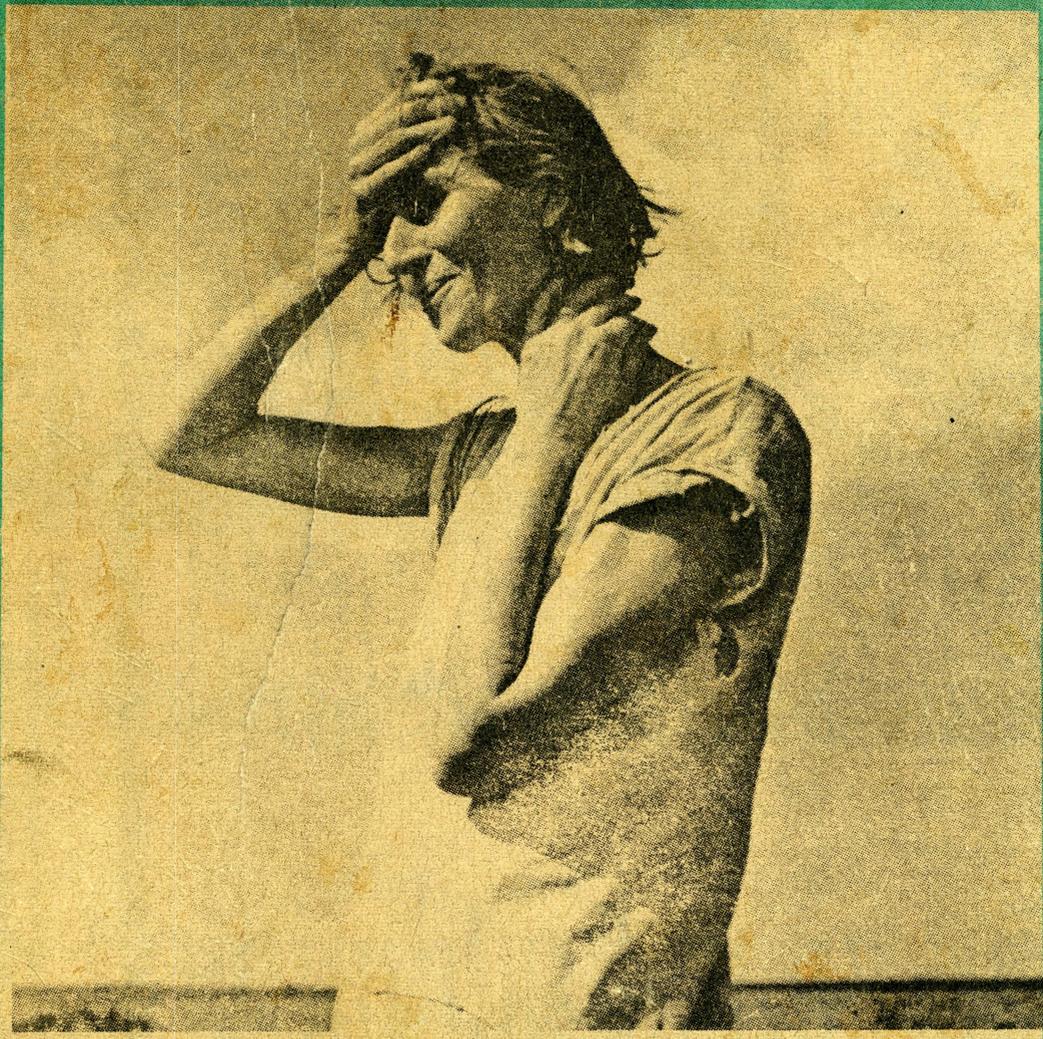


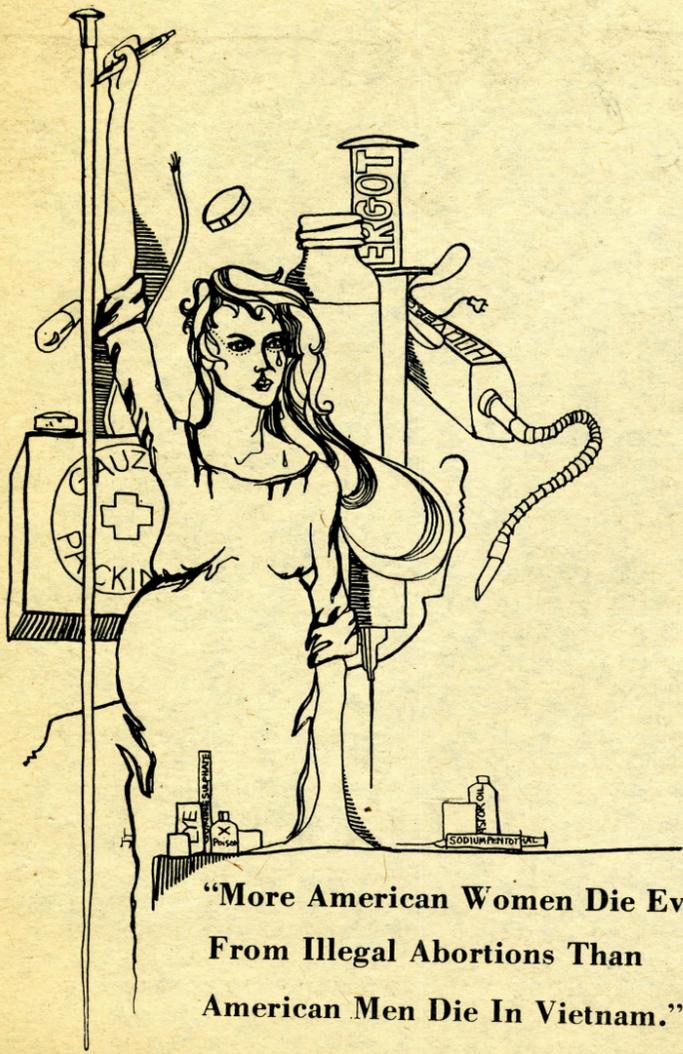
RAT

AUGUST - 2
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“they knew they could get cheap labor here. and then they turn around and call us dogs. now we are showing them we can bite.”



**"More American Women Die Every Year
From Illegal Abortions Than
American Men Die In Vietnam."**

Abortion Conference.

The Women's Strike Coalition (WSC) was formed to arrange last August 26th's demonstration and since then blossomed into a multi-issue action-oriented liberation coalition. On Monday, women from the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) who had been members of this coalition abruptly withdrew in order to form the committee for a Women's National Abortion Coalition (WNAC). Wanting to maintain WSC but unable to lose the stigma of former SWP control or pay off the \$3000 in debts the SWP women had incurred, other women from WSC formed FOCAS, Feminist Organization for Communication, Action,

and Service. This group actively pressured the committee for WNAC toward a feminist structure and platform as well as working with other feminists on such projects as a zap action at Criminal Court on July 8 against Judge Schwab's persecution of prostitutes in midtown New York.

The committee for the WNAC, largely staffed by SWP, wanted the Coalition to unite around the single issue of abortion repeal and the single tactic of mass demonstration, a philosophy SWP has been unfortunately successful in

perpetrating on the peace movement. Many sisters responded to this lack of real commitment to the women's movement by requiring that "No forced sterilization" and "No restrictions on contraception" be added to the conference call. The committee felt it could tolerate these as second-billed demands. When some lesbian sisters proposed that a fourth demand, "Freedom of sexual expression," be added to the call, the response was so antagonistic that many women walked out of the June 12 planning meeting. Not all of the women who walked out, however, were lesbians. Many joined the walk-out because they felt that a true women's liberation commitment to abortion stems from the conviction that a woman has the absolute right of control of her own body. By rejecting the fourth demand, WNAC clearly demonstrated that their commitment to political expediency far exceeded their commitment (if any) to the women's movement. At the walk-out, FOCAS called for the formation of the WISE (Women for the Inclusion of Sexual Expression) contingent to the conference. Though organized around the question of getting the whole conference to consider adoption of the fourth demand, the main thrust of the WISE contingent was to broaden the conference into a true women's liberation approach to the issues.

The conference was held at Columbia U. July 16-18. Many women, particularly those from outside the New York area, came to the conference unaware of the divisions among the planners of the conference. For some, it was a painful week-end of discovery. Others never quite understood what was at issue. The conference committee, unfortunately, were very well in control. After all attempts to open up the conference had been frustrated, a group of about 250 women representing over 70 women's liberation groups walked out of the last plenary session. These women, as a Women's Liberation Movement Caucus, disavowed any affiliation or relationship with WNAC and agreed to the following five demands: free quality abortion on demand; repeal of all abortion laws; no forced sterilization; no restrictions on contraception; and freedom of sexual expression

Since the conference, women from New York who walked out have acted through FOCAS to combat WNAC's distortions. On July 22, FOCAS coordinated a news conference at which they issued a statement which said in part:

The women who are withholding sponsorship from the Women's National Abortion Coalition differ widely among themselves on several issues of interest to women, but they are unified in opposing any manipulation of women or the women's movement by any political parties. They perceive that the planning, the structure, and the methods of this past weekend's abortion conference were dominated by a particular political party and its members, the Socialist Workers Party and its youth group, the Young Socialist Alliance.

This occurred despite constant, concerted efforts by many independent women who are truly interested in the abortion issue to cooperate in arranging an open, democratic, and effective conference that would unite women of all political beliefs in a common effort... This is *not* a "split within the women's liberation movement." It is a split *between* the movement--whose allegiance is to women's interests--and those who would *use* the movement--whose highest allegiance is to the fortunes of their own political organization.

We are united in our refusal to allow *any* political party to claim that it, or any group under its control, speaks for "women" or for the women's movement.

FOCAS is now acting to coordinate efforts to structure a true national women's liberation coalition. It is working to get WNAC endorsers to remove their names and support from WNAC and to get non-endorsers to declare their opposition. It is now collecting ideas for the structure and funding of an alternative to WNAC. These can be sent to FOCAS % Pat Korbet, P. O. Box 558, Cathedral Station, New York, New York 10025, or call 212-865-0840. FOCAS is also sorely in need of funds which can also be sent to the above address.

The workshops at the Women's National Abortion Coalition conference began Saturday morning. Many SWP/YSA members were in evidence. The chairwomen of the workshops were apparently appointed by the staff rather than chosen by the women in the workshops. The basic similarity among all of the workshops seemed to be the insistence that this conference was a one-issue conference. This seems contradictory since there were three established demands and one other (the fourth demand) the inclusion of which was to be voted upon. Many of the workshops seemed to be lectures rather than group-participation workshops. The afternoon workshops were much the same.

Saturday evening was set aside for a plenary session at which there was to be no voting. During this session, those of us who supported the fourth demand--which was labelled "the lesbian issue"--were repeatedly ignored when we wished to speak, we were called divisive, we were compared to Nixon, we were called the delegation from the sub-committee on un-American activities, and were booed and hissed at. We were witnesses to incredible railroading through of various suggestions. When the WISE group left the plenary to caucus, a vote was taken

to alter slightly the agenda for the next day so that women from out-of-town could stay to vote. It had been specifically stated that no vote would be taken. We returned with a statement to read to the assembly which was taken directly from a YSA publication that obviously showed the YSA plan to move in and literally take over the women's movement by supplying the leadership and education that was needed.

While this was being read the assembly shouted and booed and tried to take over the microphone.

Eventually, the microphone was disconnected. When we continued to read, nearly the whole assembly began to chant "Sit down, sit down," so we sat down in the front of the auditorium. Finally, the statement was read and met with cheers of "Right on" and other phrases in support of the YSA position from the assembly. We left the auditorium in rather advanced stages of frustration and caucused again. We decided to meet the next morning to decide about using establishment press to try to explain what was happening.

Sunday at the final plenary I came to a point past which I cannot clearly state the facts of what happened. I saw women looking at us to see how we were voting

and then voting against us. I saw women vote down the proposal for free abortion on demand which clearly means that poor women are still in the position of not being able to get abortions when they need them. After this, we (the WISE women) left again after formally withdrawing our support. After we had gone out to caucus, the assembly voted that no WISE women would be allowed to vote unless they relinquished their affiliations with WISE. They also voted that they would identify themselves and the conference as part of the Women's Liberation Movement. On Sunday afternoon, several well-known women withdrew their support also. During their speeches, they were harassed and the microphones were disconnected.

I am angry, so angry that all I feel I can do is not forget what I saw and felt. Women came to me with statements like, "You're a lesbian: let me ask you a question." That kind of objectification is somehow more painful when it comes from women. I have to stop now. I am feeling sort of strangled by my feelings. I have to trust that what I have written will in some way make an impression on those that read it.

SLAVE LABOR

Rat p. 3



The first I heard that welfare recipients were going to be forced to work was when I read it in the paper when I was waiting in the welfare office for another check that was never delivered.

It made me scared I would be forced to work at some menial job that no-one else would do for just \$25 a week which is what I was getting. When my caseworker came down, she said I'd get a letter in the mail telling me all about it. For a lot of people the letter in the mail would be the only thing that would tell them of the change. My letter never came: which would have meant I would have been automatically cut off if I hadn't talked to my caseworker the day it happened.

Many people didn't understand the letter. They didn't go for their appointment because they knew they were sick or had children and couldn't work. They brought the letter to their caseworker a day late. They were already cut off.

What I found out was that going to the unemployment office didn't mean that you were going to have to work because there were no jobs and because if welfare said you were not able to work then the unemployment office also said you were sick and not able to work.

The only person I saw who was harassed at the unemployment office to take a job as a chambermaid was a black woman with two small children - one of whom was crippled.

The law will mostly affect women with children who aren't sick.

My caseworker told me that this wouldn't work. The legislators didn't know anything about welfare when they passed this. She said this thing wouldn't last long.

It was passed to placate the white middle-classes who were yelling that the "welfare loafers" should be made to work. But the joke will be on them because it is costing them more tax money to employ all the clerks necessary to interview everybody every two weeks and to transfer all the checks, and to hire the policemen that are present wherever there are welfare people.

Another bad part was that the checks didn't come till the 6th of the month, which means that probably a lot of people were harassed by their landlords to pay the rent and probably were evicted. And this harassment will continue because the checks will always arrive on the sixth. Now that decontrol has been passed, it's a perfect opportunity for landlords to evict welfare people.

Also a lot of checks were lost and people had to borrow \$ to live. Some of them still haven't gotten their checks.

So it was just a pile of shit.

It's impossible anyway for anyone to get on welfare unless they have strong proof they are unable to work. The only people taking the weight of this are the women.

On Monday July 19, 1971, Kisha Shakur, a member of Third World Women's Alliance who is seven months pregnant, was taken into custody by a special squad of detectives at Bronx Supreme Court - Part 14 where she was attending a hearing as a spectator in a case involving Richard Dhruba Moore, Edward Jamal Josephs and Irving Butch Mason. Kisha is the wife of Richard Moore.

As she was leaving the courtroom with the wives of the other defendants, a gang of burly detectives surrounded the women waving little orange scraps of paper in their faces which they claimed were subpoenas. They propelled the women along the hall in a rough manner and pushed them into a room full of 'officers of the law'.

At this point, the sisters asked if they were under arrest and were told no, but they were blocked from leaving. Attorney Robert Bloom was present and when Kisha was removed from the room he accompanied her. The rest of the women were detained for about one hour and then informed that Kisha had been taken to 100 Centre Street in Manhattan for further questioning.

Several hours later after futile attempts to locate her, we were informed that Kisha Shakur was being held as a material witness in the case of the State of New York against Richard Moore who is being accused of participating in the machine gunning of two of District Attorney Hogan's policemen who had been guarding his home.

Kisha is being held as a material witness in lieu of \$100,000 bail, although she is allegedly not under arrest. The D.A. had requested a quarter of a million dollars. She is being held virtually incommunicado in the Civil Jail where there are no facilities for the proper medical attention of pregnant women.



The Third World Women's Alliance is sick and tired of these gestapo tactics by so-called justice officials. These actions are outrageous on several levels. The police claim that Kisha was present during conversations about the machine gunning of police officers and that she 'typed certain notes to the N.Y. Times and radio stations WLIB'.

Furthermore, they claim that 'efforts by the police to contact and question her about the incident have been fruitless'. This statement is a blatant lie. Kisha has been harassed for the past month and a half on a daily basis by both the FBI and the local police department. In response to their many visits to her home, her place of work, and her parent's home. Kisha contacted the FBI through her lawyer and made an appointment which the FBI later canceled. The very fact that she was present in the courtroom is evidence that she was not avoiding the police.

The astronomical bail demanded by the district attorney for Kisha as a material witness has no legal precedent.

KISHA SHAKUR

Kisha Shakur has never been arrested, she was born and raised in New York City, she attended school and she worked here. The treatment accorded our sister reeks of racism. Even though she is seven months pregnant, she has been confined in jail while Leslie Bacon in a similar case, was simply detained in a hotel. Kisha is being forced to climb four flights of stairs three times a day to have her meals. For a woman in her condition, this is an outrage.

There has been a growing pattern of intimidation against third world people across the country. This repression knows no sex barriers as the cases of Lolita Lebron, Afeni Shakur, Joan Bird, Erika Huggins, Angela Davis, and now Kisha Shakur clearly show. The Third World Women's Alliance believes that this is a conscious attempt on the part of a racist, exploitive system to stifle the growing political activity of women who are fighting for fundamental change in a society that has kept their people poor and oppressed for so long.

We are calling upon all people in the interest of justice and humane treatment to demonstrate their opposition to these frame-ups and inhuman tactics, Mass murders like Lieutenant Calley walk the streets but a seven month pregnant woman like Kisha Shakur finds herself incarcerated in Civil Jail by a racist-oppressive governmental agency.

We particularly call upon our sisters to join us in this effort. Third World Women's Alliance 346 West 20th Street New York, N.Y. 10011.



LESBIANS AND THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM by Radicalesbians Health Collective

Introduction

When a group of us got together to write this article, we found that medical doctors, including gynecologists, knew little about women's bodies. They neither knew nor cared about lesbianism. Psychologists, likewise, seemed more interested in the fact that we did not fulfill the heterosexual woman's functions than in how we lived our lives and fulfilled ourselves as lesbians.

LESBIANS

When one of us expressed emotional or physical pain, not even related to her sexuality, the medical doctor or psychiatrist told her, "It's all because you're a lesbian." We are put in a non-human category through doctors' ignorance of us.

The road to health is always seen as becoming heterosexual. Especially psychologically, to be well means to have a good relationship with a man. Our problems are not human problems; they are made into lesbian problems which would go away if we became heterosexual.

Heterosexual doctors seek out our problems, not our strengths. They fit the evidence to their assumptions. Analysts tell lesbians, "You're looking for a mother"; why don't they tell heterosexual women, "You're looking for a father"?

It is the responsibility of the health professions to admit when they have no knowledge about us and therefore are incapable of treating us.

There are real pressures in lesbians' lives. These pressures are not in our heads. Any therapy that is honest must validate our anger. We have a right to be angry because there are things wrong with this society and our position in it.

The health system as it is now postulates superior-inferior relationships where the professional knows everything and the lesbian patient has no right to speak for herself. What we need is advice and support from people in an equal relationship with us.

The health system is geared to serving the heterosexual nuclear family not the personal family made up of people we love. One lesbian said, "Under the usual health plan my father can receive blood if he needs it, but my friends and lovers can't. If these people needed help I would be unable to sign legal papers to admit them to a hospital. My friends and lovers are not considered my 'immediate family.'" Instead of the current health plans there should be mutual concern contracts which groups of 3 or 4 persons could sign.

We demand that health "professionals" stop destroying our lives by teaching that lesbianism is a sickness that should be cured or abolished. They perpetuate and give validity to a society where lesbians are forced to hide. We are emotionally and economically punished when our lesbianism is known. If we work for the government we must sign forms that say we do not engage in any "sexual perversions". We answer, "No", knowing that our life-style is considered a perversion by this society. In fact, no matter who we work for and in almost every aspect of our daily lives it is assumed that human = heterosexual. Laws and institutions that discriminate against us must be changed or abolished entirely.

It is the responsibility of the medical and psychological professions to educate themselves to the validity of lesbianism as a life style. Stop negating our existence. Affirm it.

AND

D: During the spring I began talking to my shrink about my feelings towards my roommate. A, was the first woman that I had met who took herself as seriously as I took myself, who took me as seriously as I wanted to be taken. When A. and I began talking about our sexual feelings for each other I took much of my conflict and confusion to Dr. X. In spite of the fact that this person really loved me, that she was the closest person in my life and that our communication was the most effective that I had ever experienced I never felt Dr. X in any way validating or authenticating the love. Rather, he encouraged me to get in touch with all my ambivalencies about the love, without clarifying where those ambivalences came from. He thought it was 'normal' and 'healthy' to be hesitant about a homosexual relationship, so he'd validate all my fears. Dr. X never in any way suggested that my fear might grow out of my isolation, out of real pressures from the world out there to conform, that they could be anything but intra-psychic conflicts.

F: I wasn't going to talk about my relationship with my analyst but I will. She was a woman of about 45. She was having a very hard time because she was breaking up with her boyfriend. She used to come in 20 minutes to 1/2 hour late. Once she missed the appointment completely. And I used to say poor X. One day I was 5 minutes late and she said, "Why are you so late?" So I said "Well traffic is heavy." She said, "Did you really want to get here?" I said, "What do you mean? You've been late for weeks." She said, "That's not relevant." I got mad and said to her,

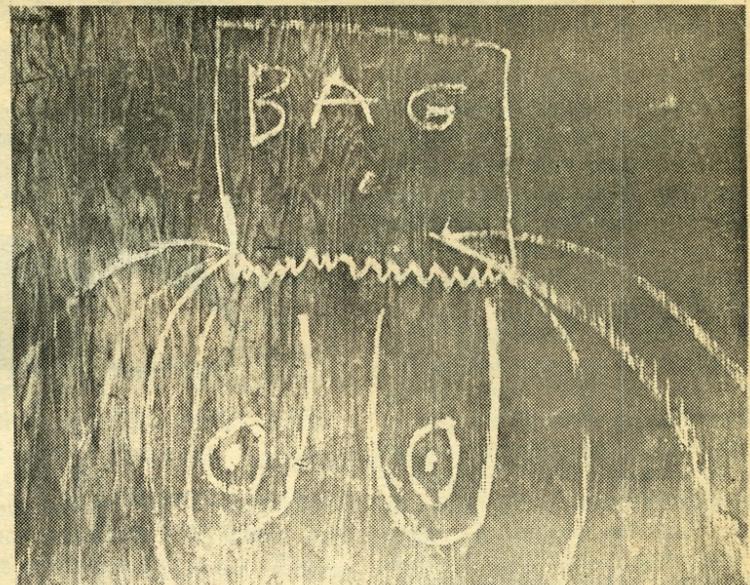
"You've been having such a hard time but if I have trouble its always because I am a lesbian.

There was always this tearing down at the root of her analysis. Everything was because I was a lesbian and it was always negative. All the time she said I couldn't call her by her first name, that I wasn't in a personal relationship with her, she let me see that she was miserable about her breakup. Later I met her at a play and she was with a man. She was sitting directly in front of me. Throughout the play she spent the whole time looking at this man. She could not enjoy herself although she seemed to like the play because the man was bored with it. She spent the whole time looking for approval from him. I couldn't reconcile this. She kept putting down women's liberation--"It's just a matter of temperament."

HEALTH

[I, initially went to her because] I needed someone to talk to. I developed a lot of affection for her. I see that she's suffered. Yet, "in her whole philosophy she expected all kinds of human consideration for herself and her failings but there was very little for the patient. There was no support. There was just, "You're very lucky that you haven't committed suicide because you are a lesbian." From there, there might be hope for you."

I had a medical doctor for about 3 years whom I "inherited" from a woman doctor. I went to him and told him I had this infection and that my gynecologist suggested he give me a diabetes test as well as check any other condition that he thought I might have. He asked me about my sex life and I had told him that I was a lesbian. He looked at me and said, "Well what do you expect?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You engage in lesbian sexual activities and that leads to infections." Then he said, "Women just have these infections and that's all there is to it. You're a woman and you have to suffer. And I think since you're a lesbian I'm going to give you a venereal disease test." I said, "No you're not."



By this time he had already taken my blood for the diabetes test because I was so stunned that I let him take my blood in the midst of this discussion. He said, "Now that I have your blood I'm sending it for a venereal disease test." I said, "You're not." He said, "You know You're a lesbian and how do you know who you consort with."

I never had the courage to admit to my gynecologist what happened. She found out about some tests that were being done on this particular infection and got me medicine that seemed to be successful at a great deal of trouble to herself. She had to look up many records and accounts of experiments. I know that if I had to depend on any

variation of the mentality of the medical doctor for my gynecological care I would still be sick.

CARE

S: I've known about my feelings for women since I was about 12. When I was about 16 I was seeing a psychologist who was very good and was a feminist. She was a white liberal very active in the civil rights demonstrations then. She was the first person I spoke to who was a model for me other than my family where the women got married when they were 15. One day I asked her I told her that I didn't understand why when I was on the subways I found myself gazing at women. She asked me, "When you look at women what do you fantasize?" and I told her I fantasize making love. She said, "Do you imagine yourself having a penis?" and I assumed the answer was yes. So I said, "I think so," and she said, "Don't worry. That means you're going through a late adolescent stage that you'll outgrow. It's something that a 13 year old usually goes through when they're going through puberty wondering about what the opposite sex is feeling." I never outgrew it. Luckily. But what that did to me was that I kept waiting to outgrow it. I kept feeling that that was part of my childishness and this childishness was a bad thing. I started going to movement doctors, people who were trying to break down the whole hierarchy of professional and patient. I started seeing this dermatologist because I didn't have any money for a mononucleosis test and he was going to take me for free. He had me come when his nurse wasn't there. He was a young doctor. All I was getting was a shot in the finger to test for mono. I walked in and he said, "Take your clothes off." I took my clothes off. He pricked my finger and took the test and told me to get dressed and come back next week. I was angry but I couldn't deal with it because he was a doctor --- I was intimidated. I found out the people who recommended the doctor were into free love. They had met him in a clinic in one of the major

hospitals and while he was examining the women they fucked, and they hadn't bothered to tell me that was why he was so groovy. I got sick but was so intimidated by doctors that instead of going to get cured I spent a month in bed hemorrhaging from ulcerated colitis.

W: When I first went to see a gynecologist I had a vaginal infection. I was about 20. She asked me about my relationships with men and I managed to say I was a lesbian. She said, "Oh, you play around with women." One time when she was examining me she asked me something to which I answered again that I was a lesbian. Just at that moment she was taking the vaginal clamp out of the cabinet where it is sterilized and it fell on the floor. She picked it up and used it anyway. I felt she did that because I was a lesbian and it didn't matter that something she used on me wasn't sterile. When she handed me medicine at the end of my visits, she actually laughed at me.

P: When I first went to this psychiatrist over 5 years ago he said I wasn't gay, the problem was with my mother. He told me to have sexual experiences with men. He thought he would help me out by having sex with me. So we had sex about 5 or 6 times during therapy sessions which I paid for. He insulted me when I wore slacks or jeans or anything that didn't seem feminine. Sex was just a mechanical act and I didn't think it would cure anything because it didn't help me relate emotionally to a man. He was shaving during about 80% of my sessions. He seemed bored, uninterested.

CONCLUSION

We want every gynecologist we go to to know all aspects of lesbian sex with relation to gynecology and not to say, "I don't know. There haven't been any studies." We demand that every doctor or psychologist know these facts about lesbianism that are relevant to her or his specialization. The prevailing myths thrive on ignorance.

We demand that doctors know all aspects of society's pressures on us and stop enforcing those pressures on themselves, so that they can no longer find the most ordinary details of our lives shocking, "Oh you take walks together." or ask us insulting questions, ("How does it feel to hold hands on the street?"). We demand that no analyst treat homosexuals or lesbians only on the basis of textbook knowledge --- some of it ancient, some of it invented in heterosexual men's imaginations ---

without human contact with us and without having homosexual experiences themselves. Psychologists must stop trying to redirect our energies towards heterosexuality.

We demand that doctors and hospitals acknowledge our lesbian friends or lovers as our true family when it comes to hospitalization or emergencies. Trust the people we trust and allow them to help us.

Women doctors should be encouraged to be gynecologists. Up to now, the field that is closest to our

bodies has been treated by men who don't know what it is like to have female genitals or to experience menstruation. Why must we ask men questions about ourselves?

We lesbians must have the full health field open to us without stigma. Women are frightened away from caring for other women's genitals because of taboos on lesbianism. Our genitals most of all belong to men. Must it be a male privilege to inspect a woman's body and tell us how to care for ourselves? We can never honestly ask men our questions because they can never honestly answer them.

There should be neighborhood women's clinics to deal with women's problems. Women should learn to transmit preventative medical care. At present, little information on genitals is transmitted in this society. Care for women's bodies should not be limited and defined by heterosexual functions of pregnancy and birth control. Sexuality and reproduction should not be linked. Sexuality is emotional; reproduction is a medical - physical fact

We demand the right to preventative medical care as well as effective treatment for specific ailments, administered to all persons equally without irrelevant discussion of our life style;

We demand the right to obtain psychological help, often needed for problems other than our sexuality, without automatically having our entire lesbian life style questioned.

We would like to hear your experiences with the health care system write to us and let us know what your group is doing to organize around lesbian health care issues.

Radicalesbians Health Collective
Lesbian Center
141 Prince Street
N.Y.C.

In Paris this winter I met many sisters in the Mouvement de Liberation des Femmes, the French women's movement. We met first in an effort to exchange information about what was happening in the States and in France. The women were very eager to hear details about action and theory in New York and I, as a former Redstockings sister, tried to give an account of how sisters in New York seemed to me at least to be dealing with their struggle. Much was familiar to the women, especially since a lot of 'leftist' literature had been translated in Paris and several American sisters living in Paris were involved in the French movement. Later, I moved in with one of the women for a month and with the help of her and her friends tried to learn as much as I could about sisterhood in France.

The women's struggle in France had only really just begun--1970 was Annee Zero for women, as they wrote on a poster plastered in the subway and in bookstores on the Left Bank. Much of the initial organization was around abortion and certain legal issues (such as the jailing in the provinces of a woman teacher at a religious school who had fallen in love with a male pupil and had been arrested at the parent's request, hounded by vicious gossip, and who finally committed suicide). Most of the women involved were students or former students who had quit the traditional 'gauchiste' (leftist) student movement. At a city-wide meeting of about 300 women, the split between the women still involved in male leftist politics and those women into a feminist analysis was very apparent. A few weeks later, a bunch of feminists zapped the Paris underground, writing graffiti demanding abortion and child-care centers for women. In France, since the May '68 Revolution, writing graffiti is a real risk, punishable by fines and imprisonment.

The present structure of the movement, growing so rapidly now in France, is set up around each university (French universities are much like the U. of Cal. with many different 'campuses' hooked up in one big bureaucratic-mess) and around 'district committees'. Paris is broken into quarters or 'arrondissements', about 25 small neighborhoods.

Each district committee tries to reach women in its quarter. Recently the women published a list of 343 names of women who declared that they had had illegal abortions and were demanding that women receive free, legal abortion in order to control their own bodies. Simone de Beauvoir and Jeanne Moreau were among about 40 nationally and internationally known women who signed. The list made a great stir and publicized the demand for abortion dramatically. In a catholic country like France, where the husband's rights over his wife are total and where abortion is a religious sin, a list of 'admissions' has a lot of shock value.

Women in Paris have also started a feminist newspaper called Le Torchon Brule (The Broom is Burning). This paper came out of a women's issue of Idiot International, a European underground.

Gay women are a motivating force behind the growing women's lib movement. They are not as yet separated from their straight sisters in an organization, but they are now considering working together in a group they say would be similar to Radicalesbians. Recently gay French men have gotten together in the FHAR (Gay, Revolutionary Action Front). The FHAR men have confronted traditional 'gauchistes' with their feminist analysis of family, sex, and love. Their only allies among the leftist movement seem to be the anarchists, who have published articles in their newsletters about the repressive nature of the family.

Much of the literature that French feminists are using is from sisters in the states. A translation of the Partisan was in France this winter with articles from Redstockings and the New York Radical Feminists.

Now they are starting a collection of translated American books; for e., they hope to translate themselves an edition of SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL. Their idea is to have copyrights of American books sold to them for translation instead of to a capitalist publisher so the funds from the sale of the books can go to the movement. They feel this would be a move towards the international solidarity of feminists if it can be gotten together. Exchange like this between us and our sisters in France could mean a new, revolutionary strength for women.



LE MOUVEMENT
de LIBERATION
des FEMMES



MA BELL



to

go to
hell!

GO TO

GO TO

One woman was so enthusiastic she wrote this poem:

UNITY MEANS VICTORY
SO put some
pride in your stride, 'some
vigor in your speech Honor the
strike

and practice what you preach
Remember unity will give US
victory and don't you
forget

If you make the scene
next year you'll be
able to pay bills and get
the bare necessities in
plus come to work clean
and that's a BET!
So if you work it this year
You can afford
the changes next year!!!

This poem and other articles were printed in a leaflet and distributed by YAWF Women to operators all over New York City before the CWA strike to encourage the women to support the strike.

I decided on working in the phone company for two reasons. One was that operators are all women, 95% Third World, and all oppressed. The second reason was that the strike of the operators was coming up within a year. Because of inflation and the recession, white women were beginning to take jobs that only one or two years ago were strictly left for Black women. I knew that the racist phone company would not hire many more white women. I had the hopes of breaking the militancy of the Black operators. I wanted to be in there to help my white sisters be strong, to support the unity of the Black operators, and to fight for better working conditions for the operators.

I got the job.

All over the country operators belong to the Communications Workers of America (CWA) except in New York City- a typical divide and conquer technique to separate the women from the men. In New York, the Bell Company has held out with a company union, the Telephone Traffic Union (TTU). This union supports company policy and takes the company's side when an operator files a grievance. For that reason the women have no job security and no means of bettering their job conditions. An election is coming up in August so the operators can vote to dump this company union and vote in a real union in which the women can represent themselves and fight their grievances. But even to win this right that belongs to them, the women felt they would have to strike, so they joined the CWA strike July 14th and made it their own!

Here are just a few of the job conditions that are forcing the women to strike:

Operators sit on a raised platform with supervisors patrolling behind them, making remarks with sexist overtones: "Pick up a light." "Don't let 'em hang out baby." "Jack in faster." "I need a whip, you girls are so slow." All day, all night, this is all we here from the supervisors. These bosses have no compassion. You'd think because they're women they'd understand. But, no, they're too worried about keeping their privileges to think about anything but getting as much work out of us as possible at the board.

The supervisors are there to see that we work as fast and hard as possible. One torture device they have is The Bell. When a call comes in on the board, the bell rings, so with hundreds of calls coming in simultaneously, the bell rings constantly, the bell rings constantly. A supervisor walks up and down behind us saying, "If you want the bell to stop ringing, pick up all the lights (calls)." But it's impossible; it's maddening.

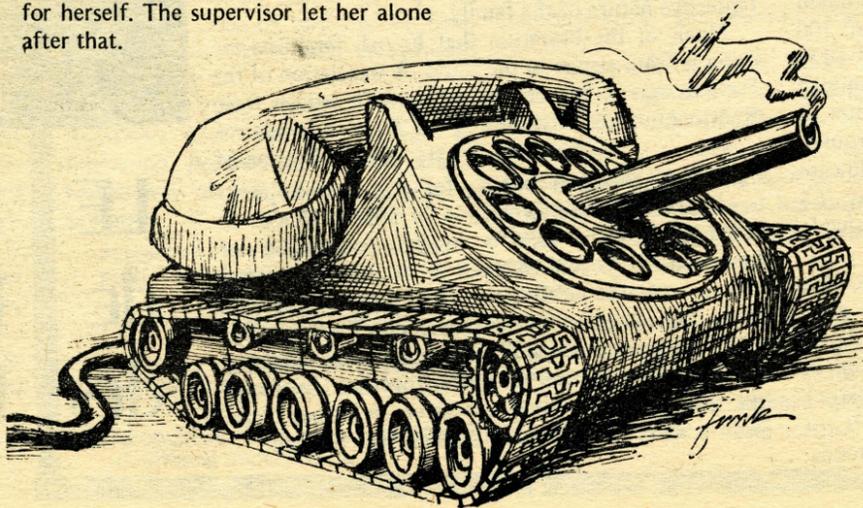
The women are forced to put up with bugs- cable bugs crawling out of the board and all over them while they work. We all constantly itch. If a supervisor catches us itching, she says, "Take your hands off your body and put them on the board." When several of us decided to face the supervisor together- that way they couldn't single anyone out- we demanded that they spray the board to get rid of the bugs. The supervisor flatly refused, saying it would damage the board- a living example of property being valued more than people!

The racism of the white supervisors is as blatant as it is disgusting. They're like mercenaries. Here's an example. A Black woman in my office shaved her head. It was just something she did and it was accepted by the operators. But one of the white supervisors couldn't accept that; she constantly came over to the woman while she was working and "petted" her head. "So that's what a Black head feels like- watermelon." The woman was being stripped of her dignity. If she spoke back, she would be fired for insubordination. If she walked off the board, that's like handing in your resignation. As I started to say, "You can't touch her," the sister smiled at me and began to take care of business for herself. The supervisor let her alone after that.

The cafeteria is also a big grievance the women have. We only get a half hour for lunch, so we're forced to eat there. The food, far from cheap, is often served two and three days in a row. Since the company buys the cheapest possible meat, we're all always feeling sick and vomiting. In April about five of us ate some veal which was bad and we all got nauseous at the board. It was a busy day and the supervisor wouldn't let us leave. One woman who was five months pregnant got sick too. But they wouldn't even let her off the board. We began making a stink. She was finally too sick to work, so they took her straight to the hospital. Late that night, she lost her baby. It was murdered by the phone company.

I was furious; I was heartbroken; she was my buddy, my co-worker. I wanted to have a demonstration, to do something. But the women in the shop couldn't risk their jobs. They all have kids and families to support. Finally, I decided to write a letter to 'BattleActs' (the YAWF Women's Magazine) in hopes that the story of the murder would reach movement women.

One evening at work in late June two Black operators from Brooklyn came to our building. They were organizers for the CWA who had come to tell the women about the CWA's upcoming strike. Even though the operator's contract hadn't expired, they stressed that we too had a right to stay out. Well, the women in my building needed no convincing; they wanted to fight, and they knew that if all the operators in the city struck, the company sure as hell would have to start listening to them.



A SISTER FROM
RAT YAWF.

Page 6

Shenandoah, Va. (LNS). The tiny town of Shenandoah in Virginia has for the past ten years been the site of a branch plant of the Alliance Manufacturing Company, an Ohio-based subsidiary of the North American Philips conglomerate. Alliance makes 85% of the small electric motors that run nearly every make of typewriters, record-players, and tape-recorders.

A decade ago the residents of Shenandoah collected \$57,000 in door-to-door donations, which was presented to the Alliance Company as an encouragement to locate a plant in their town. At that time, the people of Shenandoah thought that bringing industry to their community would solve their problems of chronic unemployment and poverty, which are characteristic of the entire Appalachian region.

Three hundred employees are now on strike against Alliance. All but two or three of the strikers are women, since women do virtually all the plant's production work.

The strike began on June 2nd as a result of the company's refusal to make a contract agreement acceptable to the newly-recognized Local 174 of the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE).

In Ohio the average wage for Alliance workers is \$3.10 an hour. In Shenandoah the starting wage is \$1.60, and the top wage, the wage that 85% earn, is \$1.76.

The workers' main complaints aren't about wages, though, but about working conditions, seniority and grievance procedures. "They were getting so they were putting real pressure on the girls. They weren't allowed to talk to one another. They thought they should sit at their work area and not go to the rest room except during their ten minute break. I told the foreman if they couldn't use the rest room they might as well put a padlock on it."

"When they laid off back in January or February they made the statement that there was some dogs in there that they had to get rid of. Girls that had been there eight or nine years they called dogs."

"They called them dead wood. Took them ten years to find out that they were dead wood."



"On this grievance procedure, they wanted the final step left up to the plant manager, and then if you don't like his decision, strike. But who wants to strike every other week?"

"When they first came out here they called us 'hillbillies'. They went back to Ohio and said we came to work barefooted and carried our lunch in molasses buckets. So after ten years, you can see, I'm wearing a pair of shoes. They cost me a dollar. They've done a lot for me."

"They didn't think we needed it. They thought, the people in Ohio, let them have their wages and not let us have it. We didn't deserve it. We wasn't as good workers as the ones up there."

"This is why the company came here, because they knew they could get cheap labor here. And then they turn around and call us dogs. Now we're showing them how we can bite".

RAT page 7

BLACK WOMAN MURDERED IN OKLAHOMA CITY



OKLAHOMA CITY (LNS) -- "Get your black asses out of the street," yelled the white man. "We will as soon as we get across the street," answered the four black women crossing the Oklahoma City street. The man cursed them, and the women yelled back again. Other blacks walking along the street stopped. Rocks began to fly. And at the end of the short May 19 afternoon confrontation Deloris Ann Jefflo, a 17-year old black woman, was dead.

Deloris, three girlfriends, and her infant child were on their way to the local grocery when the man started yelling. When the rocks began to fly, Deloris, hit on the back of the head, was momentarily stunned. She didn't hear people in the small crowd warning each other that the white man, Michael Lamb, running out of the nearby car tune-up shop had a gun. A shot rang in the air, and Deloris slumped to the ground. A black youth near her was hit in the leg when the bullet from the 7.62 Mauser rifle flashed through Deloris' body.

Michael Lamb was arrested and charged with manslaughter. But a few hours later he was back at work on a \$5000 bond.

At Lamb's preliminary hearing on June 3, Special Judge Jim Barnett cleared his packed courtroom and said that only people with seats could stay. "I'm not going to have anyone standing around this courtroom. There will be no demonstrations or shows here."

Although sufficient evidence was presented to have Lamb bound over for trial that morning, when he was arraigned in the afternoon his lawyer asked that the manslaughter charge be replaced with a charge of "discharging a firearm within the city limits."

Although the manslaughter charge still stands, Lamb was once again set free on his own recognizance.

Black community leaders are circulating a petition demanding that a grand jury investigate Deloris' fatal shooting and that Lamb be tried for murder at his upcoming trial. (Information for this story came from the Well, Oklahoma City's underground paper.)

APPALACHIAN WOMEN STRIKE

"They were afraid. They know we're a bunch of women

but they better watch us."

"They told us when we came out that it was not going to be a picnic. They had the town police there the first day, that morning. That evening there were at least 25 state troopers for about 80 girls."

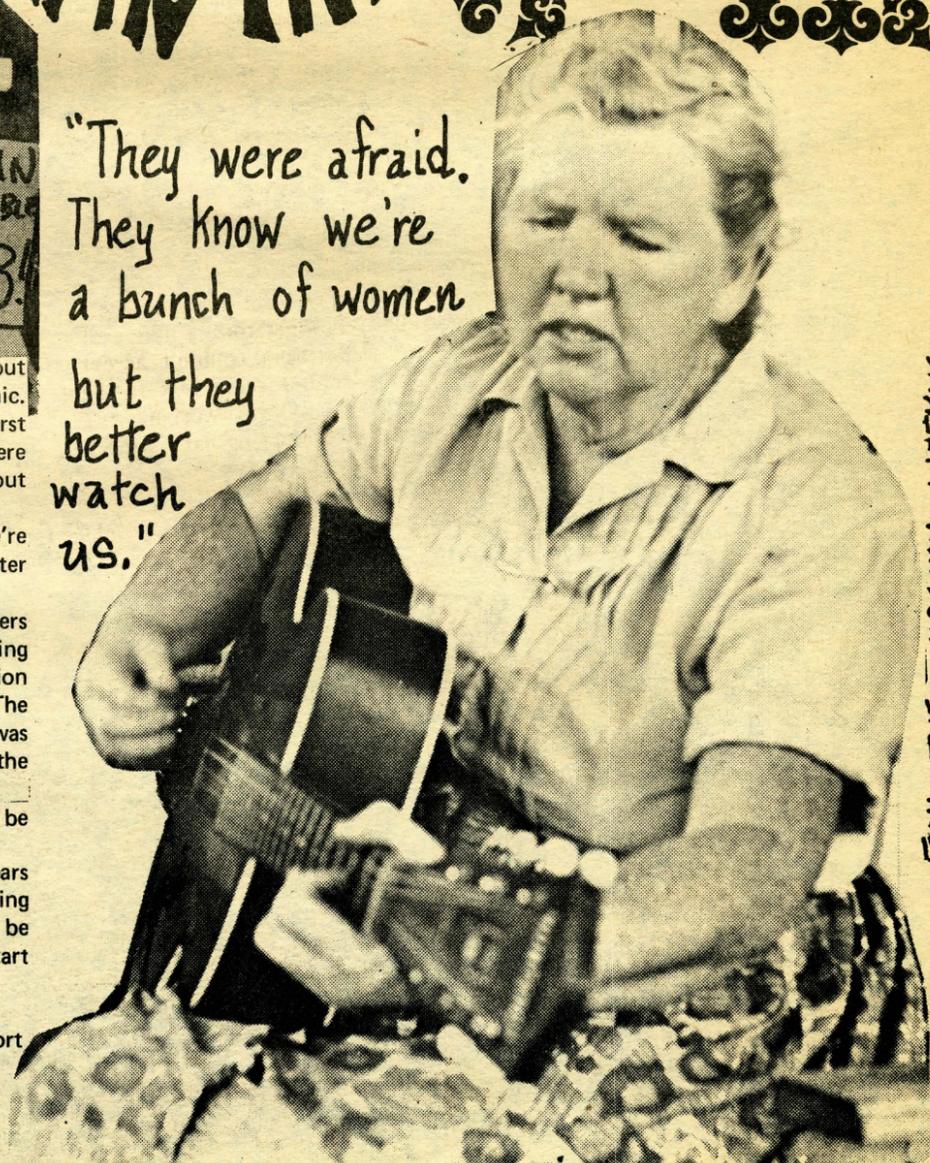
"They were afraid. They know we're a bunch of women, but they better watch us."

So far more than twenty-five strikers have been arrested, on charges ranging from assault and battery to destruction of property to "illegal" picketing". The president of the Virginia AFL-CIO was also arrested for trying to join the picket line.

The strikers are not likely to be intimidated into a settlement.

"I don't know. It took us ten years to really find out that they were using us. And you know nobody likes to be used. And it's awful that we didn't start this long ago, really."

The strikers at Alliance need support. Messages and checks may be sent to IUE Local 174, 905 Bank St., Shenandoah, Va. 22849.



FROM THE VIRGINIA WEEKLY

Dear Gay Sisters at Rat:

I am 17 and a lesbian who is still mostly "in the closet" i guess you know how bad that can be. One real person knows I am gay and she is the woman I wrote this poem to. I can't give it to her or let her see it - too much is meant just to feel - not to be said in words when things can't be changed. I don't know why I'm sending this to you. I really don't. Maybe you can understand how I feel.

I send all my love - please understand my struggle. I wish I was in the position to (had enough courage) sign my name. I can't.

Sister - love

*Mmm love
good love
sweet love
Sister love
Where are you*

or

*Self - doubt
deceit
self - hate
i feel you*

*tearing ourselves
try try
try to make it real
but compared to what
Does love exist
in some pure form
without all this pain*

*so afraid
of hurting you
demanding too much,
in my need*

*i love i love
you
so painfully
tearfully*

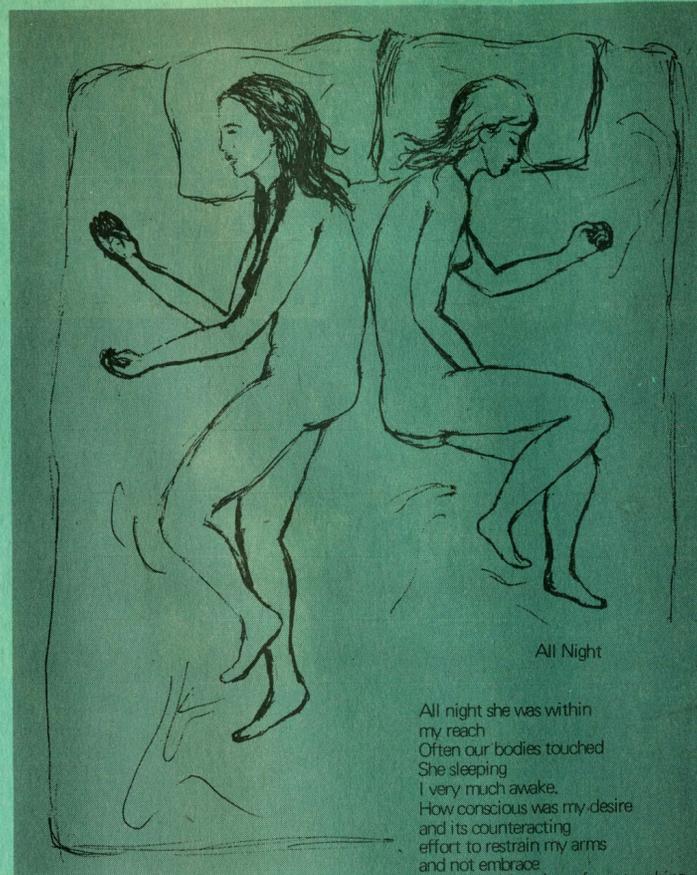
*we grope towards each other
a need
so immense
a woman need*

*i can't reach you
i feel your pain
am pained by it
helpless.....
and
is it too big a lie
if i say
everything will be alright*

*eyes meet hesitantly
holding glances tell
nothing
"repent after me
nothingnothing"
it means everything
intense emotion
a need so deep
in me, and in you
reflected - created
in your eyes*

*(tears are so inadequate
for the pain we feel)*

*Sister - love
hold me hold me
cover me with your softness
we can forget
(il faut oublier
tant peut s'oublier)
the harshness of life
of words
let your lips fill mine
(thinknothing)
only know -
the beauty of breasts
pressed together in darkness
and
I'll try not to
keep you awake later
with my tears.*



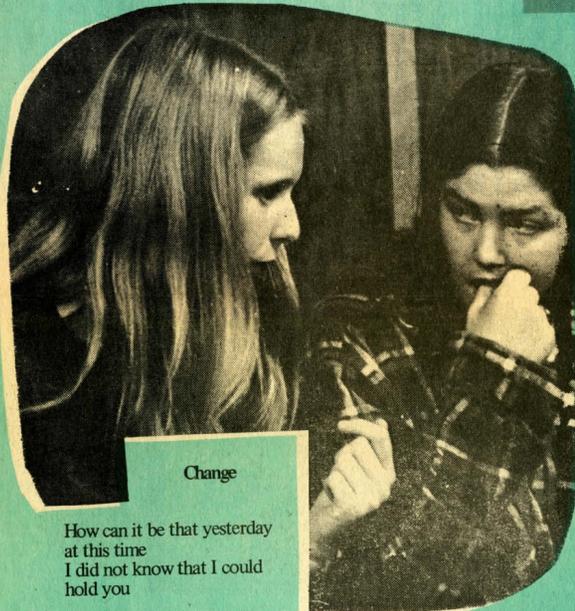
All Night

All night she was within
my reach
Often our bodies touched
She sleeping
I very much awake.
How conscious was my desire
and its counteracting
effort to restrain my arms
and not embrace
and my hands to keep from touching
hair and body form
of my beloved
So many times, as if of its own
free will my arm, my hand
would just reach out,
so natural it would have been
to hold her and to love.
How peculiar and painful
to forcibly withdraw
and turn my back to love.

Because

Because my body is
like your body
I cannot touch
Nor should I even love

By small differences
of some rather major
(to the moral public)
Features
I cannot do what is
Most natural
to my life, reach out
and touch
and not be sent away



Change

How can it be that yesterday
at this time
I did not know that I could
hold you

Even now it's hard
for me to believe

Every time that you
would speak
or run and flop
so joyfully
in the snow
I wanted so
to hold you

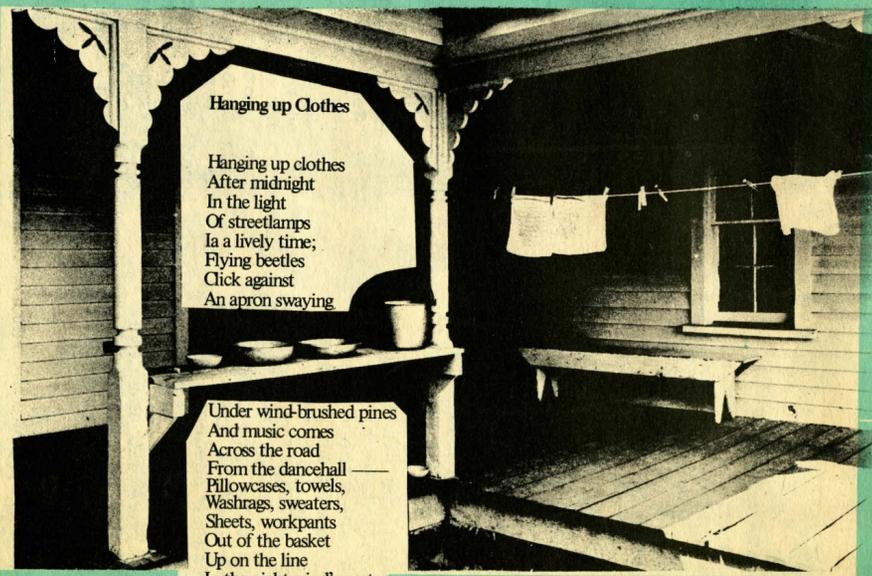
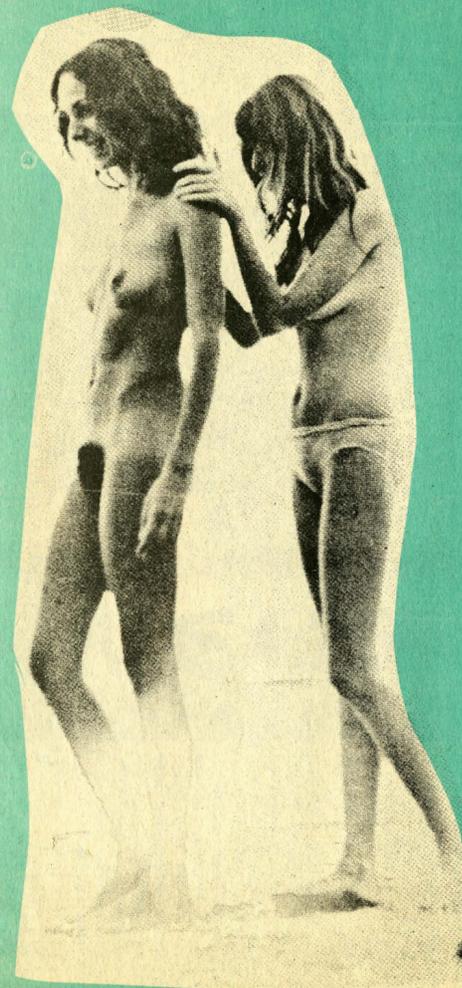
And when at last
I told you
in my shy and cautious
way of foreign tongue
with words so bold
beneath shy veneer
you simply touched me
and said yes

Oh my love !
my love, that all this time
you wanted me
and could not say

That we were so
successful
and yet so
unsuccessful
in keeping it
from each other

you didn't dare think
I might care for you
this way
and I could not
risk the pain
of believing your little clues
only to be wrong.

Damn !
Damn this society that
makes a crime of loving
and kills with fear



Hanging up Clothes

Hanging up clothes
After midnight
In the light
Of streetlamps
In a lively time;
Flying beetles
Click against
An apron swaying

Under wind-brushed pines
And music comes
Across the road
From the dancehall
Pillowcases, towels,
Washrags, sweaters,
Sheets, workpants
Out of the basket
Up on the line
In the night wind's party.

Connie Tucker, the Florida State Chairwoman of the Junta of Militant Organizations, who was jailed for five years on April 19th on a "possession of marijuana" charge, was freed on July 1st on \$5000 appeal bond.

Immediately after Connie's sentencing JOMO began a Free-Connie -Tucker campaign, and also sponsored a week-long anti-repression Action-Conference in St Petersburg, Florida, to continue to raise funds for Connie's legal fees, and to free three other JOMO members who are in prison.

All interested persons are asked to send contributions to:
Southern Student Defense Fund
P.O. BOX 12792
St Petersburg, Fla. 33733.

independence day?
dear sisters
we're the tribal sisters collective (kalamazoo, michigan) and would like to be listed as a women's house for people visiting southwestern michigan (have sisters call 616-3451-660 or write 419 locust to make sure we're home)

we're anxious to talk with other collectives -- here or there -- and badly need your back issues and advice!

what are we doing? good question!
thirty of us got together after mayday to begin "women's" work and two months later we are forty with a street paper, radical articles for a formerly chauvenistic undy, with seven in a collective co-ordinating 24 hour counseling, skillskool, and looking forward to working on daycare and prison reform

we love you

NEWS of WOMEN

On July 13, a group of women spray-painted the wall surrounding the construction site for the new Chicago Playboy Club, with the words "WE EXPLOIT WOMEN". Our purpose in doing this was to defiantly protest the multi-million dollar Playboy empire, built on the concept that woman is a sex object, a mindless, big-boobed cunt.

We also reject the image of men presented by Playboy, as insecure consumers who must buy other people and hundreds of useless commodities in order to 'make it' as full fledged Playboys (who are limited to white heterosexual men with at least bachelor's degree and middle-level executive positions.) Nor can the slickness and pseudo-liberal one of the magazine hide the fact that the Playboy philosophy and life style are really a madness for money and power, the same greed responsible for the war in Vietnam.

Hefner himself sounded the war cry against feminism and the rights of women, saying 'these chicks are our natural enemy' and 'it is time to do battle with them'. We are his enemies and the enemy of anyone else who presents a dehuamnizing picture of woman as just another commodity to be bought, used, and discarded when no longer in style. We sisters join together to fight you and we shall build instead a society in which women and men are free to relate to each other as equal human beings.

THE MOUNTAIN MOVING DAY BRIGADE

Thirdly, we criticize the women who wrote the rebuttal for taking a decision not to deal with any facts in their rebuttal. In addition, the rebuttal contains several charges against Rat. We feel we have a right to answer these charges.

Charge- The Rat collective refused to publish a rebuttal.

Answer- The Rat collective consistently maintained that they would publish any rebuttal that was based on facts that would refute testimony given in the investigation. Also when we were asked to publish the rebuttal, it was not written yet. We said that we would have to see it and review it like any other piece of copy.

Charge- that the Rat raised bombing and violence to the level of "perverted superstardom."

Answer- Our full statement was: "Security is not thinking that the only kinds of actions that count are 'heavy' actions. People who work on food co-ops should not be made to feel their concern with survival is less important than bombings. We become susceptible to being used by the pigs because we have set up a false heirarchy of levels of political action."

This statement clearly says exactly the opposite of what the rebuttal says it says.

WOMEN

We recently received a small grant to establish a film coop which is in the process of purchasing and lending films which may be helpful in focussing discussions of women's issues.

We are trying to consolidate information on films about women and by women with specific data on where the films are available and how much they cost. As film rentals can be difficult for groups with little money, we have purchased several of the films we think are most useful, and we are willing to lend them to groups for the price of the mailing plus a small contribution toward the maintenance of the prints. We also have a projector which we will lend women's groups if they are near New Haven.

In the future we hope you will send us any information you get on films about women or films by women. We also would be glad to receive reviews of films you've seen which you think relate to the women's movement. We will try to reprint and distribute those reviews.

From: Women's Film Cooperative.
Summer address: c/o Jill Hultin, 258 Winthrop Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43214.
Winter: 66 Second St., New Haven, Conn. 06519.

Charge- The rebuttal charges Rat with "slurs" on the Lesbian Movement. It states: "We are Lesbians who DO NOT think the investigation a credit to the Gay Women's Movement.!"

Answer: The original statement in Rat was: "It is a credit to the gay movement that gay sisters predominated in this investigation."

"It demonstrates that the gay struggle is not a single-issue movement. It is not just about 'tolerance' for the right to be gay, but is every bit as concerned with transforming society as a whole as any other liberation movement. As such, it is very much concerned with solidarity with other groups and individuals struggling for their liberation."

I wrote this statement for at the time I was the only gay member of Rat. I did not feel that the charge that the investigation was anti-gay was valid, since the only women who participated were gay. Instead I felt that it was important that gay women were involved especially in the investigation of another gay woman. I felt it showed these women had not only a consciousness of security but also a consciousness of gay oppression as well since they refused to allow straight women to do any of the investigating. This was my meaning which I feel the rebuttal overlooked.

The longer article can be obtained at: The Rebuttal can be obtained at:

Womens Liberation Library Collective
492 Putnam
Cambridge, Mass.

Usha Saturn
60 1st Ave
New York
N.Y. 10009



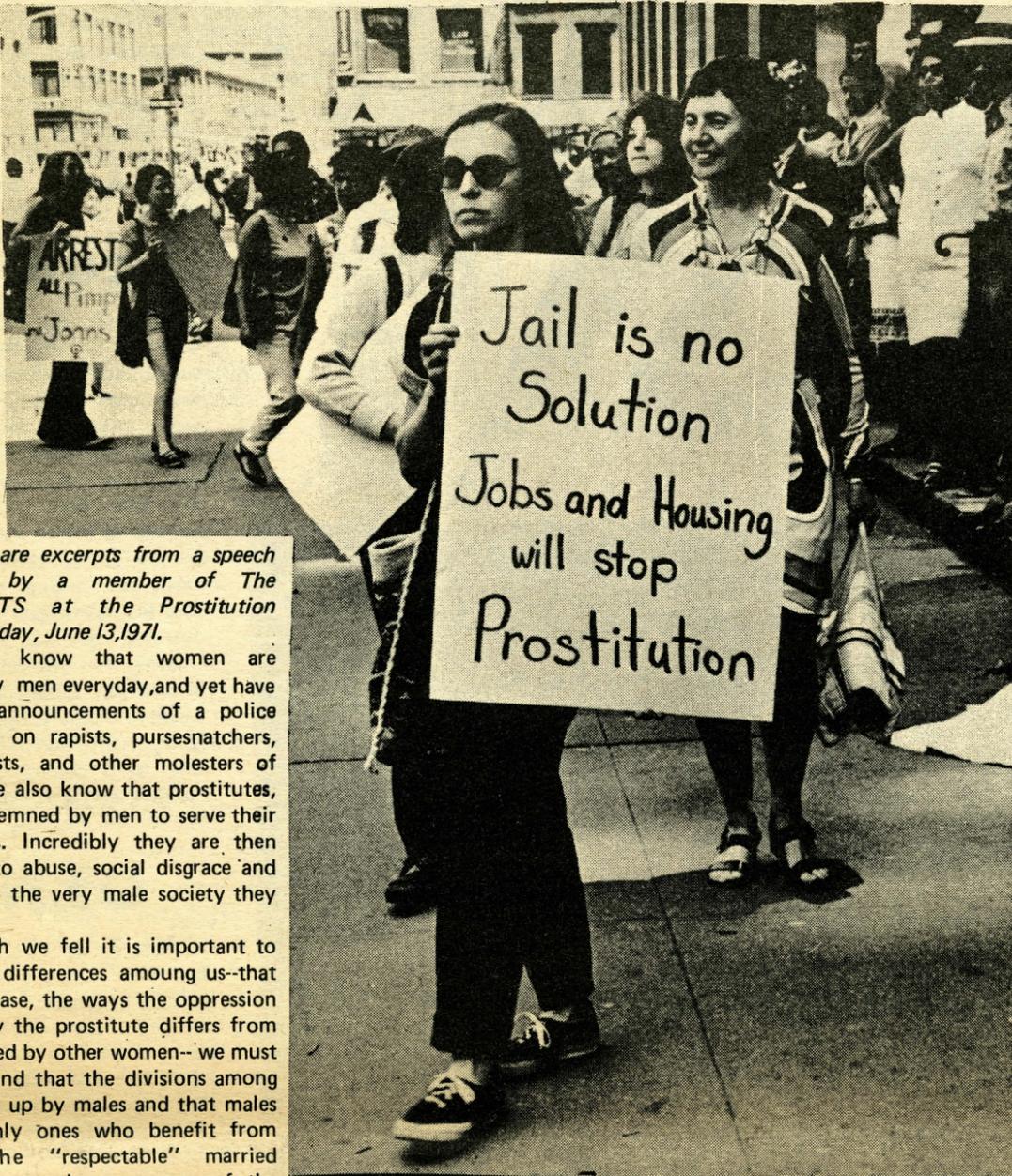
This month a rebuttal to the leaflet on Virginia Ruffalo (Rat issue no. 23) was distributed throughout the city and sent to Rat. The Rat collective on the whole still feels that we were right to publish the leaflet despite certain criticisms of our own.

First, we criticize ourselves for ommitting our criticisms of the tone of the leaflet. These were lost in the last rush before printing.

Second, we criticize the FBI report tone of the leaflet. We knew there was a longer report in preparation and would have preferred to wait for that. Some of us feel that circulating this type of inconclusive leaflet might set a dangerous precedent. We also criticize the indiscriminate distribution of this leaflet to non- movement and movement people alike, including parents and old employers.

PROSTITUTION

FORUM



These are excerpts from a speech delivered by a member of The FEMINISTS at the Prostitution Forum, Sunday, June 13, 1971.

We all know that women are attacked by men everyday, and yet have heard no announcements of a police crackdown on rapists, pursesnatchers, exhibitionists, and other molesters of women. We also know that prostitutes, while condemned by men to serve their own needs. Incredibly they are then subjected to abuse, social disgrace and arrest from the very male society they service!

Although we feel it is important to discuss the differences among us--that is, in this case, the ways the oppression suffered by the prostitute differs from that endured by other women-- we must keep in mind that the divisions among us were set up by males and that males are the only ones who benefit from them. The "respectable" married woman is not the oppressor of the prostitute-- both are the victims of men. Our job here is to understand the differences among us so we can work together against our common enemy-- those who benefit from our oppression--men.

Both wives and prostitutes have the job of providing sexual services for men. The wife, in addition, is required to perform innumerable other tasks--she has to wash his clothes, clean his house, cook for him, bear and raise his children. In return for all of this, instead of pay, she gets a certain amount of social respectability. The prostitute, on the other hand, in many cases is actually freer than the wife, in that she is not dependant on one man for survival. She is, however, a social outcast and subjected to abuse, harassment and even arrest and imprisonment, as we have seen.

Perhaps it is worthwhile taking a minute or two to get into the nature of sexual intercourse, as it appears to have such great importance in all of this. We know that after one group of people has been oppressing another group for some time, it eventually becomes impossible for the dominant group to continue to accept their victims as fellow human beings. It becomes necessary for them to create an ideology both to rationalize and to ensure the perpetuation of their position as members of a superior group. In the case of Blacks this ideology is called racism; in the case of women, it is sexism. This ideology defines males as superior to us because of their possession of a penis, and influences the very nature of sexual intercourse, and the tremendous importance it has in our society. Not only do men have marriage which ensures each of them his own personal slave, but they have prostitution which ensures a whole group of women whose sole purpose is to serve them sexually. And there are no males in a comparable position.

THE FEMINISTS have demanded an end to laws against prostitutes--an end to the harassment of our sisters through arrest and imprisonment. We do not want "legalization" either as this entails government control and a whole system of harassment through licensing, forced examinations, etc.

These reforms, although important, of course are not enough. We must work to build a strong women's movement which will overcome our oppression in all of its manifestations.

"LIFE"

IN THE

WAC

Today I am reaping the gifts of the WAC, meaning the desolation of mind and soul which penetrates my body because of the disappointments this corps has given me.

I detest the WAC for the above reason and I shall enumerate. I was promised upon my enlistment a school in a subject upon which I have based my future. I have spent at least five years studying only to have the lies of those illustrious recruiters demolish all my endeavors. This isn't my greatest argument against the WAC. The WAC takes from a person their pride in themselves as individuals. We are told when we first come to Fort McClellan that we should be ladies, and that our individual ideas are welcomed if they coincide with our CO's and other higher ranking individuals.

We live about thirty some odd to a bay, a big room divided into cubes by pieces of wood. These cubes are supposed to be our personal living quarters. Of course, if our Major or any other officer decides to crop in they may do so without invitation; also if they wish to remove an article from our cube which they dislike, they may. We have hot running water, and I do mean hot water, if someone else happens to use any other facility while another is in the shower. There are no tubs for bathing nor are there private showers I dislike the work I am forced to do under penalty of a variety of punishments. Now I certainly



P. 11

wouldn't object to all that goes on if I had been told by my recruiter in the first place, but I was painted a picture quite the opposite! Another aspect I dislike about the WAC is walking down the street to the sweet tune of "Are you a whore or a lesbian?" And from some information I have gotten from a friend, if a girl gets raped she is automatically assumed to have been curious enough to want to be raped. Of course CID will believe a woman has been raped if she is also dead. There is one fact that has touched me more than any of these and that is when a higher ranking individual lies about a lower ranking individual. The lower ranking is out of luck because she hasn't a chance even though she is telling the truth.

For all those reasons and so many more I hate the WAC with all my heart and soul. I want to be free to myself and think my own thoughts. I want to be treated as a human being and not as an animal. I want to be able to be alone, not live for three years with 29 other people. I want to be talked to not down to. I want so many things which are not possible while I am a WAC. The only consolation I have is when I go home I pain to tell every person I can about the WAC and I know they will listen, because at home at least I am looked up to and considered a responsible mature person.

from: WHACK NEWSLETTER
P.O. BOX 1595
ANNISTON, ALA. 36201

To the Staff of RAT:

I am dismayed to see your article June 14-July 10 on Cuba's attitude toward homosexuals. I have to speak my mind about *your* attitudes.

You have excerpted the most vicious part of the Gay Committee of Returned Brigadistas' statement to print, and have done some editorial writing of a politically undisciplined nature. You have failed to explain the content, democratic nature of, preparation for, and issues involved in the 1st National Congress on Education and Culture, making it appear that the congress was held to discuss homosexuality; you have emphasized the Committee's stand that the popular congress was 'fascist' and 'reactionary'.

You have many times shown your failure to acknowledge and respect the diversity of culture, the presence of specific historical factors, and have interpreted Cuba in the pushy manner of a ruling country's arrogance, which is not to be tolerated among people who supposedly oppose that arrogance.

You do much harm and injustice by the unfair omission of historical perspective and through discrimination against a country closely contaminated by Europe, while you regularly indicate your approval of cultures far removed from the West (Viet Nam, China). By the way, in those cultures recognizing homosexuality is not a priority.

Our reality, our heritage of 400 years of capitalist development, is not the reality of Cuba, or of any part of Latin America. I think that to play with the destiny of a people who have seized their country and are making their history is criminal, counter-revolutionary.

I know that there is not a consensus of opinion among gay brigadistas, that some possess more mature politics. I hope that other gay sisters and brothers will develop their politics from personal expression to anti-imperialism.

4th contingent of Venceramos Brigade

AÑO

From a Member of

RAT:

I personally had a lot of objections to your letter. I feel you are mistaken about many things, but I know that many people share your views and I felt these views deserve a long public answer.

First of all, the statement by the Gay Committee of Returned Brigadistas was not "vicious": it was a statement of genuine dismay and alarm at a development that transgresses a human right- the right to freedom of sexual expression. And publishing that statement was not "politically undisciplined": it was directed toward raising consciousness about a contradiction that affects everyone. Talking about the "content, democratic nature of, preparation for, and issues involved in" the Cuban Congress on Education and Culture as a whole in the face of its decision to eradicate homosexuals from Cuban society is not only anti-homosexual in itself: it is anti-human and, in my opinion, semantic bullshit. Cuba's anti-homosexual policy exists. It is a fact. We know about this policy not only from official documents but also from the personal testimony of gay Cubans. Many political and gay Northamericans have come to know gay Cubans personally and are well-acquainted with the pain and agony their Cuban friends have felt in their daily lives as a result of Cuba's policy. Any statement by gay people about this does not come from abstract balancing of theoretical ideas, as your letter does, but from real experience.



RAT p. 12

ANONYMOUS LETTER FROM GAY CUBANS TO THE NORTH AMERICAN GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

By chance, we got a copy of your publication with the Third World Gay Revolution Platform (Gay Flames, Pamphlet No. 7).

We believe- as people who are discriminated against in a country that is supposedly in revolution to create the new man and end traditional injustices inherent in class society- that it is our duty to inform you of our situation as homosexuals....

If in a consumer society, capitalist and oligarchic like the one in which you live, the life of the homosexual is discriminated against and suffers limitations; in our society - called marxist and revolutionary - it is much more so. From the beginning of the Cuban revolutionary movement the homosexual has been persecuted. First it was in a veiled form without scruples or justification; then by other methods from crude forms of physical aggression to attempts at psychic and moral disintegration of those individuals - incompatible, at least in theory, with the development of a society toward communism. The homosexual here is hurt and attacked obliged to conceal what the authorities consider an aberration or repudiable defect. This concealment varies from forcing us to marry and appear to lead a "normal" life to confining us to farms where the treatment is brutal, as in the case of the concentration camps of the UMAP (Military Units to Increase Production).

This situation, due to the international scandal which it provoked, was eliminated; but farms exclusively for homosexuals are still maintained. On the street we suffer persecution, aggression and constant abuse by authorities, demanding I.D. cards, arresting us for our clothes, hair styles, or simple group meetings, which are rights guaranteed by the Declaration of Human Rights. It is a contradiction yet true that these rights are more respected in some societies labelled fascist than in ours, which you often see or feel to be a solution to the problems of individual and collective liberty. Methods of psychological repression - social isolation, control by neighborhoods, zones, and centers of work and study - with invariably negative aims are a common thing in this regime.

It may be said that there are many homosexuals, intellectuals and others, that live outside of this situation. In the first place, they are few, and if people like this do exist they know they cannot cross the barriers drawn for them. Opposition means the risk of exile or confrontation with a dictatorial system, which can lead to the worst consequences.

Freedom, respect, and justice for homosexuals in the whole world cannot be advocated without knowledge of the situation of thousands of individuals in our country, and without protesting the treatment they are getting, searching for an effective- not a theoretical - solution to such problems.

de SOLIDARIDAD

BACKGROUND ON ANTI-HOMOSEXUAL POLICIES IN CUBA

(from LNS) With the advent of a revolutionary government in Cuba, anti-homosexual attitudes did not disappear. In fact, in the minds of some Cuban revolutionaries, the concentration of gay people in Havana was just one more aspect of the vice imposed on Cuba by businessmen from the North, in a class with prostitution and gambling.

Before long, anti-homosexual policies, with varying degrees of repression, became part of the official Cuban way of life. These policies were premised

- on a desire to be humane (thus, the push for "rehabilitation"),
- on age-old Roman Catholic prejudices
- on notions of bourgeois psychology exported from the U.S.,
- and on Soviet-style anti-sex puritanism developed under Stalin.

First, Havana's gay bars, where on July 1, 1959, homosexuals had cheered the victory of the *barbudos*, ("the bearded ones" meaning Fidel and his guerrilleros), were closed. In the mid-1960's repressive camps, known politely as Military Units to Increase Production, were used to incarcerate homosexuals. When these camps were abandoned, the Cuban government reverted to casual anti-homosexual persecution in schools and workplaces, denying homosexuals promotions, access to certain courses of study, and positions of political authority.

A declaration by the recent First National Congress on Education and Culture in Cuba indicates an official government program against homosexuality that may even be used to excuse physical attacks on homosexuals. Some people from the North American movement have already used the declaration to excuse their own unwillingness to struggle for gay liberation, using the revolutionary credentials earned by Cuba in its many years of courageous struggle with the Northern Collosus as their license.

How you can overlook this repression, the pain and suffering of a whole group of humanity in Cuba, and still call yourself a person who opposes arrogance or an anti-imperialist is beyond me.

And I am speaking to you as a sister brigadista too. I went on the 2nd Venceremos Brigade. And I went down to Cuba very open to learning about and admiring the first socialist society in this hemisphere. And I did see a whole society geared to meeting people's needs sensibly: I did see many good things

con la

about Cuba. But I also remember that whenever Northamericans saw something to criticize about Cuba, they were told, and told each other, that it was Cultural Imperialism for a Northamerican to criticize Cuba: that it was American thinking, as they usually do, that they know how to do something better than anybody else in the world. And I know that this attitude exists too. Cultural imperialism is a fact too. But when gay Northamericans are outraged at the treatment of gay Cubans, it is not coming from cultural imperialism. Cuba's policy threatens the freedom of gay people everywhere, and is especially horrifying to gay people who have committed their lives to building world socialism as well as to fighting for the rights of gay people.

GENTE

There comes a time in every struggle that you have to stop being silent because of political expediency. When you are a gay person working in this country for a revolution to free everybody and you turn around and find your allies, your examples, your "heroes" knifing you in the back, it makes you stop and wonder whether you are going to spend your entire life fighting to bring about a "revolutionary" society that will only turn around and *exclude* you and those like you.

HOMOSEXUAL

I can tell from your letter you are not gay- and never worried for a minute about whether gay people were going to be "allowed" to be in the life hereafter of the revolution. Your anti-gay attitude is very apparent- you "excuse" Cuba's anti-homosexual policy on the basis that every society is also anti-homosexual. You have the nerve to *taunt* gay people about this tragedy. You talk about "mature politics" in a very condescending way, setting yourself up as a judge of what are "correct" gay politics when you yourself are not even gay and have no conception of the anguish that can mean. At one time, white "revolutionaries" found it politically expedient to do this to Black people too- and many still do.

de

You may think my answer is "counter-revolutionary". But I believe that if one is not fighting for a revolution for oneself too, then it is hollow and shortlived and imperialist in itself to claim to be fighting a revolution for someone else. That's exactly what the U.S. State Department says they are doing in South Vietnam- they are "saving" the South Vietnamese from Communism. You are "saving" Cuba from Cultural Imperialism and "saving" gay people from "immature" politics. I think you'd better re-examine the whole issue.

CUBA

RESISTANCE PAINTING

RAT
p.13

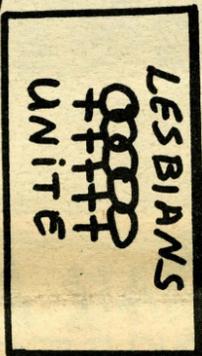
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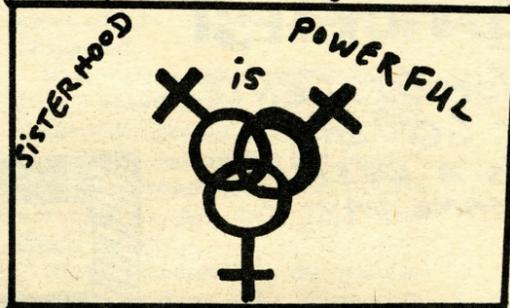
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support yourself, still think being a professional is being functional but being an office worker is not. Anyway I choose to try and become middle class, but the only movies, books or real life class climbing, success story heroes were working class men so I totally identified with that image. Class climbing I discovered is a fallacy, and learned, too, how ambitious men are held down by having to support the women they knocked up. Women were a horrible burden to all my heroes. So I couldn't stand the female role in the working class family and was a total flop anyway. I couldn't do the male thing in my class, and I didn't succeed in class climbing. Soon the belief set in "I couldn't do anything." I was absolutely awful at anything that females were supposed to do and I didn't dig men. That's something I still can't get a handle on - just how that shaped my life. I didn't get married until I was convinced that I couldn't get anywhere (meaning to the middle class) on my own and also after my best friend who I loved married a nice boy who could support her and was moving up money wise. And when I married a long haired art student son of an immigrant truck driver, I thought we could class climb together. Dead end. He hated middle class people and wasn't interested.

It took me a long time to not think there was something wrong with me since I could never really fit into the middle-class - university thing. I never could see that working class people don't fit in - that that's the way things are structured. Even if I saw that, I couldn't accept being working class (that meant all bad things to me). I had to keep believing I was an exception. One time one of my friends in high school told me that I was really lucky cause no matter what kind of clothes I wore I looked well bred. I treasured that compliment for years. It got me through countless parties where people knew just how to act and through an endless number of discussions I couldn't understand.

Now after such a long time of self denial I am starting to think about class. I'm starting to realize that disagreements I have with women over strategies and analysis aren't merely because I don't understand or I think things out more or less than they. I am beginning to see in many issues the class nature of the argument - to see how clearly I take the sides I do and middle class women take the sides they do. I am realizing that even though I think of myself as always relating to middle class women and being in middle class circles how all my close friends, the women I really get close to and love are working or lower class. I am beginning to see that it is no coincidence that I feel comfortable and can be honest with them. Most importantly I am beginning to realize that I am working class, that I'll always be working class - that that means something - something other than being embarrassed; that my needs are important; that I have a right to make demands of middle class women and that in a scale of oppression the oppressed always are made to feel damaged in comparison to those who oppress and that that is wrong. That I know gay women are beautiful and strong through their oppression, not more damaged than straight women - that working class women only seem damaged to middle class women. That we must struggle with class as women - grope to understand how it has affected us. And realize that we are affected by it - that being all oppressed as women does not mean we do not oppress each other or that our analysis is not affected by the class bias and racist values most of us have brought with us to the movement.



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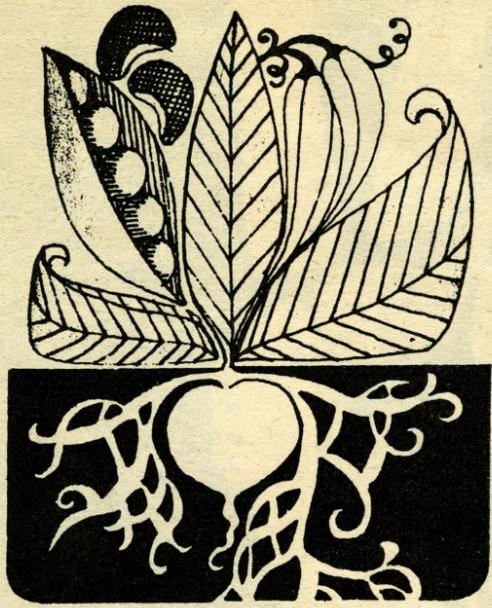
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RAT. 14

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RAT. 15

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—Bernard Drew, Gannett News Syndicate



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I can't explain it all, even to myself - the whys and how - the rationale of why the women's movement must rid itself of its class bias. It is all so difficult that were it just thoughtful on my part, I would forget it until I could spell it all out - be sure of my reason - feel more correct. But there is nothing thoughtful about this feeling of necessity. Wanting to deal with class is necessary for my survival. I cannot think that "we're all sisters" will necessarily include me (working class). Recently I feel afraid of the women's movement, afraid of women I know - a fear that women who are not involved in the movement must feel. But I am involved and sometimes I'm scared. Enemy lines get crossed. I'm afraid of my own side. And when pushed against the wall - when I feel real class antagonism from my middle class sisters, I start seeing things totally in class terms. I start defining a class war and lose sight of any feminine consciousness I have. It's a dichotomy I know is not real but appears because we have not dealt with class in any but a superficial way. Somehow that dichotomy for me has to be broken and the class differences among us have to be dealt with, struggled with, so that our oneness is real, not just the result of ignoring the parts that don't fit.

I understand how easy it has been to ignore those parts. When I do point out how something said or done is offensive to me, I realize that even middle class women who do not react antagonistically or guilt ridden had no idea they were being offensive. Something I feel in my guts they have never thought about - been aware of. It is so difficult to explain to women who have had middle class backgrounds - to put things into a perspective that they can understand. You find that by putting things in an order that can be understood in middle class terms that the meaning is changed. You're not explaining what you originally felt. My class feelings can't be explained in your class terms. I understand that now but for a long time I believed it when people (always middle class) would say middle class people are more articulate. If they were really liberal (and thought they were radical) they would say middle class people have been given the opportunities to develop skills in articulating. Now I see that for the subtle classist statement it is. Working class women make sense to me; middle class women just don't understand what they are saying. It's not that I'm inarticulate. It's that you don't understand. To talk about class to me is like spitting words and reactions out - like wretching all the feelings I can't explain yet. To get it out first so maybe I can see what it is that we have to explain. Yet I am always afraid to say anything when someone is offensive or antagonistic about class because everyone (including myself) thinks I'm the one to always bring up class - put people up against the wall about it. But I only bring it up when I feel really offended by something someone has said or done that is classist. So why is it assumed that I brought it up. If someone is offensive to working class women, it seems they have brought it up.

The first thing that surfaced for me that came close to a class consciousness was my reactions to some middle class things and of course with gut reactions you run a high risk of being wrong. You react negatively to something and are pushed to give some reason for your reaction. There are so many things that I know I, at one time dismissed as reactionary in my parents and people in my background. And of course I learned quickly in my identification with the middle class that the working class is reactionary. The explanations they gave for their dislike of art, high culture, hippy life styles were pretty bad but maybe the basis of their hatred was something more right on than their explanations. I



Reprinted from "Ain't I a Woman"

always react negatively to women becoming professionals or the whole drive to support women artists, lawyers, etc. But any way I try to explain that to people can be discredited right away. Once when we got into a fight about that subject, I ended up saying something like "If that's what the women's movement is all about (supporting women to become lawyers and artists) then there is no place for me". I just sounded jealous. And there is always the "I'm too damaged by my background" theory - that I should support middle class women in their attempt to reap the glories of middle class life in the name of all women since they have been less damaged and are capable of accomplishment. The middle class can only see that we don't have what they have and that that is unfair. But within those reactionary ideas we come up with are the seeds of deeper thought - like questioning if anyone should have the things they have. Middle class women miss the point: that we're attempting to question their whole existence. It's not just that I'm jealous cause I can't be part of that scene, it's that that scene is decadent - wrong.

I know most middle class women will react to this as if I am talking about material possessions - the idea that middle class values are valuing material things. They are totally blind thinking they have a monopoly of valuing things. I value money and material possessions more than most of my middle class friends - I have had to and that seems sensible to me - closer to truth - closer to what really matters to people - food, shelter, self respect. But I have a hard time valuing all their valuable ideas, their universities, their liberal, humanitarian, gracious-living bullshit.

In so much WL literature we talk about looking around and seeing the absence of women in so many fields and then proceed to talk about there being no women lawyers, artists, doctors. We looked around and all we saw was the middle class, every thing else is invisible to the middle class except "the ruling class" or "the poor" which are phrases easily used and dismissed in usual leftist rhetoric. When I was younger and I looked around I didn't see any of those professions period. And if I did they weren't from my class of people.

The only way I saw of getting out of marrying and having kids of being self sufficient or independent was getting out of my class. There were middle class female examples supporting themselves. There were no status female jobs that I could see when I was growing up. All the jobs the men did - the men did - no exceptional women. I heard of some women - someone's older daughter - becoming a teacher or going to art school. They never lived around me and hardly ever came home. My mother would say they were high *salutin'*. But within my class (whatever that means - I realize the variations of experience - mine can't be seen as typical of all working class backgrounds) the women who did work were few. My parents' friends were all married couples. I didn't know any older single women. Anyway why did I see the only way of being independent as being something middle class - some profession. Why did I not imagine doing any of the jobs the men I knew did. I don't think I saw the possibility of supporting myself there without a man. And I wonder why we still don't talk about filling the lower class jobs but just the middle. Most jobs in this society stink but why do we think those of the middle class are better, tolerable, functional. Is there any basis for that assumption other than most of us are middle class and have obvious class bias against anything outside of that class. That most middle class women still think middle class, still accept those bourgeois values, still believe you have to do something for high reasons - to help other people, explore realms of thought, still look down on doing a job just for the money - to

continued page 13

Starting to think about class...

RAT

DURING THE PREPARATION OF THIS ISSUE, THE RAT COLLECTIVE DID SOME SERIOUS THINKING ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A WOMAN'S PAPER.

IN THE PAST, RAT HAS PUBLISHED ARTICLES THAT DEALT WITH ALL AREAS OF REVOLUTION. IN THE FUTURE, WE ARE GOING TO TRY AND SELECT ONLY ARTICLES THAT HAVE A SPECIAL BEARING TO THE OPPRESSION AND LIBERATION OF WOMEN. ALTHOUGH MANY NOT SPECIFICALLY WOMAN-IDENTIFIED NEWS ARTICLES ARE OF INTEREST TO MANY WOMEN, WE FEEL THAT MANY MIXED OR MALE-STAFFED UNDERGROUND PUBLICATIONS WILL AND DO PICK UP THESE ARTICLES TO PRINT — WHEREAS THEY ARE NOT SO EAGER TO PRINT — OR SEARCH FOR ARTICLES ABOUT WOMEN. THROUGH OUR TALKING, WE HAVE DECIDED TO MAKE AN EVEN MORE CONSCIOUS DECISION TO DO THIS.

THROUGH POLITICAL EDUCATION WITH OTHER WOMEN COMING TO RAT, WE WILL BE ABLE TO RE-DEFINE OUR POLITICS AS A WOMAN'S PAPER AND BROADEN OUR PERSPECTIVES WORKING WITH AND REACHING OUT TO THE WOMEN IN THE JOB, ON WELFARE, AND AT HOME. ARTICLES WILL INFORM AND SET ALTERNATIVES TO WOMEN FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN HERE AND IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WE ARE GOING TO STOP PUBLISHING SO THAT WE CAN BEGIN TO PUT OUR VISIONS INTO PRACTICE.

**We are hoping that more women will join RAT in this new direction. PLEASE WRITE. RAT : 241 E 14th ST.
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