike at the very root of the system of the private ownership of the means of production, and involves not merely economic and material construction but also a patient and persistent effort in terms of propaganda and ideological remoulding, to transform people's backward prejudices and ideas about the role of the woman and bring the masses along in an enthusiastic participation in the social transformation. Lenin continues: **"This transition is a difficult one, because it involves the remoulding of the most deep-rooted inveterate, hide-bound and rigid 'order' (indecent and barbarity would be nearer the truth)."** (Ibid.) But there can be no liberation of women without this long and difficult work, and there can be no full construction of socialism unless women are freed from the chains of private housework so that they are free to take their place as equals beside men in the total social, economic, and political functioning of the new order. Lenin states: **"The real *emancipation of women*, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the state power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its *wholesale transformation into a large-scale socialist economy begins.*"** ("A Great Beginning," LOC 29:429)) Just as the private ownership of the means of production can nowhere exist without the unconditional subjugation of the female sex, so a truly socialist society is impossible where the woman remains subjugated, that is, where women are not fully equal participants in the economic and political life of the society and where petty housekeeping has not been thoroughly transformed into a large-scale social industry.

Thus it is only through the struggle for socialism that the broad masses of women will realize their emancipation. Yet there can be no struggle for socialism until the proletarian class is guided by its own independent political party, with the best elements of that class rallied to the front ranks. In the concrete conditions of Canada today, where the proletariat lacks its own independent political party, where the vanguard of proletariat has not yet been rallied to the struggle for the party, where the masses of workers are still strangled by bourgeois ideology and their struggles are forced under the leadership of one or another agent of the bourgeoisie at every turn, communists must make International Women's Day a day of struggle for the proletarian party.

Only an authentic proletarian party, guided by a correct strategy for revolution and free of bourgeois degeneration, can lead the working class in the accomplishment of its historic mission: the overthrow of the ruling bourgeois class by violence and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, so that the enemies of the revolution can be crushed and the construction of socialism can proceed.

On International Women's Day: Combat Economism and Feminism, the Twin Conspiracy for the Enslavement of Women

To make International Women's Day a day of struggle for the proletarian party is to combat the subversive and degenerate influences which always threaten to undermine the revolutionary content of International Women's Day and transform the movement of the liberation of women into an appendage of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Just as in capitalist society women are chained down by two principal forms of oppression, wage slavery and sexual subjugation, so the agents of the bourgeoisie have evolved two forms of bourgeois ideology to ensure that women do not transgress the boundaries of their oppressed position: economism and feminism.

Economism is the bourgeois ideology which centralizes the economic struggles of the workers in the workplace for a better deal under capitalism, which tries to represent those struggles as if they were the socialist revolution itself, as if they were the principal tool for the liberation of the working class and for the liberation of women.

On International Women's Day the economists can be heard to raise the slogan, "Join the Class Struggle!" But by "class struggle" they do not mean the offensive political class struggle, the class-conscious struggle under the leadership of the proletarian party, the class struggle which alone can overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie and lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Their calls are not calls to rally to the struggle for an authentic proletarian party. The economists are talking about the spontaneous struggle, the struggle waged by the workers under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and bourgeois ideology. The economists are trying to trick the masses of women into thinking that it is by sinking further under the yoke of wage slavery that they will be able to win their liberation. Their work is to seek to bring working women into the bourgeois trade-union movement and to seek control over that movement, in order to ensure that a knowledge of Marxism-Leninism is being kept from them and that

their vision of the future will remain defined by the parameters of the bourgeois order.

The economists ignore, or trivialize, the specific sexual oppression of the woman. They try to represent women as merely another set of wage workers, another set of bodies to people the picket lines and to join the spontaneous struggles over which they seek control. They cannot provide leadership in the full liberation of women because they have no vision or understanding of the specific oppression of women and how it is woven into the very fabric of capitalist society. They do not see the relationship between class oppression and the position of women within the family, nor do they see how the workplace functions as a locus of the specific, sexual, oppression of the woman. They cannot explain (or even admit) the rigid sexual segregation of the workplace in all of the imperialist countries, how it is rooted in and expresses the specific oppression of women, how it functions to fatten the profits of the imperialist bourgeoisie and split the revolutionary unity of the sexes. They cannot explain these things because they are utterly contemptuous of real scientific analysis and Marxist-Leninist theory, which alone can link the two forms of the oppression of women and demonstrate why socialism is the only alternative. By making the struggles in the bourgeois workplace the framework and the starting point of their political activity, by operating on the terrain of the bourgeoisie and accepting its basic premises, which include the segregation of the sexes and the subjugation of the woman, the economists work to split the political unity of the sexes just as much as the feminists do.

International Women's Day must also be a day of struggle against feminism. The feminists, as much as the economists, try to use the occasion of International Women's Day to subvert the struggle for the party, to discredit socialist revolution. Every March 8 feminists everywhere organize events which reek of the ugliest and most overt forms of anti-communism and neo-fascist sexual discrimination by actively excluding men from equal participation and the equal expression of their points of view.

Just as economism trivializes the specific oppression of women, so feminism trivializes the oppression of the masses of women as workers. Thus the feminists, no less so than the economists, are agents of the bourgeoisie who work to deny the double oppression of women and therefore to cover for one of the most basic realities of class society. The purpose of this is to cover the class division which

fundamentally divides women and therefore to trick the masses of women into submitting to the leadership of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois women in an autonomous women's movement.

But to say that the feminists concentrate exclusively on sexual oppression, rather than wage slavery, is not to say that the feminists have a solution to the sexual oppression of the woman. On the contrary, their function is to perpetuate it and institutionalize it, in fact to persuade women to joyously embrace it. By demanding that women close their eyes to the world around them and keep their noses to the kitchen, the woman's page, and women's concerns exclusively, the feminists are acting as agents to reinforce the specific sexual oppression of women, which since its origins has functioned to exclude women from the wider world of social production and active political participation.

Engels showed clearly that the sexual oppression of women itself has two complementary aspects: bourgeois monogamy, the domestic slavery of the woman within the family; and the free exchange of women outside of marriage, the free community of women, or public and private prostitution. By ensuring that these two institutions co-exist, the ruling classes can ensure that the female is everywhere subjugated, inside and outside the family, throughout the entire fabric of the class society. The feminist are agents of both forms of the sexual subjugation of women. To keep women enslaved in domestic drudgery, they demand that private housework be recognized as "productive" and "socially necessary" even to the point of demanding that it be institutionalized through wages, and they smoulder in fury when communists rise to advocate that private housework be abolished through socialist revolution. To keep women enslaved as sexual objects outside of marriage, to subject the working-class woman to utter economic defensiveness against the onslaught of capital and force her into lonely misery and prostitution, the feminists demand the destruction of the proletarian family, blame marriage for the oppression of women, use the attack on the family as a means to attack the entire working class, and argue that the liberation of the woman can be won under capitalism when individual women break up their families and instead offer themselves up in "the free expression of our sexuality." Feminists at their various gatherings turn blue with rage when communists rise to suggest that the masses of working women have more important tasks to accomplish in life than the cultivation of the "free expression of their sexuality" through offering themselves up as free

commodities in the community of women, for heterosexual or homosexual exploitation.

International Women's Day must therefore also be a day of persistent and unrelenting struggle against feminism, the bourgeois conspiracy to split the political unity of the sexes, ensure the submission of women to bourgeois hegemony, and reinforce the specific oppression of women throughout the fabric of capitalist society.

The struggle against opportunism is part and parcel of the struggle to build the proletarian party. That is why communists use the occasion of International Women's Day to diffuse Marxist-Leninist knowledge, not just on the question of women, but on all questions concerning the nature of class oppression and how to abolish it, so that women can be won to active political participation in the struggle for the overall transformation of the social order, on an equal footing with the male sex.

A Concrete Analysis of the Concrete Conditions of Women

For International Women's Day, 1979, the Bolshevik Union is publishing the first stage in its analysis of the concrete situation of women. In our view, this is the best way in which we can honour the memory of the defensive struggles of militant women who have bravely resisted the assaults of capital, as well as the offensive revolutionary struggles of the millions of women in the socialist Russia of Lenin and Stalin and other socialist countries to transform the old order and build a new, socialist society.

Our position, available as *Lines of Demarcation* no. 11, demonstrates that the double oppression of women has been woven into the fabric of capitalist society at every stage of its existence. Just as imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, so it has represented the highest stage in the development of the double oppression of women, in the work of the ruling classes to use each form of the oppression of women to strengthen and reinforce the other one, in such a way as to saturate the entire society to a degree never before achieved. We show that the very structure of the workplace in the imperialist countries has been shaped through the use of the oppressed position of the woman within the family, in the interests of maximum profit, and that it is through the specific oppression of women that the bourgeoisie has been able to manipulate women in and out of the labour market in accordance with its cyclical needs.

In the course of shaping a correct strategy for socialist revolution we have also developed a polemic against economism and feminism, the twin conspiracy to reinforce the oppression of women and keep a knowledge of scientific socialism from them. The economists are exposed for trivializing the vital role which women play in the workplace in all of the imperialist countries, for splitting the unity of the sexes and for covering for the role of the imperialist bourgeoisie. In our exposure of feminism, an exposure which is long overdue and has been held back because of the malicious pervasiveness of economism in the struggle for the party, we demonstrate concretely the role which the feminists play in keeping women chained to the kitchen, to sexual subjugation, to backwardness and to political ignorance, the better to keep them in the service of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

It is by making this contribution to a correct strategy for the liberation of women, by advancing the struggle for the party on this level of Marxist-Leninist theory, and by calling on the vanguard of the proletariat to study, enrich, criticize and strengthen the concrete work which we have done towards a strategy for socialist revolution in Canada, that the Bolshevik Union has prepared for International Women's Day. In doing so we have moved forward the struggle to make International Women's Day **"a means of winning the reserve of women toilers to the side of the proletariat... a means of transforming the working women and peasant women from a reserve of the working class into an active army of the emancipation movement of the proletariat."**

"Long live International Women's Day!" (Stalin, "International Women's Day," SCW 7:48-49)

The active participation of the masses of women is indispensable for the victory of the socialist revolution. To free the masses of women from the chains of wage slavery, from the barbarous and petty drudgery of private housework, from the demeaning sexual subjugation which is a daily fact of existence in class society, from the yoke of poverty, backwardness, ignorance and isolation, the masses of women must be aroused into struggle against the rule of the bourgeoisie. That is why International Women's Day must become a day of struggle for the proletarian party, which alone can lead in the making of the socialist revolution.

Long Live International Women's Day!

Appendix:

Document from the Third Congress of the Communist International

The following is an unofficial translation of “Methods of Work Among the Women of the Communist Party.” In case of textual divergences, the final authority, of course, is the official version.

“Methods of Work Among the Women of the Communist Party”

**from *Decisions of the Third Congress of the Communist
International, Moscow, July 1921***

1. The Third Congress of the Comintern in conjunction with the Second International Women’s Congress confirms the decision of the First and Second Congresses on the necessity for increasing the work of all the Communist parties of the East and West among proletarian women. The masses of women workers must be educated in the spirit of Communism and so drawn into the struggle for Soviet Power and into the construction of the Soviet Labour Republic. In all countries the working classes, and consequently the women workers, are faced with the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The capitalist economic system has got into a blind alley, for there is no room for the further development of industrial forces within that system. The general impoverishment of the workers, the impotence of the bourgeoisie to revive production, the development of speculative enterprises, the decay in the production system, unemployment, the fluctuation of prices out of keeping with wages — all this inevitably leads to the deepening of the class struggle in all countries. This struggle is to decide who shall conduct, administer, and organise production, and upon what system that should be done — whether it should be in the hands of a clique of bourgeois exploiters, and be carried on, on the principles of capitalism and private property, or in the hands of the producing class and carried on, on a Com-

munist basis.

The newly-rising class, the class of producers, must be in accordance with the laws of economic production, take the productive apparatus in its own hands, and set up new forms of public economy. Only in such a way will it be possible to create the necessary impetus for the development of the economic forces to the maximum and for the removal of the anarchy of capitalist production.

So long as the power of government is in the hands of the bourgeois class, the proletariat has no power to organise production. No reforms, no measures, carried out by the democratic or socialistic governments of the bourgeois countries are able to save the situation. They cannot alleviate the unbearable sufferings of the working women and working men, sufferings which are due to the disorganisation of the capitalist system of production, and which are going to last as long as the power is in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Only by seizing the power of government will the proletariat be able to take hold of the means of production, and thus secure the possibility of directing the economic development in the interests of the toilers.

In order to hasten the hour of the decisive conflict between the proletariat and the degenerating bourgeois world, the working class must adhere to the firm and unhesitating tactics outlined by the Third International. The most fundamental and immediate goal determining the methods of work and the line of struggle for the proletariat of both sexes, must be the dictatorship of labour.

As the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat is the vital question before the proletariat of all the capitalist countries, and the construction of Communism is the important task of those countries where the dictatorship is already in the hands of the workers, the Third Congress of the Communist International maintains that the conquest of power by the proletariat, as well as the achievement of Communism in those countries where the capitalist state has already been overthrown, can be realised only with the active participation of the wide masses of the proletarian and semi-proletarian women.

On the other hand the Congress once more calls the attention of all women to the fact that without the support of the Communist parties in all the tasks and undertakings leading to the liberation and enfranchisement of the women, this task is practically impossible of achievement.

2. The interest of the working class, especially at the present moment, imperatively demands the recruiting of women into the organ-

ised ranks of the proletariat, fighting for communism.

The economic ruin throughout the world is becoming more acute and more unbearable to the entire city and country poor. Before the working class of the bourgeois-capitalist countries the question of the social revolution rises more and more clearly, and before the working class of Soviet Russia the question of reconstructing the public economy of the land on a new Communist basis becomes more and more vital. Both these tasks will be more easily realised, the more active and the more conscious and willing the participation of the women.

3. Wherever the question of the taking of power arises, the Communist parties must consider the great danger to the revolution represented by the inert, uninformed masses of women workers, housewives, employees, peasant women, not liberated from the influence of the bourgeois church and bourgeois superstitions, and not connected in some way or other with the great liberating movement of Communism. Unless the masses of women of the East and West are drawn into this movement, they inevitably become the stronghold of the bourgeoisie and the object of counter-revolutionary propaganda. The experience of the revolution in Hungary, where the ignorance of the masses of women played such a pitiful part, should serve, in this case, as a warning for the proletariat of all other countries entering upon the road of social revolution.

On the other hand, the experience of the Soviet Republic showed in practice how important the participation of the women workers and peasants has been in the civil war in the defence of the Republic, as well as in all other activities of the Soviet construction. Facts have proven the importance of the part which the women workers and peasants have already played in the Soviet Republic in the organisation of defence, strengthening the rear; the struggle against desertion, and against all sorts of counter-revolution, sabotage, etc. The experience of the Workers' Republic must serve as a lesson to all other countries.

Hence the direct task of the Communist parties: to spread the influence of the Communist Party to the widest circles of the women population of their countries within the Party; organising a special party body and applying special methods; appealing to the women outside of it, to free them from the influence of the bourgeoisie and the compromising parties, and educating them to be real fighters for Communism, and therefore for the complete enfranchisement of women.

4. Putting before the Communist Parties of the East and West the direct task of extending the activity of the Party among the women proletariat, the Third Congress of the Comintern declares also to the women of the entire world that their emancipation from age-long slavery and inequality depends upon the victory of Communism.

What Communism offers to the women, the bourgeois women's movement will never afford her. So long as the power of capitalism and private property continue to exist, the emancipation of woman from subservience to her husband cannot proceed further than her right to dispose of her property and earnings, as she sees fit, and also to decide on equal terms with her husband the destiny of their children.

The most definite aim of the feminists — to grant the vote to the women — under the regime of bourgeois parliamentaryism, does not solve the question of the actual equalisation of women, especially of those of the dispossessed classes. This has been clearly demonstrated by the experience of the working women in those capitalist countries where the bourgeoisie has formally recognised the equality of the sexes. The right to vote does not remove the prime cause of women's enslavement in the family and in society. The substitution of the church marriage by civil marriage does not in the least alleviate the situation. The dependence of the proletarian woman upon the capitalist and upon her husband as the economic mainstay of the family remains just the same. The absence of adequate laws to safeguard motherhood and infancy and the lack of proper social education render entirely impossible the equalisation of women's position in matrimonial relations. As a matter of fact, nothing that can be done under the capitalist order will furnish the key to the solution of the problem of the relationship of the sexes.

Only under Communism, not merely formal, but the actual equalisation of women will be achieved. Then woman will be the rightful owner, on a par with all the members of the working class, of the means of production and distribution. She will participate in the management of industry and she will assume an equal responsibility for the well-being of society.

In other words, only by overthrowing the system of exploitation of man by man, and by supplanting the capitalist mode of production by the Communist organisation of industry will the full emancipation of women be achieved. Only Communism affords the conditions which are necessary in order that the natural functions of woman —

motherhood — should not come into conflict with her social obligations and hinder her creative work for the benefit of society. On the contrary, Communism will facilitate the most harmonious and diversified development of a healthy and beautiful personality that is indissolubly bound together with the whole life and activities of the entire society. Communism should be the aim of all women who are fighting for complete emancipation and real freedom.

But Communism is also the final aim of the proletariat. Consequently the struggle of the working women for this aim must be carried on in the interests of both, under a united leadership and control, as “one and indivisible” to the entire world movement of the revolutionary proletariat.

5. The Third Congress of the Comintern confirms the basic proposition of revolutionary Marxism, i.e., that there is no “specific woman question” and no “specific women’s movement,” and, that every sort of alliance of working women with bourgeois feminism, as well as any support by the women workers of the treacherous tactics of the social-compromisers and opportunists leads to the undermining of the forces of the proletariat, delaying thereby the triumph of the social revolution and the advent of Communism, and thus also postponing the great hour of women’s ultimate liberation.

Communism will be achieved not by “united efforts of all women of different classes,” but by the united struggle of all the exploited.

In their own interests the masses of proletarian women should support the revolutionary tactics of the Communist Party and take a most active and direct part in all mass-actions and all forms of civil war on a national and international scope.

6. Woman’s struggle against her double oppression (capitalism and her home and family subservience), at its highest stage of development, assumes an international character, becoming identified with the struggle of the proletariat of both sexes under the banner of the Third International for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet system.

7. While warning the women workers against entering into any form of alliance and co-operation with the bourgeois feminists, the Third Congress of the Comintern, at the same time, points out to the working women of all countries that to cherish any illusions of the possibility of the proletarian women supporting the Second International or any of the opportunistically inclined elements adhering to it without causing serious damage to the cause of women’s emancipa-

tion — will prove infinitely detrimental for the liberating struggle of the proletariat. The women must constantly remember that woman's present-day slavery has grown out of the bourgeois order. In order to put an end to women's slavery it is necessary to inaugurate the new Communist organisation of society.

Any support rendered to the Second and the Second-and-a-Half Internationals hampers the social revolution, delaying the advent of the new order. The more resolutely and uncompromisingly the women masses will turn away from the Second and Second-and-a-Half Internationals, the more certain will be the triumph of the Social Revolution. It is the sacred duty of all women Communists to condemn those who flinch from the revolutionary tactics of the Comintern. The women ought to remember that the Second International never created and never attempted to create any organ whose task would be to carry on an active struggle for the complete emancipation of woman. The organisation of an international alliance of women socialists was started outside the Second International by the initiative of the women workers themselves. The women socialists who devoted themselves to work among women had neither representation nor a decisive vote in the Second International.

At its first Congress, in 1919, the Third International defined its attitude towards enlisting the support of women in the struggle for the dictatorship. On its initiative, the first conference of women Communists was convened in 1920 and an International Secretariat for work among women was constituted with a permanent representation in the Executive Committee of the Comintern. It is the duty of all class-conscious women workers to break unconditionally with the Second and Second-and-a-Half Internationals and support wholeheartedly the revolutionary tactics of the Comintern.

8. The support of the Comintern by the women workers of all occupations should, first of all, express itself in their willingness to enter into the ranks of the Communist Party of their respective countries. In those countries and parties where the struggle between the Second and Third Internationals has not yet come to a head, it is the duty of the women workers to support, by all means, the party and groups that stand for the Comintern and carry on a relentless warfare against all vacillating and avowedly treacherous elements, irrespective of any authorities holding a different view. The class-conscious women who are striving for emancipation should not remain in any parties which have not joined the Comintern. Those who are opposed

to the Third International are the enemies of the emancipation of women.

The place of conscious working women in Eastern and Western countries is under the flag of the Communist International and in the ranks of the Communist Parties of their own countries. All wavering on the part of the working women and the fear to sever connection with the parties of compromises and the hitherto acknowledged authorities, have a pernicious influence on the satisfactory progress of the great proletarian struggle, which is assuming the nature of an open and relentless civil war on a world scale.

Methods and Forms of Work Among Women

Owing to all the above-mentioned reasons, the Third Congress of the Comintern holds that the work among the proletarian women should be carried on by the Communist Parties of all countries, on the following basis:

1. Women must be enlisted as full-fledged members of the Party, on the basis of equality and independence, in all militant class organizations, trade unions, co-operatives, factory committees, etc.

2. To recognise the importance of recruiting women into all branches of the active struggle of the proletariat (including military service for the defense of the proletariat) and into the construction of new forms of society and the organization of industry and life on a Communist basis.

3. To recognise the functions of motherhood as a social function, promoting and supporting appropriate measures to aid and protect women as the bearer of the human race.

Being earnestly opposed to the separate organisation of women into all sorts of parties, unions, or any other special women's organizations, the Third Congress, nevertheless, believes that in view of: (a) the present conditions of subjection prevailing not only in the bourgeois capitalist countries, but also in countries under the Soviet system, undergoing transition from capitalism to Communism; (b) the great inertness and political ignorance of the masses of women, due to the fact that they have been for centuries barred from social life and to age-long slavery in the family; and (c) the special functions imposed upon women by nature — childbirth, and the peculiarities attached to this, calling for the protection of her strength and health in the interests of the entire community, the Third Congress therefore considers it necessary to find special methods of work among the

women of the Communist Parties and establishes a standard of special apparatus within the Communist Parties for the realisation of this work. The apparatus for this work among the women in the Party should be the sections or committees for work among women, organised by all party committees commencing with the Executive Committee and ending with the city, district or village party committees. This decision is obligatory for all parties attached to the Comintern.

The Third Congress points out that, among the tasks set before the Communist Parties carried out through the sections are: (1) to educate the wide masses of women in the spirit of Communism, drawing them into the ranks of the Party; (2) to fight against the prejudices of male proletarians towards the women, strengthening in the working men and women the consciousness of mutual interests of the proletarians of both sexes; (3) to increase the will-power of the women by drawing them into all kinds and forms of political struggle, to awaken their activity and participation in the struggle against capitalist exploitation in the bourgeois countries by mass demonstrations against the high cost of living, against the housing conditions, unemployment, and in other revolutionary forms of the class war; the participation of the women workers in the construction of the Communist State and in the Soviet Republics; (4) to put on the order of business among the tasks of the parties and to pass rules tending to the direct enfranchisement of the women, recognising her equality and the protection of her interests as the perpetuator of the race; (5) to wage a well-planned fight against traditions, bourgeois customs, and religion, clearing the way for better and more harmonious relations between the sexes, protecting the physical and moral strength of labouring humanity.

The entire work of the sections or committees should be carried on under the direct control and responsibility of the Party Committees. A member of the local party committee should be at the head of such section or committee. Communists should be members of these committees or collegiums wherever it is possible.

All measures and problems of the committees or sections of work amongst the women must not be handled by them independently, but in the Soviet Republics through the respective economic and political organs (branches of the Soviets, Commissariats, Trade Unions, etc.), and, in the capitalist countries, with the support of the respective organs of the proletarian parties, unions, factory committees, etc.

In all places where the Communist Parties exist illegally or semi-

legally, the Party should organise an illegal apparatus for work amongst women. In all illegal bodies there must be at least one party member to organise the women for illegal work.

The present period requires that Trade and Industrial Unions should form the principal basis for work amongst women, both in countries which still carry on the struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist yoke as well as in the Soviet Labour Republics.

The spirit with which the work amongst women should be imbued is that of the unity of the Party movement, of an intact organisation, of independent initiative and of independent Commissions and sections aiming at a speedy and complete emancipation of women, to be brought about by the Party. What should be striven after is not parallelism in activity, but assistance in the activity of the Party by means of self-development and initiative of the working women.

Work of the Party Amongst Women in Soviet Countries

It is the task of the Sections of the Soviet Labour Republics to educate the masses of working women in a spirit of Communism, by attracting them to the Communist Party, to inspire and develop activity and self-reliance, by drawing them into the work of constructive Communism and bringing them up as staunch defenders of the Communist International.

It is the task of the Sections to attract the women to every form of Soviet construction, including questions of defense, as well as all the many economic plans of the Republic.

In the Soviet Republic the Sections should see that all the regulations of the Eighth Congress of Soviets regarding the attraction of working and peasant women to the work of building up and organising public production, as well as their participation in the work of all those organs which direct, manage, control and organise production should be carried out. The Sections should participate through their representatives and through the Party organs in the elaboration of new laws and exercise an influence on the alteration of such as require much alteration in the interest of the enfranchisement of women. The Sections should take the greatest interest and show most initiative in the development of those laws which deal with the protection of the labour of women and children.

It is the duty of the Sections to attract the greatest possible number of working and peasant women to all election campaigns of So-

viets, as also to see to it that working and peasant women are elected as members of Soviets and of Executive Committees.

The Sections should make it their business to assist in every way possible in making a success of political and economic campaigns carried on by the Party.

It is the task of the Sections to assist the growth of skilled women labour by means of professional education, as well as to facilitate the admission of working and peasant women to the corresponding educational establishments.

The Sections should facilitate the entrance of working women into the Commission for the Protection of Labour in various enterprises, and should also accelerate the activity of the auxiliary Committees for the Protection of Mother and Child.

The Sections should make it their business to assist the development of all social institutions, such as communal houses, etc., which, basing as they do the conditions of life upon a new Communist principle, ameliorate the difficulties which women experience during the transition period; assist their rapid enfranchisement and transform the slave of the family and the home into a free co-worker in the great social renaissance, a fellow creator of new forms of life.

Through organisers working with women elected by the Communist fraction of Trade Unions, the Section should assist in the education of women workers, members of the Trade Unions, in the spirit of Communism.

The Sections should look after the due attendance of the working women at all general factory delegates' conferences.

The Sections should carry out a systematic distribution of auxiliary workers, for all the Soviet, economic and Trade Union work.

The Section must first of all take deep and firm root amongst the proletarian women, wage-earners, and organise propaganda amongst employees, housewives, and peasant women.

To build up a firm connection between the Party and the masses of the people, and to spread its influence over the non-party members of society, and also to develop the method of the education of the women folks in the spirit of Communism, by teaching self-activity and participation in practical work, the Women's Sections are to organise delegate meetings of women workers.

The delegate meetings are the best means to educate the women workers and peasants, and to spread the Party influence amongst the backward masses of women workers and peasants.

These delegate meetings are formed from factory and shop representatives of a certain region, city or volost. In Soviet Russia, the women delegates are drawn into all kinds of political and economic campaigns. They are sent into different committees in industry, are invited to control Soviet institutions, and used for regular work in the Soviet Departments, in the capacity of clerks, for two months (Law of 1921).

The women delegates should be elected at general meetings of the Shop workers, of the housewives and employees, according to a certain rate of representation fixed by the Party. The Women's Sections are obliged to carry on propaganda and agitation among the delegates, for which purpose special meetings of women delegates are to be arranged not less than twice a month. The delegates are requested to make reports of their activities either in the shops where they work, or at meetings arranged in the city districts. The delegates should be elected for a period of three months.

Another form of agitation among the women is the organisation of large non-party conferences of women workers and peasants. Representatives to conferences are to be elected at meetings held for women workers — at their place of work, and for peasant women — in the villages.

The Section for work amongst women is charged to call the conferences, as well as to supervise their work.

In order to make the best use of the experience that the women workers have secured by participating in the work and activities of the Party, the Branches and Committees carry on an elaborate campaign of propaganda by word of mouth and press. The Sections arrange meetings and discussions for the women workers at the shops and for the housewives at the city clubs. They exercise control over the delegate meetings and carry on house to house agitation.

To train active workers among the women, and to widen their understanding of Communism, the party must organise with the help of the Sections, special courses for work among the women, at each Party school or school for Soviet work.

In Capitalist Countries

The current tasks of the Committees or Sections for work among women are initiated by the circumstances of the period. On the one hand, the ruin of world economy, the rampant growth of unemployment, especially affecting the women workers and tending to increase

prostitution, the high cost of living, the acute housing question, and the threats of the new imperialistic wars; on the other hand, the unceasing strikes in all countries, repeated outbursts of armed uprisings of the proletariat, and the ever more violent civil war throughout the world, are the prologue to the inevitable world social revolution.

The women's committees must put forward the most important tasks of the proletariat, fight for the unabridged slogans of the Communist Party, of the Communists against the bourgeoisie and social-compromisers. The committees see to it that the women are not only registered as equal members of the Party, Trade Unions and other militant workers' organisations, which are waging the fight against all injustice or inequality of the women workers, but also that the women should be allowed to occupy responsible positions in the Party, Union or Co-operative on an equal basis with the men.

The Committees or Sections must facilitate the work of the wide masses of the women proletarians and peasant women in utilising their franchise in the interests of the Communist Parties during election to the parliament and to all the public institutions, explaining at the same time the limitation of those rights, in the sense of weakening the capitalist exploitation, promoting enfranchisement of women, and replacing parliamentarism by the Soviet system.

The Committees must also aid the women workers, employees and peasant women to take a most active part in the elections of revolutionary, economic and political soviets of workers' deputies, obtaining representation in them, awakening political activity of the housewives, and carrying on a propaganda of the Soviet idea among the peasant women. The special concern of the Committees must be the realisation of the principle of equal pay for equal work. It is the task of the Committee to start a campaign; drawing men and women workers into it, for free, universal education, aiding the women to become highly qualified in their work.

The Committees should see to it that women Communists take part in the legislative, municipal and other legislative organisations, in fact, wherever women have the right to vote.

While participating in the legislative, municipal and other organisations of bourgeois States, Communist women should strictly adhere to the tactics of the party, not concerning themselves so much with the realisation of reforms within the limits of the bourgeois world order, as taking advantage of every live question and demand of the working women, as watchwords by which to lead the women

into the active mass struggle for these demands, through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Committees or Sections must explain the disadvantages and waste of the system of individual housekeeping, the bad bringing up and education of the children by the bourgeoisie, rallying the women workers to the struggle for practical improvement of the conditions of the working class, waged or supported by the Party.

The Committees must aid in recruiting the women to the Communist Party from the Trade Unions, for which purpose the Communist fraction of the Trade Unions appoints an organiser for work among the women, under the direction of the Party and the local branch. The entire work of the Committee must be carried on with one purpose in view: the development of the revolutionary activity of the masses and the hastening of the social revolution.

In Economically Backward Countries (The East)

Notice: The work among the Eastern women being of great importance, and at the same time representing a new problem for the Communist Parties, the Conference deems it necessary to add to this thesis special instructions on the methods of Communist propaganda among the women of the Eastern countries, appropriate to their local habits and conditions.

In conjunction with the Communist Party the Women's Section should do everything possible to achieve in industrially weak countries, the recognition of the legal equality, the equality both of rights and obligations, of women in the Parties, Unions, and other organisations of the working class.

The Sections or Committees should carry on, in conjunction with the Party, a struggle against prejudice, religious customs and habits which maintain an oppressive hold upon the women; to achieve this it is also necessary to carry on propaganda amongst the men.

The Communist Party, together with the Sections or Commissions, should carry out the principle of the equality of women in matters of education of children, family relations and general social life.

The Sections should look for support in their work, first of all, amongst the large classes of women who are exploited by capitalism in the capacity of workers in home industries, as laborers on rice, cotton, and other plantations, and assist in the general establishment of communal workshops and home co-operatives; this applies espe-

cially to all Eastern peoples living within the borders of Soviet Russia; the Sections should also assist in the general organisation of all women engaged in plantation work with the working men united in Trade Unions.

The raising of the general educational level of the population is one of the best means of fighting the general stagnation of the country as well as religious prejudices. Committees or Sections should, therefore, assist in the opening of schools for grown-ups and children, such schools also to be accessible to the women. In bourgeois countries the Committees should carry on a direct agitation to counteract the influence of the bourgeois schools.

Wherever possible, Sections or Committees should carry the agitation into the homes of the women and utilise the field work of the women for purposes of agitation. They should also organise clubs for working women, doing everything to attract to these clubs the most backward section of the women. These clubs should represent cultural and educational centers and model institutions, illustrating what can be achieved by women for their emancipation, through such means of self-activity, as the organisation of creches, kindergartens, schools for adults, and so forth.

Special clubs should be organised for nomadic peoples.

In Soviet lands the Sections, together with the Party, should assist in the transformation of the existing pre-capitalist forms of production and economics into a communal form of production. They should be practically propagated, in a manner to convince the working women, that the former home-life and home production oppressed and exploited them, whilst communal labour will emancipate them.

With regard to the peoples of the East who live within the borders of Soviet Russia, the Sections should take care that Soviet legislation should equalise men and women, and that the interests of the women should be properly protected. For this purpose the Sections should assist in appointing women to the position of judges, and as members of juries in national Courts of law.

The Sections should also get the women to participate in Soviets, taking care that working and peasant women should be elected into the Soviets and Executive Committees. All work amongst the women proletariat of the East should be done on a class basis. It should be the task of the Sections to expose the powerlessness of the Moslem feminists in the solution of the question of the enfranchisement of

women. For enlightening purposes in all the Soviet countries of the East, the intelligent feminine forces should be utilised, as, for instance, women teachers and sympathisers, avoiding all tactless and vulgar treatment of religious faiths and national traditions. The Sections or Committees working amongst the women of the East should definitely fight against nationalism and the hold of religion on the women's minds.

All the organisations of the workers should, in the East as well as in the West, be built not upon the basis of defending national interest, but upon the unity of the International proletariat of both sexes striving for the same class aims.

Propaganda and Agitation

In order to fulfill the principal tasks of the Sections, dealing with the Communist education of the large masses of the proletariat, and in order to reinforce this body of fighters, it is necessary that all Communist Parties of the West and of the East should realise that the principle of work among women is: "agitation and propaganda by deed."

Agitation by deed first of all signifies an ability to arouse a sense of independence in the working women, to eradicate the distrust in themselves and, by attracting them to the practical work of construction, to teach them by practical experience that every conquest of the Communist Party, that every action which is directed against capitalist exploitation, is one more step toward the improvement of the position of women. The method which the Communist Party and its Sections for work amongst women should use, can be expressed in the following words: "From experience and action, to a knowledge of the ideas of Communism and its theoretical principles."

In order that the Section should represent organs not of verbal propaganda alone, but also of activity, it is necessary that they should work in contact with the Communist Fractions of the various enterprises and workshops, for which purpose the latter should supply an organiser for the work amongst the women of the respective enterprise or workshop.

The Sections should come into contact with the Trade Unions through their representative or organisers, who are appointed for the purpose by that Trade Union fraction, and who should carry on work under the direction of Sections.

Propaganda, by deed, of Communist ideas in Soviet Russia, signifies that all the women workers, peasant women, housewives and

employees in all spheres of Soviet Life, from the army and militia down to every enfranchised Oblast (district), should be drawn into the work of the organisation of Communal Housekeeping, of establishing the necessary number of institutions for Public Education, institutions for the Protection of Motherhood, and so forth. A special task is to draw the labour women into the bodies that control, etc., the production.

Active propaganda, by deeds, in the capitalist countries, means first of all the enlistment of the women workers to take part in strikes, demonstrations and other forms of the class struggle, fortifying and enlightening the revolutionary will and consciousness; the recruiting of women workers to all sorts of Party activity, their utilisation for purposes of illegal work, particularly in despatch service, the organisation of party "Saturdays" or "Sundays" at which all women sympathisers of communism, the wives of labouring and professional men, in this way learn to be useful to the Party. The principle of propaganda by acts and deeds is also aided by drawing the women into all political, economic or educational campaigns, from time to time carried on by the Communist Parties.

While organising the feminine forces for the Party the Sections must, first of all, leave deep and firm roots amongst the women workers, developing propaganda activity also among the housewives, employees and peasant women.

In order to carry out the work of propaganda by word of mouth, according to a plan, the Sections must arrange meetings in the factories and workshops, also open meetings for women workers and employees according to profession or location, as well as general public meetings of housewives. They must see to it that canvassers and organisers are elected by the Communist groups of the Trade Unions, co-operative and industrial councils in capitalist states, and that women members are elected in all the organising, controlling and administrative bodies of the Soviet institutions. In a word, the labour women must be elected to all organisations, which in capitalist countries must be used to revolutionise the exploited and oppressed masses, and assist them in their struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat; and in Soviet countries to such organisations as serve to defend and realise Communism.

The Sections must delegate experienced women Communists as workers or employees to enterprises where great numbers of women are employed. These comrades must settle down in large Proletarian

districts and centres as practiced with success in Soviet Russia. In the same way as the working women's organisations of the Communist Party in Soviet Russia organise meetings and conferences of delegates not belonging to any party, the Communist women's committees in the capitalist countries must convene public meetings of women workers, female employees of every kind, peasant women and housewives, to discuss various questions and needs of the day, and elect committees to serve as connecting links between their respective constituencies and the Communist women's organisations, and to attend to the questions raised. They should also send speakers representing their views to gatherings of opposing organisations. Public propaganda by means of meetings, etc., must be supplemented by constant and regular home propaganda.

Each Communist woman engaged in this work should have not more than ten women to visit at their homes, on whom she ought to call regularly at least once a week, and also on every occasion of importance to the Communist Party, or the Proletarian masses.

In order to promote agitation, organisation and education among the masses by written word, the women's Section of the Communist Parties are charged to work for the establishment: (1) of a central women's Communist journal in every country; (2) to secure the appearance of a woman's department in the Communist press, as also the printing of articles in the political and industrial papers. They must provide editors for such publications, and find adequate assistance for them in the ranks of professional and militant women. The Sections must publish and distribute simple, stimulating and adequate literature in pamphlets and leaflets. They must strive to make the best possible use of their members.

Women Communists should be sent to attend courses in Party schools in order to intensify their class consciousness and to prepare them for work among the masses of women. Special courses, lectures and discussions for women can be organised only in case of special conditions and urgent necessity.

In order to enhance the spirit of comradeship among male and female workers it is desirable not to organise separate courses or schools, but to establish, in the general Party schools, sections for courses for work among women. The Sections exercise a right to elect a certain number of their women members for attendance at the general Party courses.

Construction of the Sections or Committees of work Sections

amongst the women must be organised by each Party Local Executive, District Executive and the Central Executive Committee of the Party.

Each country decides for itself the numbers of members in these Sections or Committees. The number of members of the Sections, who are paid by the Party, is also fixed by each party according to the possibilities.

The director or chairman of the local Committees or Sections must be a member of the local Party Committee.

Where this is not the case, the Director of the Section is present at all meetings of the Party Committee, with the right of decisive vote on all questions of the women's Committees, and with a consultative vote on all other questions.

Besides the duties of the district Section or Committee above mentioned, the following tasks are also part of their work: to maintain connections between the Sections of one district with the Central Sections; to collect facts on the activity of the district Sections or Committees; to facilitate the exchange of material between the local branches; to supply the district with literature; distribute agitators among the districts; to mobilise the efficient party workers for work among women; to call district conferences of the women Communists, representatives of branches, with a representation of one or two from each Branch, at least twice a year; to call non-party conferences of women workers, peasant women and housewives of a particular district. The members of the Section or the Committee are approved by the provincial Committee or the county Committee on recommendation by the Director of the Section. The director, as well as the other members of the county Committees and province Committees, are elected at the conferences of the county.

Members of the district or local Sections or Committees are elected at a general city, county or district conference, or are appointed by the respective Sections in agreement with the Party Committee. If the director of the section is not a member of the district Party Committee, he has the right to be present at all meetings of the party Committee with a decisive vote on all questions of the Branch, and with a consultative vote on all other questions.

Besides all the functions above mentioned, which are the duties of the district Sections, the Central Section must fulfil the following additional functions: instruct the Sections and their workers; investigate the work of the Section; take charge, in connection with the re-

spective organs of the party, of the transfer of workers from one Section to another; observe the conditions and development of work, consider the changes in the legal or economic situation of the women, its representatives or appointees; participate in Special Committees, solving the questions of bettering the conditions of existence of the working class, protection of labour, protection of childhood, etc.; publish a central "page" and edit periodical journals for women; call conferences of the representatives of all the district Sections not less than once a year; organise agitational excursions of instructors on work among the women of the country; take charge of the recruiting of women and of the participation of all Sections in all sorts of political and economic campaigns and demonstrations of the party; send delegates to the International Secretariat of Women Communists; take charge of the annual International Women's day.

If the Director of the Women's Section of the Executive Committee of the Party is not a member of the Executive Committee, he has the right to be present at all the meetings of the Executive Committee, with a decisive vote on all questions concerning the Sections, and with a consultative vote on all others. The director of the Section or the chairman of the Committee is appointed by the Central Executive Committee, or is elected at the general Party Congress. The decisions and resolutions of all Sections or Committees are subject to the final sanction of the respective Party Committee.

Work on an International Basis

The direction of the work of the Communist Parties of all countries, uniting the women workers for the tasks set by the Comintern, and drawing the women of all countries and nations into the revolutionary struggle for the Soviet system and the dictatorship of the working class, on a world basis, is the task of the Women's Secretariat of the Comintern.

