

May 31, 1981 Bread and Roses Meeting @ Britannia

Present; Sara, Ann Mc, May Lynn, Wendy, Micki, Dara, Caitlin, Adrienne, Rose, Jackie, Maggie, Frances, Bett, Susan, Teresa, Danyelle, Luce, Corrinne, Marion, Helen

Chair; Sara, Minute taker; Marion

Agenda;

1. Meeting against the right
2. Basis of unity
3. other business including the India Mahilia Association

Frances proposed that we discuss the basis of unity first. This was accepted.

Sara; Rape Relief got a letter from the Klan this week, it is appropriate to hear from them. I will cut down on the time allotted for the meeting against the right

There was some discussion about a proposal made by Jackie and Helen to have a potluck prior to one of our meetings. It was decided that the potluck would take place on June 28, with the steering committee determining the location.

Sara; for the basis of unity discussion, Maureen will give us an introduction, to give the discussion a context.

Maureen; The reason I included the IWDC basis of unity was as a model--to acknowledge where I started from.

I took the IWDC basis of unity and worked on it with Jackie about different ways of saying the same things and adding new items. I then talked to Helen.

The basis of unity statement is for our own needs, not necessarily something that we will distribute to the public. What we want to develop is something that would make sense for us.

I took the part out about the state not being neutral and as socialist feminists I think we all agree with that concept. The problem with the IWDC statement is that it refers to the state as monolithic and something that can't be pushed. The IWDC has lobbied the state around equal pay for equal value etc.

It sounds too negative and purist, as if we never lobby just have mass demonstrations. People may want to argue this.

There is also something in the basis of unity that I want to add--in the section on our enemy, stuff about the 3rd world, suffering from deeper exploitation.

The difficulty with a statement like this is that you have to put down the whole nub of capitalism and patriarchy.

This is complex and we haven't worked on this, or the history of women's oppression. ~~How I said this in Bread and Roses is different~~ I don't see women's oppression as starting with capitalism.

How I said this in Bread and Roses is different than in IWDC. We should try and put it in a way that is sufficient for all of us.

I think that the basis of unity is now something we all have to work together on, nothing we want to accept or reject. We have to guard spending a lot of time on it No nit picking

Sara; I will explain for the women who just came in. Our initial discussion is on the basis of unity. Focus in on making some of the general points. I will chair on the round system.

Susan; It is important to address the question of the state. The weakness of feminism and the women's movement is that we build alternatives outside the state. We should say that the state is not neutral, we can make gain by pressing the state, but it cannot be reformed.

Bett; You're saying that you want a stronger statement. Question of class,

Jackie; I want to stress the importance of the statement. This group wanted two priorities--anti-right work and trade union support. The women who come to it have a socialist feminist perspective. We want to tell the women's movement who we are. There is a problem with the language. Somebody else should put it in language more accessible. Rewrite it to make the language easier.

In the last paragraph the stuff about the autonomous women's movement. I want to see a women's movement in its majority and led by working class women.

In terms of the state, I think there is a problem. The position that the state cannot be reformed is revolutionary. But this group is broadly based and we want to attract other women who do not necessarily believe that for example some people in the women's committee of the N.D.P.

Sara; When we were talking about the public meeting we discussed what do we want to say to other women who want to become active. Do we want to build Bread and Roses as an organization for women who are just getting involved in doing this work? if so how do we balance the perspective of our work and our analysis.

IWDC in Toronto started on a practical basis, and then developed a basis of unity. This (the basis of unity) is too theoretical. I guess I didn't understand that we were trying to define the nature of patriarchal capitalism. We should talk about what we want to do and its relationship to patriarchal capitalism.

The language assumes a level of theoretical work. My response to the basis of unity is that I have problems with the language and concepts. It should be rewritten.

Concept of focus on goals and work which we want to undertake is needed now.

Frances; the first time I read likes it. I agree that the concept of the state should be included. It is in impossible language. The concepts should stay in.

Frances volunteered to rewrite it.

Helen; I agree with the problems of language. The label socialist-feminist comes with a certain level of struggle. I meet a lot of women who I have agreement with but who don't identify themselves as socialist feminists.

I think we should include ~~the text~~ a section on tasks. We can say that they may broaden. I have problems with the section These structures... a particular oppression for women problematic. Patriarchy has lasted for a long time, throughout all economic ~~for~~ systems.

Maureen; Jackie also has some problems with that section. This talks more about patriarchal attitudes than patriarchy.

Helen; This says that patriarchy hasn't existed for a long time. I find it problematic when we talk about our enemy only as patriarchy. As socialist feminist we define capitalism ~~or~~ or the bourgeoisie as our enemy.

In ~~the~~ Suggested that we adopt this formulation regarding the state; Reforms can be won through mass mobilizations but women's liberation cannot be achieved under capitalism/ Bett Spoke about defining our tasks. Wanted to know is if our function is as a support group. Also questioned how we draw women into our work. Suggested that either we are going to be a collection of women who are working with other groups or a group who is doing their own work. Said that if we want to be the former we could be a socialist feminist caucus in BCFW

Adrienne; Asked if it was intentional that left groups were not included in as allies. Stated that they should be included.

Jackie responded that this was not intentional; but we were mostly talking in terms of mass movements.

Maggie; Agreed with the criticism regarding the language. Suggested that in order to make our analysis more concrete we put in examples of what we are talking about. Stated that the basis of unity has to include the kind of work we are going to take up

Dara; It is important to define our position around the state. The state is involved in confusing people, especially those who are involved in mass movements. Important to define whether we are trying to mobilize women to join this group or whether we are a caucus of socialist-feminists

Danyelle- Having a hard time understanding "drawing people in" You pose action, then you have a basis of unity, then people join because it relates to their lives.

Sara; As chair we need to address what this group is in relationship to the basis of unity.

Jackie; I want to take up the thing about the purpose of the group. Want to rewrite the stuff about our enemy. On the purpose of the group. A problem is that the group keeps changing. We are both. We want to build an activist socialist-feminist group, but in the process of doing so we will function as a support group. If there is a group of women struggling in some racial minority we'd support them. We wouldn't have to be sure that they agreed with our basis of unity. Also we want more trade union women who are active in their unions and will come to us for support in their strikes.

Maureen. Can't explain capitalism in this section. As opposed to those feminist who say men are the enemy we say it is a lot more complex, because we are dealing with systems. As socialist feminist we don't often look how patriarchy works, I want to see that in.

Frances; Agrees with Jackie but this group is not only for support for women in other women's groups or unions but for women in other organizations. I'm in this group because I want to talk to other women about what I am doing, how I am doing it, and the problems involved. This is intended for women inside this group. It is not intended as an organizing tool, just as a way of organizing us.

Sara; Need an activist group in a context where I can develop. Basis of unity must talk about the kind of work we want to do.

If there are areas which we can't clarify, if the question re patriarchy is a problem, I don't think we need to agree on this to develop a women's group based on a class struggle perspective. If it is going to be those kinds of debates remove it and talk about how women experience it. We want to join with groups who are outside the traditional women's movement.

Helen. In response to Maureen. I don't agree with the stuff on patriarchy. Important in terms of drawing in women that we have an analysis of capitalism/

Susan; I think we need a think tank on strategies.

Frances; Basis of unity should be rewritten. I will help

Sara; Useful to say what this group is, that it is a support group and what we want to do. Will help write this.

Jackie and ~~Maureen~~ Maggie will help rewrite it.

Sara; Report on the meeting of subcommittee against the right; Decided to build a public meeting. Discussed the following; who the public was, who should speak, format, how to develop our point of view, objective, how to build it.

Objectives; 1. To do consciousness raising in the women's movement. on the need to fight against the right and thru that to involve more women in actively fighting the right. 2. Feminist agitation--putting forward a feminist analysis to groups fighting against the right is the B.C.O.F.R. 3. to mobilize such groups as the membership of CCA. 4. to build bread and roses 5. to build the activities of other organizations which we invite to speak, and to build other orgs. 6. To provide a perspective on how to be active'

Maybe will result in ~~axualization~~ the beginning of a coalition to fight the right. We also want to build practical links with the other groups.

Agreed that we wanted to bring women into the fight against the right. But do we want to bring them into a broad cttee with a lower bases of unity or do we want them to ~~fight~~ ^{xxx} join Bread and Roses.

The public includes women and men. We want to reach out to get the membership of BCOFR to attend ^{at}

Speakers-BCOFRM LARE, BCTF, to speak on fighting the right and the right wings attempt to stop sex ed in the schools and reintroduce religion. We may want to initiate something to fight the Moral Majority in the schools later. India Mahilai Association to talk about the daily experience of racism. We want other groups to talk about the work they are doing and how it effect women. We'd provide an analysis of a feminist perspective which would link various struggles.

Developing the analysis-on or two women write it, take ~~it~~ it to the group for discussion

Format-10 min. per speaker. Discussion and question from the floor. A public meeting tentatively ~~aka~~ calling it "women's speakout against the right"

Building it. targetted the groups we wanted to mobilize. Had primary and secondary targets

We really want a broad mobilization, but that means we need many women to be active.

Targetted groups; womens movemnt, women union members, lesbian ghetto, gay ghetto, Union, base of organizations like CCA, immigrant community, possibly going door to door, teachers, punks.

Ideas re mobilizing' ~~llwaflwting~~ union meetings, articles in Union papers. Did not resolve issue of formal Union endorsement. The Union women should decide this.

Good childcare/

Oct 3 date/

Teresa; What about funding. Has there been any discussion. In terms of endorsements are we asking for money?

Maureen; Should have something more than we generally do. Something that involves music, Black Arts Theatre reading poetry. We should use other medium.

Jackie' ~~Toxx~~ Too much crammed into ten minutes. I don't think you can do it. I'm opposed to the date. I don't want to wait 1/2 year for our first public event. I want something a couple of months from now. When I heard stuff from Rape Relief I wanted it in a couple of weeks

Bett; Need to talk about how women who come to meeting can move beyond. Other groups should have tables. Meeting should be focussed for involvement.

Adrienne' 6 speakers too many. Should be self selective. Maybe we don't want BCOFR to speak but can mention ~~their~~ their presence. # 3 speakers.

Ann; Why choose Oct. Its a long time

Helen' I thought we should do it in Oct. But now I feel we should do it earlier and reduce our expectations. We should do more than an evening meet. For instance an evening meet followed by a daylong workshop in OCT.

Maggie; We should be more creative.

Sara; 2 proposals 1. a meeting that is sooner and less a complex, conference or workshop later in the year. Women should bring a new proposal next meeting.

Dara; We should be doing active work between now and the meeting. The outreach will involve lots of work. I thought Oct was good because it would give time to be thorough and clear.

Helen; I was gunning for a long period of time. Based on the experience of the Lesbian Conference I think that it is important to be public even if you are not together. We should have a public meeting which would make us stronger.

Sara- subtee to meet and take account of these ideas.

Helen; New women her ~~xxx~~ Explain subtee.

Sara; Doesn't really exist. Volunteers. Next report on India Mahilia. They contacted us whether we'd be interested in doing support work. At an earlier meeting we decided we'd want to decide how to work ~~with~~ with them.

Maggie. I contacted them. 3 of us, 3 of them and have an informal exchange on how we would work together. No reply yet.

Sara' We proposed; helping to build public meeting and speaking at it, what to do to breakdown traditionally white women's movemnt, find out what their interest is.

Frances' The possibility of them speaking at our meeting should be deferred until we decide.

Sara; We'll just say that we are setting up a meeting.

~~xxx~~ Caitlin; What kind of support do they want/ Concrete support or political analysis.

Sara; Help with writing, translation, transportation.

Maggie; Some women want to build links with the women's movement.

MayLynn; How did this group originate.

Maureen; We know about it because of the involvement of Prabha Khosla.

Sara; Next item Rape Relief

Bett. Our offices were ~~xxxxxx~~ broken int, smashed up, files missing. Same day in mail we received something from KKK. Stuff from KKK was just backgrounders plus a copy of a letter to the Sun re Eatons windows. KKK had written upon it see what happens when you speak up. We can't make sure it was the KKK. I'm not sure what we wanted. Need ideas. I don't want it to just go by.

MayLynn; Whenever KKK does stuff they leave a mark. I find this a bit wierd.

Sar; On thier terrorist stuff they have not.

Bett; Not possible to make a direct connection. But the KKK doesn't like it. Second time in 2 months we have been ransacked. In October both us and the Quebec rape crisis centre were broken into on the same night.

MayLynn; has Rape Relief discussed this/

Bett; Committee making a proposal tomorrow. I need ideas. No collective request at this time.

Helen; Phone BCOFR. They have mobilized on very quick notice and know how Klan works. It would also raise within BCOFR the idea that the Klan is not only attacking racial minorities but also women.

Sara; Rape relief had a banner on the anti Klan march. Even a letter is a reason for making a fuss. I like a joint press statement not only Rape Relief and Bread and Roses but BCOFR, BCFW, BCFL.

Marion; Norman Bthune bookstore and SCO have already received hate mail

Dara; last week in Abbotsford three men were arrested after setting fire to cars and East Indian homes. Two members of BCOFR had crosses burned on their lawns in the past two weeks.

Frances; How do you know its the KKK

Bett; they sent us a backgrounder printed leaflets ~~xxxxxxx~~ by the Klan. If we wanted some public statement how would we contact you/

Maureen; Isn't 2 weeks too late. Hearing escalation of activities June should be the time when we have the meeting. Soon/

Adrienne; Joint press release very important.

Sara; ~~it~~ might be possible to produce a leaflet opposing this action, in conjunction with other groups.

Teresa; Problem is that the media portrays these incidents as sporadic and isolated.

What is the possibility of documenting Klan activity?

Dara; BCOFR does this. They have had a meeting with CBC and BCTV to talk about coverage.

Sara; make phone calls to other groups to make sure others groups have not been hit.

Bett; This will happen at the BCFW regional meeting.

Maureen; maybe possible to have a meeting and issue a press release about the Klan. The press may attend if it was built in a comprehensive way. Suggested that this meeting be involve all groups who are under attack by the Klan

Frances; Let other ~~groups~~ women's groups know. The more open people are about these events the better.

Helen; Will take a lot of work. The subcommittee should take it up. We want to work with Rape Relief. Two suggestions; someone from Rape Relief to work on the subcommittee someone from Bread and Roses to work with Rape Relief.

Adrienne; If press conference ~~is~~ called BCTF should be invited. A ESL teacher was beat up because she teaches immigrants.

Micki; Vesta says these attacks are subsiding. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Their term is not anti-racism but multi culturalism.

Sara; We've made concrete suggestions, a subcommittee to work with Rape relief, a leaflet, a press release, contact with other groups.

Bett; Pitch for Rape Relief walkathon June 28th. If we can make this a successful walk, we can pay fixed costs for house for a year. It is not only a shelter but a concrete basis for organizing.

Recently an article ~~xxxxxxx~~ appeared in Kinesis about accountability and our fundraising campaign. It came at a bad time—we were in negotiations with the government for funding and to buy the house. WE took it to the last BCFW meeting and want Kinesis to change their editorial policy saying if their is an article about a group the group gets a look first. Letters to Kinesis about this would be appreciated

Sara; this is for individuals not for Bread and Roses.

Helen; You want Bread and Roses to take a position

Bett; Initially yes, but no time

Sara; You don't have to be on a subcommittee. You can be one either or both.

Helen; Need more women to join steering ctee. Especially trade union women. Bread and Roses meets alternate Sundays.

Next meeting,
Maggie chairs.

Agenda;

Trade union report
another round on basis of unity
round on anti right meeting

If the minutes are missing soething please bring it up in a meeting as we need an accurate record. I apologize for all the typing and spelling errors.