THE FEMINISTS is a group of women committed to the study of the causes underlying the persecution of women and to direct action to eradicate this persecution. Our principles and the structure through which we operate are set forth in the following paragraphs. Membership in the group is contingent on acceptance of the basic principles and adherence to policies decided upon by the group.

The first principle of THE FEMINISTS is the principle of equality. Equality among all human beings is, for us, both a premise and a goal. The assumption underlying the existence of our group is that in political affairs all people have the right to contribute equally, and further, that everyone has the potential to do so. Politics in its broadest sense refers to interaction among people with respect to their shared world or life, rather than activities which are solitary or affect only a group of intimates. Political ability involves the ability to speak and to act effectively. Everyone knows how to speak to other people and can refine that ability by experiences in the group; everyone can develop the ability to act, to take the initiative, to begin something new rather than simply to carry out instructions or adhere to conventions. Political abilities are general human abilities and we claim that potential in these areas is about the same in all people. We cannot prove this assumption but neither can the opposite (that inequalities are natural) be proven until we rid ourselves of all oppression, i.e., of any and all instances of unequal treatment or opportunity which create artificial inequalities among us. Until then logic and a sense of decency compel us to assume that all people are equal.

We have tried to build this idea into the structure of the group. Since we must be for all women, we have to find ways to remedy the inequities that exist in society and separate women—not merely to eliminate formal hierarchy, but to create a structure which will prevent those who have had more opportunity for development than others from taking the lead. The main structural contribution to feminism we have made is the use of the lot system. We believe that it is essential to the process of equalization as well as being the most direct form of participatory democracy among equals.

The lot system works in the following way: each member's name is placed on two pieces of paper which are deposited one in each of two envelopes, the first, labelled the "privileged lot" the second, the "routine lot." Then a job comes up a name is chosen from one of these envelopes depending on the nature of the job.
An individual chosen for a certain type job will not be chosen for a job of the same type until everyone has had a turn. The routine lot distributes those jobs which are drudgery and ought not to fall to certain individuals exclusively as it does in the rest of society. The privileged lot distributes those jobs which involve necessary revolutionary skills (e.g. writing, speaking, organizing) and require creativity on the part of the individual. In this way, equality is sought in all things and initiating qualities are developed in every member.

Four other assumptions underlie our emphasis on the lot system:

1. women as an oppressed class are deprived of their individuality and therefore have a right to expect from a feminist group every aid in achieving this human right;
2. alongside the male/female class system and developing from it, there are economic, social and racial class systems based on unequal treatment and opportunity; black women and women in the lower classes are twice oppressed and therefore a feminist group has the responsibility to do everything necessary to eliminate the effects of these inequalities;
3. groups with leaders are hierarchical and hierarchy necessarily suppresses the initiative of the majority of the membership;
4. as leaderless groups are dependent upon the strength of each member, an equal share in responsibility and creativity for oneself and for the group is a necessity.

The equality we hope to achieve does not in any way imply uniformity. The society we envision for the future is one based on the principles of equality and individuality. Each person born into the world experiences it in a different way and has different things to say about it—the time one is born, one's particular constitution, as well as the specifics of one's environment form an individual and unique consciousness. In the society in which we live individuals are made to fit themselves into pre-existing stereotypes (e.g. feminine, masculine) in order to function without harassment. Our uniqueness is squelched as early as possible. THE FEMINISTS acknowledges differences in people and, unlike the uptight male world, is not afraid of them. In the work of the group each person will approach a job in a way peculiar to herself, and the completed job will reflect something of her individuality.

A further point in need of elucidation is our attitude toward the idea of leadership. We think that leadership, when it becomes attached to more than a unique action, when it is stabilized into a role, always involves oppression. The role of the leader is to initiate (or at its worst to rule)—that
The ability of the majority of people to initiate, to start something new, is suppressed. Leadership creates a hierarchy which destroys inspiration, intuition and ingenuity from below. It is in the nature of a hierarchy to monopolize the finer human endeavors for the top, while delegating meager duties, routine jobs for those on the bottom. It creates a class system based on skills which are not available to everyone, when someone from the lower classes makes it to the top (which happens very rarely), she is immediately initiated into the cult of the leader, made to feel threatened by those below, to identify exclusively with a "higher type". Most people succumb. Hierarchy has been so bred into us through our culture that we have come to imagine an innate pecking order among us. We tend to respect power and believe that it is not accidental but essential to certain personalities. But leadership depends on the opportunity to develop certain skills and perfect them. This opportunity is denied to the majority.

The oppressed often lack "initiative". But in actual fact, women, blacks and the poor have been slapped back every time they have attempted to take matters into their own hands, to make a new start in their own behalf. The inequalities that exist among women are the result of class and environment. They must be eliminated. Privileged women cannot win our freedom for us, whoever attempts to do so is acting against the interests of all women. In a group in which everyone retains intact the power to initiate, where this is encouraged and made self-conscious, no one can be said to rule, not even temporarily. Ideas are no longer "things", bits of property to be possessed and cherished, but part of the process of human relationships, a characteristic of a person, an effect produced on a subject by a subject. Sometimes one person leads off, sometimes another. But we do not merely discourage the deification of one person, but also each of us accepts the responsibility for everyone's equal participation in the group.

Another method used in THE FEMINISTS to ensure equality is the "disc system". Each member is supplied with a fixed number of discs at the beginning of each meeting. Everyday a member speaks she must throw out a disc. When her discs run out she forfeits the right to speak until the end of the meeting. Since speech is the most forceful and immediate way of distinguishing oneself and influencing others, we adopted this method as a means of equalizing the number of times each person can speak. Before we started using this method, only a few members would have the floor for almost the entire meeting, we also discovered some correlation between class and talkativeness which worked against the interests of the less privileged women. This method, of course, is not foolproof since it only limits those who talk too much, but does not necessarily
increase the number of times a shy or reserved woman will speak. However, it does discourage digressions and ego trips and encourages each person to think before she speaks.

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Besides achieving equality among all members and developing the resources of each member, THE FEMINISTS wants to make a revolution. Four important principles are derived from this purpose: (1) that organization is a necessary prerequisite to successful action; (2) that all women must be educated in the necessary revolutionary skills; (3) that a high degree of commitment must be the mark of every feminist; and (4) that action must proceed from theory.

ORGANIZATION

It is in the nature of oppression that individuals acting separately cannot overcome the effects of it. This is because, though affecting individuality as an ideal, the oppressor is actually well-organized and firmly entrenched; and, though divided on almost every other issue, the oppressors can always be counted upon to stand collectively against one of the oppressed. But neither can spontaneous mass actions force the kind of changes that are necessary to our liberation. Unorganized masses are far too indiscriminate, variable and concerned with immediate needs to sustain a consistent and single-minded movement against the establishment. Only groups of women organized on the basis of strength and stability and guided by a clearly enunciated analysis have a chance of achieving a radical transformation of society.

At this point it is the small independent group that is the basic unit of the movement. This is only a transitional phase. We must assume that each small group with relevant distinctions in theory and tactics is the kernel of a larger organization which will be composed of affiliated groups united by a common analysis, principles and a single structure. The small group is the beginning of a process; as such it must have within it the seeds of its own expansion. It creates power, which is the product of the collective strength of its members, and it must have stability. But how do we achieve these once we have rejected leadership and institutionalized division of labor? The only way is through the total commitment and political education of every member.

POLITICAL EDUCATION

It is our purpose to make every member of the group a trained and eventually, a full-time revolutionary. The acquisition of the necessary skills, such as the ability to speak and write
well, to organize, to agitate on feminist issues, and to create and explain theory, as well as the knowledge of facts and statistics, has been a major concern of the group. We teach each other these skills, learn from experience, utilize the lot system as well as voluntary workshops in an effort to transform ourselves into an organization of skilled revolutionaries capable of carrying on the struggle for change. We are continuing to educate ourselves and to provide education for all women who long to contribute actively and creatively in the work of their own liberation.

COMMITMENT

Part of all oppression is the cultivation in the oppressed of an attitude of irresponsibility and low self-esteem. These are the insidious effects of the master/slave, leader/follower relationship. THE FEMINISTS therefore seeks to nourish responsibility and self-discipline in all of its members. The way we have gone about this is first, by trying to achieve the full participation of every member in the work of the group so as to make total commitment possible and desirable and, second, by the creation of a set of standards for the group. These standards were not the work of one individual but of the entire group and evolved from group discussion, experience in actions and problems posed by individual members. They are also subject to change at any time. We feel that the existence of rules and standards have the following functions:

1. act as a safeguard against the inequality which results when self-interest and competition are allowed free reign in a group;
2. define a minimum commitment for each member of the group by which she can objectively judge her own development;
3. provide a minimum of security for each member of the group by clarifying exactly what each member can expect from the others;
4. create and maintain a continuity for the group which transcends individual changeability and which is absolutely necessary in order to make plans for the future and effectively use the past.

The following are the resolutions passed by THE FEMINISTS regarding membership:

ATTENDANCE RESOLUTION: If a member misses a meeting(s) she loses her vote and her right to be in the privileged lot for the next meeting(s) she attends. That is, a member loses her vote and her right to be in the privileged lot for as many meetings as meetings she has missed, if a person misses more than 1/2 the meetings in a three-month period without a valid reason (employment or illness) she is no longer a member of THE FEMINISTS. She may reapply for membership at any time.

The recorder is to announce at the beginning of each meeting who can vote and who cannot; who is in the privileged lot and who is not.

RESOLUTION #2: Any member who misses work meetings without a valid reason (employment or illness) shall lose her vote and right to be in the privileged lot for as many regular meetings as work meetings missed. Every effort should be made to schedule work meetings at a time which is convenient for all participants.

* committee meetings or mimeograph meetings.
3. Only voting members can be in the privileged lot.
4. Any member missing a group action without a valid reason or the previous approval of the group is no longer a member of THE FEMINISTS. She may reapply for membership (in writing) if she wishes.
5. A vote of one-half of the members present at any meeting is necessary to change sections of this policy statement.
6. A vote of two-thirds of the members present at any meeting is necessary to change sections of this policy statement.
7. Any member who consistently disrupts or interferes with group discussion or activity may be expelled. A single act which constitutes an exploitation of the group or seriously endangers its work or survival may also be grounds for expulsion. Expulsion of a member requires a two-thirds majority decision of all members present at a meeting about which notification has been sent to all members at least ten days in advance.
8. Since infiltration of the group is not unlikely, if a member suspects another of being an infiltrator that member should confront her before a meeting of the group. When the act of infiltration has been established to the satisfaction of the group, the agent will be expelled immediately.
9. It is resolved that no woman who is living with a man can be a member of THE FEMINISTS.

APRIL THE FIFTH RESOLUTION:
Because the aim of THE FEMINISTS is revolution for all women and equality among all human beings, because this revolution will be accomplished only through the collective mind and energy of women working together rather than individualistically, because we believe that "feminist ideas" arise out of the common condition of women and are not therefore the exclusive property of any individual, because we see the creation of "media stars" as contrary to the aims of our movement, since it puts forth individual personalities as the originators of ideas and the source of inspiration rather than each and all women in common, because we believe that the dissemination of feminist ideas is the work and responsibility of the groups of the movement and that these groups are therefore entitled to make political decisions about the use of media;

It is therefore resolved that contact with the media on feminist issues of any member of THE FEMINISTS is to be decided upon by the group and chosen by lot. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by 2/3's of the group in advance.

Anyone who violates this rule will be held accountable to the group. Anyone who flagrantly or consistently violates this rule will no longer be a member of THE FEMINISTS.

STANDARDS FOR THE FEMINISTS

1. Work for the group takes precedence over all other activities (except employment).
2. Lateness at meetings is not permitted.
3. Talking to outsiders about the private operations of the group is forbidden.
4. Lot duties are expected to be completed on the day which they are due. It is therefore recommended that records be kept of lot obligations and that they be begun on the day following the meeting at which the jobs were drawn.
5. No digressions are permitted at meetings.
6. Each member is required to spend at least two hours per week reading data relevant to feminism.
7. Intoxicating agents—liquor or drugs—are not to be used during meetings nor three hours prior to meetings.
8. Personal living habits of members should be consistent with good health:
   - adequate sleep
   - good dietary habits
   - exercise (dependent on preference and availability)
   - medical and dental care as needed
9. Each member is responsible for the equal participation of all members at meetings and actions.
10. Cooperation rather than competition among members is expected.

**THEORY**

The final principle we consider essential to the nature of our group is the central position of theoretical work as the basis of all action. Too often in the movement this kind of work is downgraded or ignored—political writing does not frequently rise above the level of catchwords and slogans. Actions are decided upon arbitrarily—rarely are series of actions co-ordinated so as to disclose more effectively the nature of male exploitation in all its interconnections. The movement as a whole in dealing with the immediate problems of women (e.g. job discrimination or male infidelity) does not as a rule relate these problems with any theory on the male/female class system, its functions and origin. This is why reformism and opportunism are such dangers in the movement. For instance N.G.O.W. takes action on economic discrimination against women and at least talks about marriage reforms, but never clearly relates the two. If they did they would soon understand the basic service function of women in society. Marriage is an institution which employs women for the essential, though usually debasing work of society without the payment of wages. What this means is that this society exists on the backs of women. The conclusion: women must eliminate both marriage and our service function in society.

Reformism and opportunism always ride on slipshod or pseudo-analysis. They are bound to the present—to present needs and present desires. Revolutionary theory is an attempt to arrive at the basis of oppression and to deal with the future—with emerging needs and desires. We must not only deal with what women want; we must change women's idea of themselves and in
that way change what it is women want. All action must disclose the future and have its basis in the changes women must effect in themselves and in society for the sake of total liberation.

The particular circumstances in which we find ourselves further necessitate work on theory:

1. The feminist movement is only in the process of formation. Trends exist which have not been settled or evaluated or in some cases even clearly distinguished. Many of these trends could be mere diversions. We must define them. Reformism and dogmatic Marxism are two such trends, but numerous other shades of opinion exist as exemplified by the proliferation of small groups in the larger cities. Only the very short-sighted will, at this point in our development, call for unity and the suppression of differences among us. Factional disputes and the differentiation between subtle shades of opinion are both healthy and essential to the growth of this movement.

It is only by means of theoretical struggle that a clear and consistent analysis will emerge. These disputes we are having now are not incidental but a drawing of lines that will have far-reaching effects in the development of our movement.

2. Feminism must be a movement for all women; we must seek out and combat class bias in the movement. This means that every woman, no matter of what class, race, or nationality, must be involved in the theoretical work of the movement. So far the educated and experienced white women have taken it upon themselves to direct the movement and make up almost the entire membership of the movement. Neither our theory nor our priorities reflect the experience of the poor, black or Puerto Rican women. Our theory will be false if all women do not take a hand in creating it. We will have an analysis that is truly feminist only by dealing critically with the experience of all women.

3. The problems of the feminist movement are such as have never confronted any other "revolutionary" movement in history. Our oppression is more deeply rooted in society than the blacks'. It goes back so far that no one has yet discovered the beginning of it. Our experience is seen by the male establishment as political, personal or psychological. Without theory women will not free themselves from the vise of male ideology. Their ideology is older than ours; it is more fully

"Since all previous "revolutions" have been merely upheavals among the class of men, the changes they brought about cannot be said to constitute revolution as we define it."
developed and has at its disposal infinitely more means of dissemination and enforcement.

4. In acting without theory we are doing what the oppressed have always done, i.e. reacting with flashes of consciousness and indignation but with nothing to sustain this consciousness and objectify it. A valid analysis suggests valid action, action that will get to the heart of our oppression. A lot of energy has been wasted so far struggling with incidentals or mere fashions in oppression. The time we must take to develop theory will save us a lot of waste and frustration in the future.

ALLIANCES

Our insistence on theory and its relation to action has tempered our relations with other groups in the movement. However, THE FEMINISTS have in the past formed alliances with other groups on clearly feminist issues and will continue to do so in the future, as long as the focus of these issues is consistent with our program. The degree of our involvement (in terms of group time) will be proportional to how essential it is to our program:

1. Support--If another group plans an action directly related to a feminist issue, we may give our group support.
2. Cooperation--We will join with other groups to plan and execute a single short-term or long-term action.
3. Coalition--In this instance we may join with another group (s) in a long-term, multi-faceted association.

* * *

There are three basic prerequisites for membership in THE FEMINISTS:

1. Basic agreement with our policy statements.
2. Two special orientation meetings:
   (a) to discuss personal experiences and issues relevant to feminism,
   (b) for a discussion and clarification of our policy statements.
3. A period of one month during which the prospective member will be required to develop some knowledge of the concepts, history and statistics of feminism as well as to become acquainted with the group, its ideas, method of functioning, and individual members. During this time prospective members
will be given a list of books and pamphlets from which to choose their reading matter. Women who have previously been involved in the movement may be asked to write a paper explaining the evolution of their ideas since joining the movement and what brought them to wish to join THE FENIN- ISTS. At the end of the month the group will decide upon each individual applying for membership. Our judgment will be based on whether the person understands and agrees generally with our ideas and seems willing to make the commitment we consider necessary for the success of the movement.