

5 April 1981: Strategies Meeting. held at Grandview Co-op. *H. J. ...*

PRESENT: Sandy, Helen, Susan M, Billy, Sara D. Maureen F., Jackie Susan C., Lou, Anne McD, Nancy, Frances, Anna D., Bet.

Chair: Helen. Minutes: Frances (these are notes of the discussion at this meeting. Direct quotations are indicated by " ", otherwise I have tried to get the sense of what people said. If there are disagreement or additions please let me know.)

NANCY asked if presentations were going to happen? MAUREEN said she would do MAGGIE's presentation because she was unable to be present. We agreed that the meeting would run from 7:55 to 10:00 pm. The first thing that was done (by I know not who) was to clarify the consensus we were operating with, which resulted in some conversations after the consensus was summarized as follows:

We have agreed to tasks as related to:

1. Women's movement links with the Trade Union Movement
2. Anti-fascist work/against the right (this has to be broad enough - not all groups are 'anti-fascist.')

NANCY - what kind of thing wouldn't we do?

MAUREEN - examples might be violence against women work, take-back-the-night marches.

ANNE - those might be seen as work done elsewhere, and that's the kind of work we wouldn't do. Violence against women is being organized around elsewhere.

NANCY We wouldn't initiate actions which other groups are already looking after. So we are left with the question of whether or not we'd attend those actions as a group.

SARA - that would be resolved with how we work.

HELEN - we are moving into other questions, we need to clarify what we're doing. So we don't have to go backwards in the middle of a discussion. People felt we should have a practical basis of unity.

SUSAN - what's the name of the group?

VARIOUS WOMEN - there isn't one, we're not there yet....

HELEN - is this clear - can we move on to the next agenda point?

LOU - is group to be action oriented, research oriented, or both?

HELEN - we have had 2 proposals, both have included both research and action. We have to be sure we're not duplicating other people's work.

JACKIE - ~~skugga~~ suggest the form of anti-fascist work/right work be a campaign, but with building links, doesn't say how it's going to be done. Has to be sorted out, because it is a fundamental question.

SARA - focus on support work around union issues, working with women in unions. Brings up how to work with Working Women Unite, also wanting to work with unions.

HELEN - so there is then, ^{to} limited definition - consensus...

ALL - yes

HELEN - ~~we~~ ~~we~~ will we exist as identifiable group with a name, or as a loose group?

MAUREEN (this presentation doesn't include all of MAGGIE's point of view because she's sick). My speaking is not out of being in Vancouver history, and I won't be here to do the work. If we continue to meet the group needs definition, not about strategies for the women's movement as a whole. Implicit socialist-feminist assumptions. Where true this is better to say. Important for people to know that, so group should acknowledge it.

'Anti-capitalist' may not be necessary. Socialist-feminist. So important to find a name, if only for a set of meetings. Argue for our working as a group not as individuals. We've agreed on ~~w~~ 2 areas of work, why is because we're socialist feminists. Strategic assumptions. has to do with the growth of the women's liberation ~~w~~ movement, and how it will occur. Even though not strategies group for whole women's movement. Not all feminist see numbers of women's movement as important, socialist-

feminists do see this as important. "Important to add to the number of feminists without subtracting from the number of feminists." Important to see and work where women are being radicalized, in unions. Important ~~xxx~~ not to lose a touch with radical feminists in process, radical feminists have kept alive the issue of violence against women. Would be a shame to isolate 2 areas of work and loose feminism in the areas of work, always a struggle, IWDC has always been a struggle with unions, some issues, e.g. lesbiansim. Issues have to be presented together, we will not drop certain issues because people are afraid of them. About the Saturday demo - the Klan is not just racist, didn't ~~xxx~~ hear one word about their anti-homosexuality (this refers to the BCOFR demo). We need a group, which meets regularly, is named and can offer support. ANNA - some women who came to early meetings have decided this is a socialist feminist group, and some women don't want to be a part. So we should name ourselves with what others see already.

SUSAN C - ~~we~~ I need a socialist feminist group because of socialist analysis shared. Class analysis added to feminism is important.

SARA - ~~xxxx~~ some questions about IWDC in Toronto. If we're going to initiate actions and have an analysis, wouldn't we be calling meetings to which women would come who do not call themselves socialist feminists? What is our relation to them; how do we grow? How did IWDC deal with that growth?

MAUREEN - women come in and out, the core goes on. The ~~w~~ core hasn't grown a lot, but has maintained it. Problem with IWD, seen to have the 'franchise,' just us in extension. So in Toronto this year the radical feminists are not joining it. Creates problems, currents are not as well organized. ~~xxxxxxx~~ There is a statement of unity, ~~a~~ not extensive, one page. Used to identify us as 'anti-capitalist,' now as socialist-feminists.

NANCY J - I have same questions as SARA. Definitions must not result in a closed group. Whatever structure needs to be open. Might choose name which identifies action intentions.

HELEN - the specific situation I'm involved in, working in BCOFR. Doesn't take into concern of women. I'm vocal at meetings, with support things have changed. At demo were lots of women's groups. Women are coming up to me, they have concerns about how to make concerns of women visible. Need more women to talk to, this group might mobilize women to work in the BCOFR, rather than trying to draw those women into this group. Would want to have a women's caucus in BCOFR

LOU - some thoughts re WWU, how to maintain a group. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Tactics for drawing in women; conference in 1979. We talked about it and sent out information beforehand. So need to work with a long time span, 6 months. Need to be task oriented, and also provide analysis; requires time commitment from ~~xxx~~ members, which may not be possible with this group of women. Research hasn't been done by WWU because of time problems and commitment to tasks. With tasks taken on will have to consciously address problems re analysis. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Socialist feminist seems a vague definition...strategies for the women's movement (S-F)... Re the BCOFR, surprised to hear suggestion of organizing women into BCOFR. ~~xxxxxxx~~ If it has the potential to be massive group of people...one thing to go to an event ~~a~~ sponsored by them, and another to encourage women from this group to join. I'd think we would need to make feminism accessible to women in BCOFR.

JACKIE - Agreed with what MAUREEN said. Wanted to stress one thing. The growth of the women's movement...closely tied to action. Radicalization will not take place without action. Have trouble locating this group... key to success in Toronto was IWD plus OWW (Not in Ontario Fed), so was a formation of two bodies ~~w~~ serving 2 important functions, IWD forced unity

on easily dropped issues, and OWW provided way ~~w~~ for women to talk about women working in unions. Sask WW, focus also on situation of working women Group has to address both sides, I'd like to ~~work with~~ be ~~involved~~ ~~in~~ in socialist feminist group, but also want to work inside unions and might not be possible in this formation. With B.C. Fed women's committee it's hard to set up rank and file women's organizations.^S Don't want group to be exclusionary. Needs to have a basic statement of unity. Which basically says the socialist feminist position. Needs to be some active women's liberation group which is active and wants to build the women's movement.

NANCY - has to do with the division between analysis and action -- We have to see that how we will form an analysis is through how we lead. Not necessarily a theoretical study group work. Need to make time in meetings for talking about what we're doing and the reasons for decisions.

HELEN - it's here in this group where I'd love to have a discussion about how to make feminism accessible.

MAUREEN: in IWDC no one ever required to ~~put~~ pledge allegiance to the basis of unity. Think works on talk basis, some come in, some withdraw. Basis of unity is important, helps clarify why some actions are taken, rather than being a basis of exclusivity.

SARA - developing such a document and group/ing would probably force women in Vancouver ~~into~~ into thinking about the questions. Re BCOFR - ~~probably~~ probably could do both, help ~~build~~ build the organization with feminist perspective and invite women to join this group as well. Not sure about question re trade union work. Good for women who are working in unions now to work out presentation on how to build relations with TU's. Discussion we should have soon in this group.

SUSAN C - Important for me to have a group where I can discuss ideas and act on them. Important to have a socialist-feminist group. I see the group as providing a forum for women to come and talk about ideas. See as group doing interventions in other organizations and also initiating actions. I'd like to talk about CUPE/VMREU strike and what it means for first major strike re equal pay in this province. We have the politics to influence but need to ~~figure~~ figure ~~out~~ out how.

HELEN - want to delineate points being discussed:

1. question of whether we should have a name
2. what basis of unity should be, how it should appear and its function.
3. Tasks group will take up - discuss work
 - analysis
 - interventions

4. question of our relationship with people not in the group. ~~From~~ my point of view this is problematic question. - relation with radical feminists, women in trade unions, women in BCOFR, women who have not been mobilized into political activity.

SARA - not just radical feminists, but also organizations like WWU, which do similar kinds of work.

ANNA - people are defined by things they're seen ^{with these} to be doing. 2 tasks - we could be anyone - don't have to be socialist feminists. Object to another organization devoted to spontaneity, so important to make explicit our assumptions. Important not to have basis of unity like a fly trap. Need to be explicit about analysis/basis of unity. To say 'anti-capitalist' is too broad, a popular front. Analysis must come to ~~a~~ some degree before task, not after as a sanction. Cannot afford elitism of saying women not socialist feminists // most feminist analysis are not part of theory. Must acknowledge different priorities.

HELEN - points laid out should be discussed. Should probably start with the basis of unity.

(There was Agreement with this suggestion) Important not to rehash dis-

discussion we've already had. So to say again - we agreed at the meeting on consensus 1, and 2. (see first page top). Now other things have been brought up. (~~xxxxx~~ 'appear' re basis of unity means how long it will be). LOU - assume a basis of unity like IWDC in Toronto, ~~fluctuating~~ membership, not a collective, of individuals with fixed membership. SARA - create means to bring together many people - a current. Maximize growth, a collective would ~~x~~ work against that. SUSAN M - how do you create cohesive analysis with a fluctuating membership?

SARA - not the conditions now to create a cohesive theory. Document discussions, keep minutes. Generalize around issues from a socialist-feminist perspective. Not developing a party platform.

SUSAN^M - my doubts, in the beginning of meeting, people want a group which is more than an action group - plus theory and cohesive analysis. Not all of us have the same socialist feminist analysis. How does one maintain forward direction with such a group?

JACKIE - agree with relation between action and analysis as NANCY said. Groups of such different women, pretty amazing, if we can begin to act, then can begin to figure out analysis. But does ~~xxx~~ need a basis of unity: Action, growth of women's movement, ~~xxx~~ links with radical feminists, and trade union women, why necessary to begin to act; basic statement of socialist feminism. Outline positions taken on women's oppression; why chosen foci we have.

HELEN - important to talk about 'brief' statement of socialist feminism.

ANNA - SARA contradicts herself in a description of a current. It is a group of people with definite position, hoping to attract people and exclude others. Basis of unity should fulfill function of defining current. Needs to be quite specific. Current better idea in present circumstances than party or organization. necessary to specify what is meant by socialism, principal/secondary contradictions, tie in how patriarchal institutions involved in capitalism and imperialism. Specify major contradictions between class struggle and women's oppression.

HELEN - important to think about the function, my point of view is to get together women who are anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, see world globally, see class struggle as a problem. There might not be agreement on questions of the principal contradiction. What we're trying to accomplish and who we're attempting to demarcate from is important: complex ~~xxx~~ questions are not useful. JACKIE's suggestion useful. Important for a basis of unity to highlight feminist perspective, don't deal with what's principal, but what we do agree on. Not convinced that it's useful to be defined as socialist-feminists. Some women who agree with those ideas don't see themselves as socialist.

MAUREEN - ANNA's outlined a major task. Socialist feminists around the world are working on it. Too ~~xxx~~ rigid and tight, too much time now. Not necessary to be that clear to move forward. See group as fairly flexible. Possible for group to move within flexible box, don't need to have total agreement on something before you move forward.

FRANCES - it isn't possible to be a collective and be flexible at the same time. If we are task oriented and build a movement we will have 'spongy edges' (Maureen's notes say I said this, but I'm not sure what it means - it should mean that we would be open to others joining). A specific basis of unity will define what's important, that is, who is with us. If we define what a socialist-feminist is, some might agree and begin to identify that way, too.

SARA - basis of unity will remind us what we're doing and bring together people who want to do the work. Not to provide for ideological & debate. Make positive definition of society we want to work towards. Concerned about language, have to make sure we are understood and not use labels we assume everyone understands. Important to define why these

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2 tasks are important.

HELEN - we have 20 minutes, then 10 to discuss next meeting.

NANCY - seems like both MAXX MAUREEN AND JACKIE made statements we might agree with. We might ask them to draft a 2 page document, for discussion on basis of unity.

SUSAN - Important for this group not to be seen as in opposition to other groups.

MAUREEN - not sure we'd incorporate some ideas you mentioned Helen, especially re imperialism, so you might join.

JACKIE - ~~xxxx~~ three of us would be ok, I'm over committed, have ideas and not much time for writing.

HELEN - asked for input from people who haven't spoken.

BILLY - relationship to WWU is important.

BET - here to inform myself, and to learn.

DAPHNE - have a problem with the meeting, all seems very abstract.

Didn't know what to tell other people about what was happening.

Don't have a clear idea about what is being done.

SARA - report on relationship to women's movement is important, some people to initiate discussion...

JACKIE - suggest we spend $\frac{1}{2}$ next meeting on basis of unity, and $\frac{1}{2}$ on discussion of ~~XXXXX~~ BCOFR work.

NANCY - do BCOFR work/discussion first, then at ~~later~~ meeting do b/u.

SUSAN - more beneficial to figure out relation of this group with others.

FRANCES - (but I don't know what I said)

MAUREEN - we talked about building women's caucus in ~~the~~ BCOFR, or interesting women in us.

HELEN - can see getting women from BCOFR to talk about experience. Don't know if they'd come.

(At this point my notes deteriorate, or the meeting did and then I made a proposal for a public meeting as a suggested concrete action which we could organize our discussion around, and plan some action with)

SARA - we've had some discussion about such a proposal.

HELEN - propose getting together with SARA and FRANCES to discuss how to do anti-racist work, rather than be clear about it now.

Next meetings 26 April

3 May

24 May at the Grandview Co-op (unless the strike is over first)

HELEN - will do agenda, and suggests that each person call two others to notify about next meeting dates.

It was suggested that we have a look at Varda Burstyn's article in DIMENSION on the women's movement.