1. Our politics begin with our feelings. Feelings are a direct response to the events and relationships that we experience; that's how we know what's really going on. For centuries women's information has been categorized as magic, in­
stinct, intuition, witchcraft, and more recently, projections, distortions, per­
sonal hangups, and other variations on a theme designed to render our knowledge meaningless and empty. Women who have insisted on communicating and acting on their knowledge have traditionally been punished according to the customs of the times. Three hundred years ago we were burned; now we are locked up in punitive institutions and labeled mentally ill, threatened with rape, isolation, and death. Information derived from our feelings is our only reliable information; and our political analysis can be trusted only so long as it does not contradict our feelings.

Our first task is to develop our capacity to be aware of our feelings and to pinpoint the events or interactions to which they are valid responses. This method has taught us that we do not oppress ourselves and that our pain is not the result of masochism, self hate, or inferiority, but is a response to some be­

avior that was in fact designed to humiliate, hurt, and oppress us.

2. The political unit in which we can discover, share, and explore our feel­
ings is the small group. Raising our collective consciousness is not a process

that begins and ends, but is continuous and necessary given the enormous pressure placed on us everywhere to deny our own perceptions or feelings. By facing our pain together we can begin to imagine the absence of that pain and develop an idea of our needs or our vision. In our groups we ask what stands between us and that vision and in each particular case we see the enemy is men and their interests: male supremacy.

3. Male supremacy is neither a psychological set nor a meaningless abstraction that we feel, but cannot touch. Male supremacy is that total system which oppresses us in every aspect of our lives. Male supremacy as an eco­
nomic system is that one in which every individual man has greater access to scarce goods and resources than any individual woman. All women must perform some kind of labor for a man or men in order to survive. The kind of labor in each particular case depends on the economic relationship of the man to other men. Male supremacy is expressed in every encounter between a man and a woman, beginning with the most subtle gesture, which if not successful escalates in intensity until physical violence occurs. Male chauvinism is the system of beliefs or ideology by which men have rationalized their position of power and dominance and reduced the need for resorting to violence by defining the oppressed class in such a manner as to make the system appear to be an immutable law of nature.

Historically male supremacy has gone through distinct stages. In most of these such as slavery, feudalism, and capitalism a few men have dominated other men in some aspects of their lives as well as all men totally dominating women. Monopoly capitalism-imperialism is the current stage of male supremacy in our society and socialism in e.g. Cuba, China, and the Soviet Union is a more advanced stage of male supremacy in which the means of production and reproduction are owned by all men collectively. Both bourgeois and Marxist social scientists have failed to produce any meaningful analysis of society because they have excluded over half of the world's population and focused only on the fluctuating patterns of dominance and exploitation between men, rather than on the basic economic system which has remained remarkably stable for centuries.

In each historical stage of the system women have been exploited as labor and objects owned by men and thus divided. Women controlled directly by "working class" men have been labeled "working class women" and women controlled directly by "ruling class men" have been labeled "ruling class women" when in fact they have had nothing whatsoever to do with controlling the means of production. These women's real class interests lie entirely with the women who are directly controlled by "working class" men. Domination hierarchies between women have reflected the hierarchies of their controllers thus facilitating the smooth working of the system.

The technological changes that put women in the mills early in the industrial revolution broke the chain of total dependency on the private male controller, or the family. Thus, acting on the short-range interests of capitalist profits planted the seeds that will ultimately destroy the system.

4. The economic system of male supremacy lies at the core of our oppression, and until it has been destroyed we will never be free. Equality and justice will be meaningless until we have equal access to scarce goods and resources so that we do not need to work and put out for men in order to survive. Because men benefit in every way from the system in which they reap all the rewards, they will not hand us our liberation. In order to be free we must seize power from men in all aspects of our lives.
II.

1. Our movement is under pressure from the media, the new left, and the old left all of which are run by men, and, consequently, interested in destroying us. They are using old well-tested techniques: pushing individual opportunism, appealing to our guilt, to our oppression. Their real intentions are most often hidden behind devilously supportive rhetoric designed to co-opt us. Our only protection is in our method of sharing our real feelings regardless of how unacceptable we fear they are. Each one of us has a secret wish to be rich and famous or a Life magazine revolutionary hero because the alternative has been invisibility. Each one of us longs for respect and warmth because we have been totally deprived and starved, while somehow giving all to males. A tendency to opportunism lives in each of us, and is dangerous only when we hide it from each other. We can withstand the efforts to co-opt us if we honestly share the feelings such efforts evoke and deal with their causes by real support. In this sense we are entering a new era in which we are really being treated as a collectivity and responding as a collectivity and our consciousness raising must intensify and direct itself to the collective issues at hand.

2. Within our movement there is a strong tendency towards idealism which is dangerous because it obscures real motivations with fancy rhetoric about morals and ethics which makes us afraid or ashamed to express our true feelings and blocks the communication of information necessary for successful evaluation of real conditions. We cannot rely on the moral principle of a sisterhood which does not exist. It is as absurd as its power counterpart, the Mafia or brotherhood. What we can rely on is a real understanding of the necessity of the collectivity in order to achieve the ends of the self-interests of each one of us. Good and bad is not at issue. Our success depends on a realistic appraisal of the conditions of every situation, not on our wishes, and idealistic thinking hinders such an appraisal.

3. We identify with all women. We define our best interest as that of the poorest, ugliest, most brutally exploited woman. We repudiate all economic, racial, educational, religious, or status differentiations that divide us from other women.

4. We are often criticized for not doing anything. While there is a truth to that criticism and it's very hard for us to take ourselves seriously enough to stick with endeavors outside of our small groups. The solution is not to jump into superficial pseudo-activities but to carefully analyze the prevailing conditions that have made it difficult for us to carry through projects and actions. The success of a project depends on the commitment to oneself and one another. The initiative and responsibility taken by each woman involved and the analysis of why a project fails must refer back to the small group in which each woman identifies the feelings associated with that aspect of her work which will provide the necessary clues for analysis. For example, if we want to understand why our abortion workshop or "Off the Chronicle" committee stopped functioning each woman involved has to reconstruct what really went down that inhibited her initiative. Piecing each story together will give us a realistic idea of what happened and why and perhaps make the next projects more successful.

5. Our bodies are male-occupied territory. The point about power is that what the Lord can give, the Lord can take away; women are still forced into the ultimate oppression—the total schizophrenia of being completely intimate, yet completely not ourselves. When the lord can take away personhood, it is total state power vested in one individual; and the other is in solitary.

We are not allowed to love any woman's body including our own. In addition to being considered unlovable women are considered incomplete human beings, and therefore any bond existing between two women must always by its nature remain an inadequate alternative to bondage to a man. The fear of "lesbianism" is an effective male device to keep us from relating freely to ourselves and each other. Nor, as is often forgotten, can we relate freely to men, since slavery is our condition and is designed to fulfill their needs, never ours.

6. Many of us entered the women's movement while still involved with various left-wing organizations. We expected to be able to work in both movements and were surprised by the speed with which our so-called comrades on the left threw...
us out as we began to make our demands. Painful as such experiences were to us they served the purpose of clarifying the distinctions between friends and enemies. Quite naturally, the men used the women under their control as henchmen, a tactic which worked quite nicely in creating a division between us. They dug it as voyeurs watching a catfight. Now we are openly slandered as "bourgeois feminists," "cultural Kotex," "honky mothers," "white bitches," "lesbians," etc. Woman is again a dirty word not to be mentioned in public. Incidents such as those around International Women's Day will undoubtedly continue to occur. While we clearly cannot allow the women controlled by movement men to disrupt our meetings or plans, we should not fall for the enemy's tactics and consider ourselves permanently divided from those women, many of whom will choose to leave the "stagnant" (male-dominated movement) and become feminists as the women's movement becomes a strong and visible revolutionary alternative for them and one that better serves their own self-interests.

7. Some of us feel that it is time to begin to define ourselves as a membership organization or party of revolutionary feminists consisting of our small groups, intergroup council, or council if we become national. In other words, things would be as they are now, but our identity would be strengthened and clarified in terms of what we stand for instead of what we are against. We would work both inside and outside of our party and join other women in their particular struggles against male supremacy trying wherever possible to bring them into small groups. Our party would be neither the traditional mass party nor a centralist party, but a flexible organization of a non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian nature in which forms would evolve from rather than direct the needs of the members. The openly stated long-range revolutionary goal of such an organization would in no way hinder its members from working on particular short-range goals which the counterleft has often called reformist, but which in fact are necessary steps in the overthrow of male supremacy.

Redstockings

Submitted at

SF Meeting of W.L.
March 21, 1970

Written by Lynn O'Connor
(of the Second Page) This
is what first got me
interested in her... then
+ her article "Defining
Reality," which she
had written the year
before + which Redstocking
(NY) had been
distributing. This "manifesto"
was the first time Lynn
called herself Redstocking.

Through