

# League for Socialist Action/ Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière

## Discussion Bulletin 1972-73

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SUBMISSION TO THE 1973 LSA/LSO CONVENTION ON

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

A COUNTER DOCUMENT

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SUBMISSION TO THE 1973 ISA/LSO CONVENTION ON WOMEN'S  
LIBERATION -- A COUNTER DOCUMENT

The P.C. Draft Resolution on Women's Liberation dated October 22, 1972, is totally inadequate, in my opinion, for several reasons. First, it does not factually assess and evaluate our past experiences. In the two years since our last convention we have allotted considerable personnel and political priority to women's liberation work and it is imperative that we realistically examine our efforts and our achievements. In the one instance where leading comrades attempt to assess one of our projects, in the TWC document, I disagree with that assessment.

Secondly the P.C. document fails in any way to prepare our forces for intervention in any areas of women's liberation work other than abortion. Day care and on the job issues are not assessed as to existing activity, programmatic questions, organizational forms, etc. There is a listing of demands on pages 8 and 9 of the P.C. document plus a page on Québec women that includes some material on their role in the mass strikes. But on day care, no analysis; and on women at work in English Canada, no analysis.

Thirdly the document deals only with the positive attributes of the abortion issue - there is no balanced assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of abortion as an issue, and single issue mass action coalitions as an organizational form. Much of the motivation for abortion work is based on false premises.

This document will provide some of this missing material, refute some assessments and motivations, and criticize some of our past activities. It will be organized as follows:

1. Considerations determining the importance of abortion work relative to other issues of women's liberation, and single issue mass action coalitions relative to other organizational forms.
2. Outline of our past experiences with abortion work; (a) in the coalition, (b) on campus in a coalition and in women's studies, (c) an attempt to explain our limited results.
3. Labour Challenge's coverage of Women's Liberation over three years.
4. Commentary on the TWC document.
5. The RCT position
6. Conclusions

This document does not contain an examination of day care

as an issue. I hope to write such an examination shortly.

1. Considerations Determining the Importance of Abortion Work Relative to Other Issues of Women's Liberation.

The P.C. document cites a number of reasons for the primacy of the abortion issue. I shall list each one, and comment on it. Page numbers following each quotation refer to the amended P.C. document.

(a) "...abortion law repeal is the issue capable of mobilizing masses of Canadian women in action..."  
(page 12) Where is the proof for this supposed statement of fact? To date we have seen mass sentiment in favour of abortion law repeal as evidenced by the success of the petition and the referenda on campuses. Comrade Linda B. in a conversation with me defined a mass movement as mass sentiment which takes on some organizational character - so by her definition we have a mass movement. I would define mass movement at this time to mean a mass sentiment which permeates the population so profoundly that it is expressed in actions and organizations that go beyond the intervention of our forces, limited as they are. For example, I would consider the anti-war movement in the United States to be a mass movement. While we provided both the political and organizational leadership, that movement developed, on campuses, in the army and in the moratorium phenomenon, an expression far beyond the intervention of our limited forces. By that definition we do not have here a mass movement for repeal of the abortion laws. The P.C. document concurs: "But the organized campaign is not yet a mass movement in size. The coalitions in Quebec and English Canada still include a relatively narrow range of forces." (page 15)

That raises a related question - what is the support for the coalitions? I would agree with the P.C. statement above on that question. We can muster at best a few hundred persons to any given conference or demonstration and then only after a considerable campaign and the involvement of all our own forces in the action. In addition the coalition has a very narrow organizational base and the bulk of the day-to-day work is carried by our comrades.

I disagree with the claim that we have "a large movement" (page 14) or that the two coalitions are "concrete proof that women can unite in struggle and that they can build a powerful movement when they do so." (page 15)

What is clearly required is a factual report of the state of the abortion coalitions, outlining membership, mailing lists, attendance at demonstrations and meetings, financial support, day-to-day work and the degree to which

our comrades are involved in each instance. See section 2(a) of this document for this material.

Certainly I would contend that the case has not been made to date that "abortion law repeal is the issue capable of mobilizing masses of Canadian women in action". This statement therefore is a prediction of the future possibilities of the abortion issue and the coalition as an organizational form. What are the document's bases for this prediction?

(b) "Mass action coalitions around single issues are the key organizational form for drawing broad numbers of women into struggle" (page 9)

Why is this the case? Surely the union movement has in the past two years drawn far more women into struggle than the abortion issue. Usually they fought around demands that struck at particular issues of job discrimination and women's low paid position in the work force. The P.C. document points out on page 3 that 60% of the 200,000 public workers involved in the massive strikes in Quebec were women. That's 120,000 women, comrades, drawn into struggle through another organizational form. If the strike or union form of struggle, with attendant meetings, picketing and other support activity were inherently inferior to single issue mass action coalition work, the union form of organization could then be properly downplayed. But what Marxist can seriously suggest this, since women workers' consciousness of job discrimination, property rights, the role of the state, courts and police are all raised, at least to some extent, through union organization and struggle. In addition women gain some insight into the role of union bureaucrats and some feeling of their own strength. Women workers stand at the key economic-communication-education nerve centers of modern capitalism. Surely then we must concede that this union mode of struggle is by no means trivial or secondary. It is worth noting that the percentage of union members who are women is rising. In 1962 it was 16.4%. In 1969 it was 21.2%. 18.7% of all women workers are union members.<sup>1</sup>

On the University of Toronto more students have been drawn into struggle around a co-operative day care organization than around abortion coalitions. The day care struggle there has involved a sit-in and more recently an occupation lasting many months. The organizational form here limits participation generally to students on this campus. Because most day care struggles are directed against universities or municipalities, they are limited

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1. Data supplied by the Ontario Government's Women's Bureau.

to members of these communities and are not coalitions as we use the term.

Perhaps what is really meant by "key organizational form" is that single issue mass action coalitions are the form which most facilitates our intervention. We choose the issue, the program, the organizational form, the activity level etc. But this form has certain disadvantages, not intrinsic to the form but dependent on the particular circumstances. Where, as in the abortion coalition, the other forces are meagre, we have to carry the burden of maintaining the coalition organizationally. This is a very serious drain on the movement, limiting our intervention politically both on this issue and on other issues. We may then also find that the impact of the group on women generally is limited, our influence in the feminist movement not extensive, and the number of women in the coalition whom we can educate and recruit very small. Where the coalition is very broad, our political intervention is facilitated, since all our forces are not tied up in organizational work.

Intervening in already existing organizations such as unions or day care committees, poses a different set of problems. We have to take the situations as they develop, around issues not of our choosing, at what may be a low political level and in organizational forms that may limit our participation. But there is one very basic advantage to these organizational forms. Already existing struggles involve women (and men) already committed to a fight around what is for them an important issue. That means we have an audience and some organizational support. We have to meet these people at their level, work out with them the most effective strategy for that particular struggle and then try to implement the strategy. In that process we will hopefully assist that particular struggle, generalize and politicize it, make some connections and put down some roots in the outside world, develop a periphery for the Trotskyist movement (perhaps even recruit some members), circulate our press, and develop some skills in intervening in struggles not structured by ourselves.

(c) A coalition unites women around a single issue. If they disagree on other feminist issues they can still become involved in the feminist struggle. (page 9)

Of course day care and on the job struggles do exactly the same thing. On the other hand, the task of revolutionaries is to raise consciousness; that is to assist in the process of generalization in which opposition to the status quo on one issue, becomes opposition on many issues and finally becomes opposition to the system as a whole. In women's liberation, that means taking consciousness

around a single issue, generalizing it to consciousness on women's oppression as a whole, all the while linking it up to other struggles of the working class, and putting forward a socialist analysis and programme in order to develop rounded revolutionary Marxist consciousness. In our attempts to give the movement a "struggle" perspective we seem to have reversed the process and to be saying "forget Women's Liberation as a whole; the key struggle - the only struggle is abortion."

The original P.C. document said on page 23 "Abortion is not just one issue among many. Without control of her body, woman is little more than a slave..." (my emphasis). This was changed in the amended version to read on page 25 "...the abortion struggle is not in competition with other struggles of women. Women will struggle around many questions and revolutionaries support all actions of women for their rights." I agree with the amended version but the amendments are not sufficiently far reaching. While the document pays lip service to other issues the reality is that in the past year (1972) almost all our women's liberation work has been around the abortion issue. (I will deal with this in more detail in the section of this document dealing with Labor Challenge coverage and TWC.) The ratio in terms of woman-hours of abortion work relative to other areas is, I would speculate in Toronto, about 100 to 1. And while Toronto (for example) is now assigning women to other areas of women's liberation work, the U. of T. comrades have once again been instructed to form an Abortion Action Committee on campus. We have not taken women concerned with a single issue and broadened their view. We have reversed this process.

We have done so on the grounds of developing a struggle perspective and obviously a struggle perspective has to be concretized. (It is noteworthy that the 35,000 women demonstration in New York in December 1970 was multi-issue and that the Women's Place newsletter is urging all organizations and individuals to participate in a multi-issue rally at city hall on March 8, International Women's Day). We cannot carry a struggle type campaign for women's liberation in general. But struggles can be waged around a number of demands, including at times day care and on the job issues. Concretizing a struggle around a single issue should not mean narrowing women's liberation to abortion exclusively and either explicitly belittling other issues or intervening in other struggles only or primarily to raise abortion.

Secondly many women come to women's liberation not on a single issue but around a more general development of consciousness. This general interest in women's oppression is attested to by the circulation of the vast

amounts of literature referred to in paragraph 2 of the P.C. document. How do we meet and mobilize these women? I would suggest by our involvement in the existing women's liberation groups such as the Women's Centre and Women's Studies Courses. Toronto Women's Caucus was an important experience for our movement in this area with which I will deal later in the document; it was an experience in which we mobilized women in demonstrations around a number of issues, as well as utilizing the opportunity for education and propaganda.

(d) "Lack of control of her own reproductive processes is so fundamental to her oppression in all areas" (page 10). Comrade Angus in her Reply to the RCT puts it another way. "The repeal campaign is based on an objective need of virtually every woman." (page 12) On the one hand it is impossible to imagine a woman who at some time has not worried about the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy. On the other hand, many women, particularly since the advent of the pill, and the increased availability of abortion and sterilization, do not feel that unwanted pregnancy is an omnipresent problem. My experience in an office where ages ranged from 20 to 50, was that many women seemed to feel they had this problem under control. Some of them took subs to the Velvet Fist and came out occasionally to meetings of TWC but they saw abortion as a secondary question not affecting them personally. Job inequalities, on the other hand, affect almost all women at some point in their lives and many women for most of their lives. The day care issue is a long term problem for thousands of parents where both parents work or would like to work if day care availability gave them the option. In Ontario alone during 1970 there were 135,000 children under six whose mothers worked; at the same time there were less than 10,000 places in full day care, private and municipal.<sup>1</sup> So while lack of control of her reproductive processes is both oppressive to women and an excuse for oppression on the job and at school, for many women day care and on the job issues are more long-term constant problems.

In addition, High School teachers in the movement have pointed out that birth control is far more relevant to high schools than is abortion (probably because students lacking sexual experience would look to prevention and pregnant women usually leave school) and while general women's liberation groups are tolerated, abortion groups would probably be impossible.

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1. Information supplied by the Ontario Day Nurseries Branch.

(e) "Abortion (is) the key struggle of the feminist movement at this time". (page 10) Throughout our movement abortion has been characterized as a "struggle" issue while other issues are not. The TWC document refers to the controversy in the TWC as a "drift away from action and toward inward-turned armchair feminism" (page 7) and as a question of "mass action or personal liberation". (page 9) As I point out in my comments on the TWC experience this is not the case. The issue there was abortion exclusively or a broader perspective for women's liberation. Is abortion the only struggle issue?

Both day care and abortion are issues which some tendencies within the women's liberation movement have tried to solve on a self-help basis. Both abortion referral work and co-op day care centres have absorbed the energies of many women and no doubt diverted some of them from a struggle perspective. Only the equal pay for equal work issue has no self-help aspect. But both abortion and day care can also have a struggle perspective - abortion around repeal of the laws and day care around demands for its provision by the state, company and university. I will deal with the day care issue in a later document.

(f) "Scientifically this control (of her own reproductive processes) is now within reach, blocked only by reactionary laws". (page 10)

The basis for restriction on abortions is very clearly ideological, that is it rests on the philosophical proposition that women are inferior as a sex. The issue poses clearly two concepts - that a woman's right to determine the direction and quality of her life is more important than the existence of a foetus and that a woman should have the right to free sexual expression without reprisal. This issue, which could be substantially resolved by the simple enactment of a law taking abortion out of the Criminal Code, most clearly expresses the ideology or bald "philosophical" rationale underlying the oppression of women - the idea that they are inferior. This issue therefore probably cuts across class lines more than day care or on the job issues. This is not to say that abortion is not a working class issue as some women's liberationists do. Clearly abortion is less available to working class women than to middle class women. But the ideological implications of abortion make it an issue more likely to attract middle class women than day care or on the job struggles. It also attracts women who have more time to participate in political activity than the day care issue does.

Day care also generates some ideological opposition (there are still people who believe children should be looked after by mothers in homes) but the main block to



day care is economic. Parents can't find it or afford it and subsidization is opposed on the false grounds either that the nuclear family should bear the responsibility or that no money is available. Thus either working class children get inferior care while their parents work or women providing day care in their homes are underpaid - another example of the super-exploitation of working class women.

The equal pay for equal work issue and equal opportunity for education and jobs again runs into strong undercurrents of ideological opposition (women don't "need" as much money as men or aren't as committed to the job or aren't as capable of absorbing abstract ideas etc.) but again the basic problem is economic. But are issues that have heavy economic content, that relate directly to the class structure of our society, as well as having ideological implications, necessarily inferior to purely ideological issues? The day care question profoundly poses the whole question of social priorities in our society and the socialist concept of society's responsibility for children. The free twenty-four day care demand challenges the whole basis of the nuclear family. The issue of equal pay and opportunity brings women into a struggle against the boss and the trade union bureaucracy and in an alliance with the more militant trade unionists. Flowing from this the white collar trade union organization campaign now finally getting off the ground in Toronto is a very important development in which we must become involved.

(g) "The ruling class and its supporters have chosen to make abortion the issue around which to push back the entire feminist struggle." (page 10)

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision certainly disproves this. While that decision is a victory that is neither total nor directly and immediately applicable to Canada, it is certainly substantial. Furthermore it was won without the type of massive campaign we had predicted would be necessary to win this fundamental right. "The only way this victory will be won is by the combined efforts of masses of women in a united campaign. There are no shorter ways of winning," (Comrade Angus in her Reply to the RCT, pg.13). First, Right to Life organized a campaign that at times exceeded ours in size. The picture projected by some comrades of a bourgeoisie frightened by massive social unrest, which included a rapidly expanding movement on abortion, is unreal. The Nixon government just won a sweeping electoral victory. It has just pulled off a major political coup in Vietnam. An anti-war movement many times as large as the abortion movement, lasting for many years, with an impact felt in all layers of American society, only partially won its

demands. We cannot then explain the abortion victory solely in terms of Nixon's fear of protest. Certainly the campaign had substantial effect on public opinion and no doubt some effect on the decision, but as an organized mass-action pressure group it was scarcely off the ground.

The explanation of the government's action, or at least that of its more astute and far sighted components, must also lie both in its assessment of the importance of the issue, (that is the compatibility of freely available abortion in the U.S. context with the maintenance of sexual oppression and capitalism), and in its concern about rising unemployment and rising costs of welfare, housing, health and education. To illustrate this latter point, I would cite the Report of the Commission on Population and the American Future, set up by the President and Congress and chaired by John D. Rockefeller 3rd.<sup>1</sup> It stated "After two years of concentrated effort, we have concluded that, in the long run, no substantial benefits will result from further growth of the Nation's population, rather that the gradual stabilization of our population through voluntary means would contribute significantly to the Nation's ability to solve its problems. We have looked for, and have not found, any convincing economic argument for continued population growth. The health of our country does not depend on it, nor does the vitality of business nor the welfare of the average person...(and) population growth of the magnitude we have experienced since WWII has multiplied and intensified many of our domestic problems..." (page 8). Their concrete recommendations included the following: "Present state laws restricting abortion be liberalized along the lines of the New York State statute ..."; that "funds for abortion services" be provided by the appropriate governments and that abortion costs be included in health plans. They estimated that if the New York law were applicable across the nation the birth rate would decline by 1.5 per 1,000 in the first year.

The point of this is to refute the suggestion that it was our campaign and our campaign alone that achieved this victory. If that is not our line, why do articles on this development in our press, not mention other factors. Another country in which these population control factors cut across repressive ideology is Japan where abortion is freely available and women clearly

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1. Dated March 27, 1972 and available in the Queen's Park Legislative Library.

remain terribly oppressed. (The summer 1972 issue of Spokeswoman carried an item on Japanese cabinet discussions to partially restrict abortion).

But the U.S. Supreme Court decision creates a need for reassessment for another reason. We chose abortion as the major focus of our women's liberation work not only because the issue per se is important but because we thought it would project masses of women into struggle against the state. Had that happened and had we then won a victory, the lesson would be clear. Only through mass struggle against the state can women win major victories. But since this major victory was won without that type of mass struggle, surely the conclusion for many women active in women's liberation work will be: we can win victories through educational campaigns, through bourgeois courts, through influencing the existing capitalist parties. That mass action is not necessary may well be their conclusion.

Further it could create reformist illusions inside our own party. If such a fundamental tool of oppression as restrictive abortion laws can be overturned by a campaign of this type, does it not logically follow that other profoundly oppressive aspects of capitalism can be easily changed, by relatively short-term and small campaigns? We must look at these other factors.

I am not opposed to victories. I welcome the Supreme Court decision as any feminist is bound to do. I think the victory poses the necessity of re-examining our characterization of the abortion issue. Its transitional character is now called into question. Furthermore it requires us to examine the task of revolutionaries. Is it to almost single handedly take on the struggle for abortion law repeal - a reform that in the U.S. did not launch masses of women into struggle? Or is it to participate with other women in struggle on a number of issues, no doubt winning some victories but the totality of which can be gained only in a socialist society?

#### Conclusions on the limitations of abortion law repeal coalitions.

Abortion law repeal has not mobilized a mass movement and may be granted before it ever does. It has widespread sentiment behind it and little organizational steam apart from ourselves. We have put enormous organizational work into it and in practice stressed it to the point of denying the validity of other issues. We are consequently relatively isolated from women's liberationists working in other areas. Abortion is not the only struggle issue. Single issue campaigns, where we have to carry the bulk of the organization, enable us to pick up some women on the

one issue but inhibit our generalizing on our oppression. These exclusive campaigns cut us off from women who are interested in other aspects of women's liberation. Lack of control of one's body is not "the fundamental factor" in women's oppression as the original P.C. document suggests. Childcare and on the job factors are at least as important. Ideological issues are not per se superior to issues with a heavy economic content and single issue "mass action" organizations are not necessarily the best organizational form.

My general rounded conclusions will be found in Section 6 of this document. Before drawing those conclusions I will examine our work on abortion, our press coverage, TWC experience and the RCT position.

## 2(a) Abortion Coalition Work

A chronological outline of our work on abortion with numbers involved where I have figures follows:

- May '70 .. Abortion caravan - one comrade involved in actual caravan - we played role in organizing rallies in some cities. Final rally in Ottawa 500 women.
- June '70 .. TWC founded
- Nov. '70 .. Saskatoon Conference
- Feb. '71 .. Ottawa demonstration of 350 plus solidarity actions elsewhere
- May '71 .. Cross country demonstrations, 7 cities involved from 30 women in Saskatoon to 250 in Vancouver.
- Oct. '71 .. Ontario coalition founded
- Nov. '71 .. Cross country demonstrations
- Feb. '72 .. Ottawa injunction case - small demonstrations
- Mar. '72 .. Spokeswoman founded
- Mar. '72 .. Winnipeg conference, 250 women, Canadian coalition founded
- May '72 .. Cross country demonstrations
- Oct. '72 .. Rally around election campaign

In addition the coalition carried a petition campaign that got 93,500 signatures and campus comrades organized referenda on several campuses. A cross Canada conference is projected for this March.

Since October '71 the maintenance of the abortion coalition has been our primary work in Toronto in women's liberation. The activities of the coalition have been outlined above. The organization of the Canadian and Ontario office will now be examined.

There is an active mailing list of 300 to 400, including organizations. Between 20 and 50 of these women are prepared

to do some work when asked. Attendance at the weekly meetings fluctuates from 20 to 40 when a major project is on to 15 to 20 in periods of relative inactivity. Five to ten women are regularly around the office - that is they may come in once a week to work. The women who come around the coalition are feminists before they meet us, who essentially come to the coalition because it gives them a chance to act on their ideas. Two organizations have been consistently represented and given support, the YWCA and the United Church. Women around the Status of Women Committee remain in contact also. Turnover among the women is heavy in terms of level of activity but contacts tend to consistently show up at conferences and demonstrations.

Activities that go beyond the coalition through these supporting groups include their mailing some coalition material to 2-3,000 women, circulation of the petition, free facilities for meetings, and the setting up of meetings for our speakers, (approximately 12 meetings for the YWCA and 6 for the United Church).

The Spokeswoman has come out three times, an April May 1972 issue (press run 4,000 approximately), a summer issue (5,000) and then a February '73 issue (3,000). They were eight, twelve and four pages respectively. The paper pays for itself, all copies are sold, and the sub base is 300. It is now projected as a mobilizer to come out as a builder of a conference or demonstration rather than as a periodical.

The group is financially sustained through donations: from organizations; the United Church has given nearly \$1,000 and is considering another \$1,000, and the YWCA has given about \$100. As well, individual women make substantial donations. In the last 10 months the group has raised and spent \$5,000, of which approximately \$1,000 came from literature sales and the Spokeswoman. Tours are self-sustained; major expenses are telephone, salaries, office supplies, publicity for activities, etc. Rent is free.

What do we put into the group? For most of the past year two comrades worked full time for the coalition (one paid, one unpaid). The paid comrade is owed about \$700 in back pay. At present due to the upcoming conference four comrades are there fulltime; two paid and two unpaid. Nine comrades have major assignments to the area. Six to eight comrades attend the weekly meetings when they are small; ten to fifteen when they are larger.

During periods of intense activity a League or Youth full timer spends considerable time on the coalition; and one full time league comrade puts out all leaflets and posters. Almost all the work on the Spokeswoman is done by comrades (league staffers with the exception of Comrade L.

Angus) and about \$300 is owed the movement for technical work. A substantial portion of the attendance at any conference or demonstration is our comrades since branch mobilizations are called for these occasions.

In both branch and fraction meetings the criticism has been made that the weekly meetings of the coalition lack educational and political content. Comrades have stated that it is impossible to bring contacts down because they are so boring, even though the same contacts are willing to come to large meetings of a political character or to demonstrations. While there have been consistent reports that an educational program would be started, one comrade estimates there have been at the most ten educationals in the past year and a half and the other comrade estimates fifteen to twenty. Among the topics given were "Women and Sexuality" including the family, "Right to Choose versus Population Control" as a reason for abortion law repeal, the "Right to Life and the Catholic Church", "the Suffragist Movement", and "the Early Birth Control Movement."

It would seem to me that our organizational commitment to this area, particularly in terms of full time comrades working on an unpaid basis, is very heavy. We are carrying a major part of the organizational load - with, I would suggest, insufficient returns to warrant that type of investment.

For other suggestions regarding the operation of the coalition see Section 6, Conclusions.

2(b) U. of T. comrades experience in abortion work and women's studies for the year 1971 - 1972

In 1970 - 1971 comrades organized a U. of T. Women's Caucus. The following year, in line with the movement's general policy, we formed instead the U. of T. Women for Abortion Law Repeal.. Comrade K. Curtin led the group with one or two other comrades present at most meetings. Six to eight activists attended hour-long weekly organizational meetings throughout the year. Because classes restricted time in the day time and the women seemed not to be available for evening meetings, educationals were non-existent. We had literature tables, (organized by an independent) for at

1. Data was obtained from two comrades. Ranges in figures usually represent differences in their estimates. Both are long time activists in the coalition and supporters of the original line or the amended line of the P:C. document.

least six weeks (3-4 times weekly) and we did petition work in the dorms at least twice. We had the referendum passed with a strong majority (69%) although we did very little work around it because our comrades were tied up with a crisis in SAC elections. In spite of petitioning and lit tables we got no one out to the Ottawa demonstration except our hard core of activists. We held a debate with an anti-abortion Catholic student and got out 50 people. We debated Right to Life before a large theology class. We tried to get a debate with the new-left women over the primacy of abortion but they were not interested. We didn't get to know the abortion law repeal women well, personally or politically. At least a couple of them were socialists of sorts but the limitations of the issue and the organizational form restricted us. None of them came around our movement.

We tried to raise the abortion issue in our Women's Studies Courses but were not very successful. Two of us (comrade K. Curtin and myself) were in a course "Women in the 20th Century", and comrade Curtin was also taking a "Women's History Course". The format for the 20th Century course was infrequent large assemblies of 200 women and weekly discussion groups of 15 to 20. The discussion groups were led by new-left women, concerned with such educational concepts as salaries based on need, team teaching, student course determination, student self-evaluation etc., as well as women's liberation. The women in the course were largely young, full time students, and quite unpolitical. By Christmas some were still unconvinced that women were really oppressed and there was little discussion in the class around methods of overcoming oppression. As comrade Curtin cited in her youth document, one student joined an abortion demonstration from a class of 20 and at the class-organized Women's Festival there were no displays from women's groups because the new left teachers wished to avoid a conflict atmosphere. In spite of a hard fight we lost this vote. There was an abortion workshop at the festival at which five comrades failed to convince the five non-comrades of the primacy of abortion work. They agreed it was important, but not primary. We got no contacts from this experience although one YS sub was sold and renewed. We became known as women's liberationists on campus but no specific gains were made. Experiences elsewhere do not always duplicate this experience; it would seem there is considerable heterogeneity in the courses. Comrades should examine the youth documentation for a more rounded assessment.

I would urge, on the basis of my abortion group experience, the formation of women's liberation groups on campus. Comrade K. Alcock's comments in the Y.S. documentation on the experience with the Peterborough Women's Caucus

seem to me to validate from that experience, the formation of general groups. The decision of the Toronto youth group in the fall of '72 was to do that on U. of T. I do not understand the reversal of that decision in January '73. The U.S. Supreme Court decision and the coming March conference justify a meeting to publicize the decision, an abortion debate, and leaflet distribution about the conference but trying to rebuild a sterile abortion coalition is ridiculous in my opinion.

2(c) An Attempt to Explain our Limited Results

The P.C. document attempts to explain on pages 15 and 16 the reason for the limited success of the abortion campaign. Comrade Angus on page 14 of her Reply to the RCT sums up the problems as follows: the existence of non-struggle perspectives in the feminist movement, the abstention and opposition of other feminists, the international opponents of the women's struggle who have focussed their attack on abortion, and the problem of educating women to take action in spite of their socialization to passivity.

It seems to me that one characteristic of abortion actions is that they are frequently the opening gun in the Women's Liberation struggle - this has been true in France, Italy, Germany, the United States and Canada. The issue enables a small layer of radicalized women to come together and have a national impact. They seem to be able to best maintain their activity when they have either a particularly oppressive situation or a chance of success. Both provide a focus for abortion work. In France it was the recent prosecution of a very young woman for having an illegal abortion. In New York State it was repeal and then retention of the liberalized law against a very real attack.

In Canada we have an odd situation. We have a liberalized law which makes abortion relatively freely available for some women. Let us first examine the number of abortions across Canada.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Therapeutic Abortions</u>	<u>Therapeutic Abortions as a % of live births</u>
1969	Aug. 28 liberalized laws came into effect - no figures available since number negligible	0.0%
1970	11,152	3.0%
1971	30,949	8.3%
1972 (Jan. to June)	18,801	10.1%



Secondly these figures vary sharply from province to province. In order of availability for 1971<sup>1</sup> they are: B.C. 22.0%, Ontario 12.0%, Alberta 9.7%, Saskatchewan 4.6%, Manitoba 4.5% Nova Scotia 4.5%, Prince Edward Island 2.0%, Quebec 2.0%, New Brunswick 1.3%, and Newfoundland .6%. The women for whom it is most freely available are precisely those women we are trying to mobilize (urban, better educated women), with Quebec being the exception to this rule. U of T is a case in point. I have been approached by young women as I sat at an abortion table who pointed out to me that at the U of T medical clinic one can readily make arrangements for an abortion. One can point out that the situation is totally different for women in Quebec or in rural Canada but it is rather an abstract proposition when one is trying to bring these urban women out on a demonstration.

Pelrine points out that as of August 1970 of 453 hospitals in Canada, 120 had set up abortion boards. She also points out that from July 1970 to June 1971, 4,437 Canadian women had abortions in New York State. The Minister of Justice of Quebec estimates there were between 10,000 and 25,000 illegal abortions in Quebec in 1970. So I am not suggesting that abortions are freely available throughout Canada. Even where the boards exist, they constitute an enormous injustice and infringement on the rights of Canadian women. I do think however that the relative availability of abortion in English speaking urban centres undercuts the potential of the issue to mobilize women, particularly on campuses where I think a specific problem must exist to get a substantial mobilization.

### 3. Press Coverage in Labor Challenge.

One of the arguments used to justify our almost total absorption in abortion is our lack of forces. If this is the real reason than surely our press which should reflect our political priorities and not our organizational priorities, would carry material on all phases of women's liberation. In order to assess our coverage of the various areas, I skimmed through the last three years of Labour Challenge measuring column inches of coverage.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The appendix to E. Pelrine's Abortion in Canada, -Paperback Edition.
  2. For comrades wishing to examine press coverage more closely, I can produce the issue by issue breakdown although I did no paragraph by paragraph breakdown of articles that contained material on several issues. I either lumped them in the general category, or if they dealt primarily with one issue, into the category for that issue.

LABOUR CHALLENGE COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Numbers are column inches. Percentages are percentages of total coverage within that year. The year 1972 is broken down into two parts because the coverage changed markedly in mid-year. Coverage of the general strike in Quebec which involved 120,000 women is not included in these figures because the strike was not handled in our press in a way that stressed the involvement of women. The key demand of the strike, \$100. weekly minimum wage is a demand that would particularly appeal to women who are of course at the bottom wage level. One photo in Labour Challenge shows a picket sign that says "Femmes à Nous Aussi le \$100.00" which would indicate that some strikers certainly saw the women's liberation aspect of the struggle. In another episode an exactly equal number (17 of each) of men and women went to jail which again indicates that women's liberation was high in the consciousness of the whole movement. Our coverage of that strike was well over 400 column inches, and comrades should take that into account when they examine these figures.

Year	Abortion		Day Care		On the Job		General or Multi-Issue	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1970	358	45	nil	nil	nil	nil	431	55
1971	913	64	nil	nil	34	2	477	34
1972								
Jan-May	717	88	nil	nil	8	1	87	11
June-Dec	287	26	39	4	72	7	686	63

The trend in these figures is quite clear. In the period between January 1970 and May 1972 our coverage of abortion consistently increased until it reached the ridiculous heights of 88% of our women's liberation coverage. At the same time our coverage of more general topics of women's liberation steadily declined. This category includes theoretical material, book reviews, women in political action, etc. Our coverage on day care and on the job issues was essentially nil. Comrades may reply that that is because nothing was happening. I would answer that on two levels - that if absolutely nothing was happening we should have at least carried some material on the existing conditions - on the fact of our oppression - on the need for something to happen. And secondly I would contend that some action did take place. Bell did go out on strike, as did Texpack. European abortion events were covered but what did we say about working women's struggles in Britain? Conferences did occur where women's condition both as to equal pay, equal opportunity and day care were discussed. I read about them in the Globe and Mail. These statistics on press coverage clearly prove that abortion was stressed in our movement to the almost total exclusion of other issues. We didn't "support all actions of women for their rights" as the P.C. document urges - we didn't even give them press coverage.

And if this is the political level of our leadership, its reflection in the ranks of the movement was even cruder. Women "struggled around abortion" or they were "living room feminists". Day care was a "reformist" issue. And comrades who put forward these formulations were not corrected by the leaders of our women's liberation work. These misconceptions were allowed to continue. The P.C. document in spite of the amendments does very little to clarify the question.

The coverage in the last six months of 1972 is an improvement in that there is at least some substantial coverage of general questions. In my opinion we have also to cover the on-the-job and day care issues at every opportunity.

#### 4. The IWC Experience

I hope that some comrade more intimately involved in the IWC situation will document accurately our experiences there. However, until such a document is written, this brief refutation of the document Toronto Women's Caucus: A Two Year Experience In A Cross City Women's Liberation Group by comrades Angus, Dineen and Robertson will have to suffice.

Cross-city women's liberation groups have certain characteristics and problems which should be noted. Women come to them with two aims in mind. They want to better understand themselves and their oppression and they want to find some way to change their situation although they probably have no idea as to methods. When these groups are led by non-revolutionaries they run into a number of problems. They may bog down in life style experiments, the exclusionism of socialist women's groups, or blaming men for their situation. Even if these obvious pitfalls are avoided, it is next to impossible for non-revolutionary leaderships to educate women year after year as to the generality of their oppression without disillusionment occurring. Furthermore some method of overcoming their oppression has to be posed, but actions taken without an overall revolutionary perspective seem isolated and futile. Multi-issue women's liberation groups are viable on a long term basis only when we lead them.

We therefore played an extremely important role in TWC. We not only founded it but we sustained it in almost every sense. When I first attended the meetings in the spring of 1971, there were usually at least half a dozen comrades at each meeting. We often gave the educationals, sparked the discussion, volunteered for work, etc. That is not to say the other women were unwilling to become involved; that is to say they were politically and organizationally inexperienced. They needed leadership, encouragement, and confidence and many of them responded very positively to their experiences in TWC. The turnover was large but there were a number of women who stayed and took on responsibilities; the TWC document states that eight of them were recruited to our movement.

According to the document, TWC began to decline in the fall of 1971. (page 7). This was certainly not our analysis at the time - in fact as late as February and March of 1972 comrades considered the TWC to be flourishing. When the debate opened up inside our movement on the Velvet Fist proposals, comrades who opposed dumping the Fist predicted that doing so would logically be followed by our withdrawal from TWC. This was denied vehemently by comrades who supported the change. They maintained at the time that the Velvet Fist discussion would not result in an end to our intervention in TWC. That comrades Angus, Dineen and Robertson now recognize their error, is indicated on page 8 of their document. "We quickly discovered that the debate was much broader and inclusive than we had anticipated. Although the discussion formally centered around the proposal for the paper, in fact this proposal was only a catalyst for full

debate over the direction and priorities of the women's movement."

I can recall going to a TWC meeting after the Velvet Fist discussion and finding forty women there, including many new faces. I heard an educational on the matriarchy, based on Reed and Engels and given by a woman I had not previously met and heard an anti-war report from our delegate to the VMC - again a woman I had not previously met. I was very impressed and I made some comments on the branch floor to this effect. A male comrade, somewhat confused by the obvious dichotomy between our position on the Fist, our gradual withdrawal of comrades from the TWC and my report, requested contradiction or confirmation of my impressions; one of our women's liberation leaders confirmed that TWC was indeed flourishing!

TWC declined finally in my opinion, for two reasons; our withdrawal of forces from it and our insistence before our withdrawal that it confine its activity to abortion work. Comments are made in the TWC document about the response of these women to Comrade Angus's proposals on the Fist. Let us examine the position she put forward in a paper to TWC at that time. It is clearly one in which abortion and abortion only should occupy our attention. "...we have become aware of the crucial role that the issue of abortion law repeal is playing; it is now apparent to us that this is the vehicle that is broadening the women's movement out into all sectors of society,...this struggle has become the battleground on which women's right to struggle for liberation is being fought, this makes the struggle for abortion law repeal a front-line responsibility for every feminist...It is now evident that the route to that (future mass) movement lies directly through the movement for abortion law repeal..."(my emphasis)<sup>1</sup>. How does this line correspond to the portion of the P.C. document that states "the abortion struggle is not in competition with other struggles of women. Women will struggle around many questions and revolutionaries support all actions of women for their rights." (page 25)? The women in TWC did not oppose the abortion campaign - they had worked on it throughout 1971 as the TWC document outlines. What they did oppose was concentration on abortion to the exclusion of all other issues which is what comrade Angus's paper demanded of them. We had convinced them a periodical was important, even crucial to their work and now we wanted them to give it up. Now we said: give it to the abortion movement because abortion and only abortion is valid. No wonder they balked. And no wonder as we withdrew our forces and failed to provide any initiatives except in the direction of abortion, that the group then and only then lost interest, became inactive and finally folded.

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1. The Next Step in the Evolution of the Velvet Fist, A Discussion Paper, by Lis Angus, pages 1 and 3

The fact that the group could not survive without us is sometimes pointed to as proof that it was not a viable group. How long would the Abortion Law Repeal Coalition survive without us? Comrades point out that abortion work was a key part of TWC's activity - that without it, it would have had no focus. Certainly at that point in time, extensive activity around abortion was key. But why could we not have set up the coalition and functioned in both groups. Comrade Angus points out in her reply to the RCT that "the assignment of women comrades to the abortion campaign has been quite modest across the country; by no means are all women comrades assigned to this work." (page 15) So we could have carried both areas. We had in the TWC a very important vehicle for mobilizing support for the abortion coalition - we used it for that purpose for several months. Why give it up? Because we mechanically, schematically, and artificially imposed our concept of a coalition on the women's liberation movement to the exclusion of all other organizational forms and abortion to the exclusion of all other issues. And by so doing we narrowed the support for abortion work and isolated ourselves.

The TWC document points out that we recruited eight comrades from our abortion work in TWC. That is when our abortion work was consistently accompanied by a general analysis of women's oppression in class society. That kind of analysis only takes place in general women's liberation group meetings heavily populated by Marxists.

How many women have we recruited from our abortion work in the coalition? In Toronto; one woman to the YS who left again in a few weeks, one woman who was in personal touch with the movement, got involved in abortion work and then joined the League, and one close contact. Why so few? Listen in fraction meetings to comrades' complaints as to their inability to bring contacts to coalition meetings because they are without educational or political content. We keep resolving to inject this content. But it is clear why it is so difficult. The subject material is essentially limited to abortion - and there's a limit to what you can say at weekly meetings about this topic. So the educational content is very low, the attendance is low and the recruitment is low. And if the Women's Place is a substitute for TWC, why have we done so little work there?

Recruitment is not of course our only reason for intervention in women's liberation work. Comrade Angus is right on when she says in her reply to the RCT that it is "formalistic nonsense to divide that task (the task of building the feminist movement) from the task of recruitment - we cannot do either properly without doing

both." It is my contention that in concentrating on abortion work as we have, and in isolating ourselves from other areas of women's liberation work as we have, we have failed to do either properly.

And what about giving up the Velvet Fist for the Spokeswoman? Did this change bring us big benefits? First, at least the Velvet Fist came out! From September 1970 to the spring of 1972 about 13 8-page issues were produced, an average of one every two months. Since the founding of Spokeswoman we have managed 3 issues in 10 months and the last issue is four pages, with a poster occupying all of the back page. The proposal is that it become a mobilizer only. But what was projected in the Velvet Fist debate was a periodical which not only dealt with the abortion issue, but with other women's liberation issues as well. I don't know what happened to that proposal. I could speculate that an abortion coalition can't put out a periodical because there is not enough to say about abortion exclusively, and that it can't become a feminist periodical because forces in the coalition are not feminists. However I'm told that the forces in the abortion coalition are feminists. So why no feminist periodical from them? Let's hear that argument. What we have lost is the Velvet Fist, which carried considerable abortion material, was put out by independent women in addition to ourselves and provided a vehicle for our propaganda.

When we pulled out of TWC we were abandoning one of our most fruitful areas of work in terms of; experience for our comrades, abortion repeal work, viable intervention in other areas of women's liberation as they arose and recruitment to our movement. The TWC document says our intervention in TWC was a model intervention; it was very valuable until we decided to abort the whole process.

In one sense, when we withdrew from TWC and failed to carry a consistent co-ordinated intervention in the Women's Place and in the Women's Studies Courses and when we gave up one of our major forms of intervention, the Velvet Fist, we abdicated our responsibilities to the women we had been reaching and left them to the misleadership of non-Marxists. No one else would put forward either our revolutionary analysis or our concept of mass strategy. Withdrawing into the abortion coalition to talk to women already committed to the issue was a real turning inwards in terms of the rest of the feminist movement.

## 5. The RCT Position

The RCT document, Feminism or Scientific Socialism has been replied to by comrade L. Angus but I would like to interject some comments into that debate. First on feminism. The term according to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary of 1933 means "advocacy of the claims and rights of women" and has been used in that sense since 1895. The American Heritage Dictionary of 1969-1970 (just to get the U.S. version) is a "doctrine that advocates or demands for women the same rights guaranteed men as in political or economic status". The second definition is a "movement in support of such a doctrine". It therefore seems to me that the term encompasses both a bourgeois and Marxist analysis and programme. Since this debate is not simply terminological it would facilitate coming to grips with the underlying issues if we dealt with them rather than with the term.

The main issue in debate, the ability of feminist issues to mobilize non-working class women, is summed up well in the quote from E. Reed given in comrade Angus's reply (page 5) which states in part: "On the one hand, women are united in their condition as an oppressed sex and share a common need to get rid of disabilities inflicted upon them by male-dominated capitalist society. On the other hand, women are divided according to their socio-economic status, which gives them diverging and conflicting interests. Both aspects must be taken into account..." But this is not the type of analysis that takes place in either the P.C. document or the RCT document. In the P.C. document's discussion of the class composition of the abortion coalitions, the emphasis is totally on the capacity of the feminist movement "to reach out to all women, regardless of class, race, etc. and unite them in struggle." The RCT attack on the term feminism stems, in my opinion, on a mistaken emphasis in the other direction. The value of feminism lies in its capacity to affect women both from the working class and the petit-bourgeoisie. Certainly the possibility of influencing, mobilizing and recruiting working class women now and in pre-revolutionary situations is far greater because of their double oppression as women and workers and their feminist awareness of this double oppression. Feminism will have a profound effect on working class women; we have seen the beginnings of this already in the trade union movement. It will also bring to the revolutionary struggle now and later some elements of the petit-bourgeoisie and it will neutralize others from opposing the revolution. (Those comrades interested in examining the importance of winning segments of the petit-bourgeoisie over to the socialist revolution might well take a look at Trotsky's Fascism, What It Is, How to Fight It.)



Certainly the impact of feminism on working class women is, in the long term, more important. At the present time, it is my impression that more petit-bourgeoise women are involved in women's liberation than their proportion in the population would warrant - although I cannot document that impression. The heavy involvement of university women, given the class composition of our universities would tend to confirm that. (Let it also be noted however that TWC was primarily composed of office workers, nurses, teachers etc., all members of the working class). The problem for us is to maintain a balance, drawing in women wherever we can but with some emphasis in a working-class direction. For example, when we look for support for the abortion coalition let us make an extra effort to get trade union endorsement and involvement because it injects into the coalition, in a small way, a class influence. I think the RCT position stems also from a criticism of the way in which we build the coalitions, a criticism I share in part.

Secondly the attack of the RCT on feminism stems from an assessment of its impact on the movement internally. (pages 4 and 5 of Feminism or Scientific Socialism). What they say in these two large paragraphs is true (beginning "Even...fractions".) What they neglect to examine is the positive effect of women's liberation on our movement. Prior to the existence of the feminist movement our party was primarily a male party. We understood that that was a problem and we tried to overcome it, but obviously the party reflected society, and our capacity to overcome that reflection was limited. Women were not only few in numbers, but tended to concentrate on organizational work, seldom intervened in debates, practically never wrote documents, seldom served on the National Committee, and disappeared when they had children. To inject a personal note in this, in my early years in the party, I always felt that the decisions of the revolution would somehow be made by a group of older men, named Cannon, Dobbs, Weiss, Kerry, Hansen and Dowson. When the barricades were erected I would be in the soup kitchen and I vaguely hoped that after the revolution "they" would find time at some point to consider the problems of women. It was not until the development of a women's liberation movement that the socialist revolution became my revolution; that I felt it would end my oppression as a woman, that work could be done about that oppression now and that my intervention and that of other women revolutionaries was crucial to the development of the revolutionary forces. That is the key impact of feminism on our movement internally.

The situation that now exists in the movement is part of this process - it is logical that women would first take responsibility for the line in the women's liberation

field before they would feel enough confidence to broaden their intervention. And while our line in the women's liberation work is frequently confused and erroneous, it seems to me it stems from confusions that pervade the movement in all areas rather than from the inexperience of our women leaders.

Thirdly I find the RCT position on Socialist Women's Groups ambiguous and in part erroneous. After taking what I feel is a correct position on page 9 of their document they go on to add: "However, this does not mean that we should be opposed to women's liberation groups defining themselves politically particularly along socialist lines. It would not at all be an undesirable or artificial thing for such groups to arise out of the women's movement. It would be quite a logical progression for women who radicalized through the women's liberation movement to see their further intervention being necessarily a socialist one, though not all of these women would be prepared to join a revolutionary organization. When such groups do arise we should participate in them as members of the LSA/YS."

It seems to me that this model of a group evolving to a socialist position is static. First is there no inflow of new women necessitating a constant re-education? Is the group reaching out for this and defining their educational program around bringing in and retaining new women? The RCT may think it is possible for a group which has defined itself and its membership as explicitly socialist to re-define itself three months later to encompass broad new elements from a hospital strike or a high school struggle, who as yet accept no ideology. Women's memories are longer than that, or would the RCT ignore or exclude new contacts of a women's liberation group unless they toed the socialist line? And while all the women may not be prepared to join a revolutionary organization, we do not want a socialist women's group to be a substitute for the full revolutionary programme and party. I think that in light of these comments and the position of the IMG on socialist women's groups, which indicates the logical application of the RCT position, the RCT has to clarify and correct its stand on this question.

## 6. Conclusions

Lack of full control of our reproductive processes is certainly a profoundly important factor in the oppression of women. While recognizing this fact, we must not, however, concede ground to those who locate women's oppression in our biology. Women have been oppressed, indeed super-exploited under capitalism for hundreds of years. Our productive role includes supplying the bourgeoisie

with an expanding labor supply, a task which of course includes both child bearing and child rearing. We cook, clean house, provide clothing and sex, etc. as sustainers of the male labor force, and we frequently serve as a large pool of labor directly employed by the bourgeoisie. We do all of these tasks for remuneration (monetary or in kind) that is notoriously inadequate for the hours and intensity of work. Our role in the nuclear family is used to justify the enormous job and educational discrimination we suffer. This double oppression of women produces super-profits for the bourgeoisie. All the above forms of our oppression are basic and profound. Even if every child were indeed a wanted child, capitalist exploitation through the medium of the nuclear family and flowing from that through on-the-job exploitation, would all remain.

Historically, in the long process of building the forces to make a socialist revolution in this country, which includes the process of building a mass women's liberation movement, it is my considered opinion, that abortion will be one issue among many. It is no more important to the oppression of women than is lack of day care, lack of educational and job opportunities, and equal pay for equal work.

We have a strategy for approaching that whole process, of building a mass women's liberation movement, a mass action strategy. What does that mean? Briefly, it means that winning our goals is not possible through changes in life styles, through co-operative movements, or through education, communication, or moral persuasion of the ruling class, but through a struggle, involving large numbers of women, prepared to take over society. They will be working class women, in their majority, allied with working class men, although women's oppression as a sex will give us some allies in the middle class and neutralize others. At this time, that mass action strategy means we encourage women's struggles which are posed against the bourgeoisie, whether in the state, in the office, factory or hospital, or in the university. It means we strive for mass involvement in those struggles, and it means we want a form of struggle that clearly poses a refusal to operate within the bourgeois framework of politics; we want a power struggle. That can mean mass demonstrations, or strikes, or sit-ins or perhaps mass attendance at council meetings etc. We can use many other techniques to build that kind of struggle and get publicity for it, but that is the essence of our action.

Wherever we have some combination of an issue that is fundamental to women's oppression, combined with democratic or transitional demands directed against that oppression, and

a form of struggle that is within the framework of our mass action strategy, then we have a struggle that is an ideal one for us. That can mean a strike at Bell Telephone, a sit-in at a University over day care, or a mass demonstration in favor of abortion law repeal. The specifics of each situation are of course relevant but in general each of those examples meets our criteria.

The only valid reason for emphasizing abortion work in the past was because there was more motion around it and because it was more difficult to initiate day care struggles ourselves and impossible to initiate union struggles. But already that situation is changing. It is only a matter of time until these issues too will be expressed in struggles equalling and going beyond the abortion struggle.

But a mass action strategy is not enough - on two counts. It is not enough in the women's movement because many women have first to be educated on the need for struggle, before they are prepared to join such a campaign. That kind of education can take place around forms like Women's Studies, the Women's Place and TWC, and through papers like the Velvet Fist. We have to reach them and educate them there first.

Secondly a mass action strategy will only lead women to revolutionary conclusions if it is accompanied by consistent educational work that enables the participants to generalize and learn from their experience, both as to their total oppression as women, and the cause for that oppression, the capitalist system. In the initial stages of the women's liberation movement, it was necessary to concentrate on showing women the generality of their oppression. Frequently women would see the problem in one area, but not be prepared to carry it over to other areas and synthesize it. So Marxists for example in a discussion on day care would interject that even when women could locate day care, they could not afford it because of their position in the work force. That type of limited, one issue approach by women is less common now. The existence of a magazine like Ms. illustrates that a widespread consciousness of women's total oppression exists. What does not exist is an understanding of the roots of that oppression in a capitalist society and the need for a socialist revolution. Our task therefore has changed in emphasis. It is to intervene in an anti-capitalist direction. If we do not win women to a socialist understanding, to a revolutionary consciousness, our work in these struggles is fruitless. That does not mean that all women in the abortion coalition have to join the League now, but it does mean that at all levels of the feminist movement and to varying degrees up

to and including the recruitment of the most advanced women, this educational process must be taking place. That is the purpose of our intervention.

What are my concrete proposals for our future work?

1. Our intervention in the abortion coalition has to change. While there is contradictory testimony from the comrades as to the degree of seriousness of the political problems in the coalition, it is clear the situation is far from ideal. If even our comrades find the meetings boring, because of lack of political and educational content, it means both that we are restricted as to the contacts we can bring to the coalition and we are not educating the women with whom we are in contact. If educationalists cannot be obtained from the comrades or other women in the group, perhaps other comrades could be invited in on a guest speaker basis. But there have to be educationalists. Perhaps too the topics could be taken a little farther afield. Why not have topics on other issues of women's liberation, on other struggles when they occur, on the economic value to the capitalist system of women's oppression and consequently the reasons for the hostility to women's liberation, on why that necessitates a struggle perspective, and on women in workers' states. Perhaps the fraction in Toronto should draw up such a list, and if the comrades in the abortion coalition cannot give them all, the fraction could work out some way to feed other comrades into the educational process.

2. I think our organizational commitment to the coalition is too heavy particularly in the area of full-time unpaid comrades. When one considers that throughout the year, during periods of inactivity as well as activity, we had a comrade full time and unpaid in that office as well as a full time paid comrade, whose salary was considerably in arrears, that seems to me a huge investment. When one considers also that many branches of our party in this country make do with part-time organizers, (an enormous handicap), it seems to me our allotment of forces has to be reassessed. I think also that six to eight comrades going to weekly meetings is a large investment, if the meetings are small and almost totally organizational. If the meetings are educational and attended by a number of contacts, six to eight comrades would be justified.

3. Our press intervention should change. We have failed in this area on three counts; the character of the Spokeswoman, the character of our coverage in Labor Challenge, and the degree to which Labour Challenge is sold in the coalition. The Spokeswoman in three issues has had the following material not bearing directly on the abortion issue. One article on the Status of Women Conference, one

on Margaret Sanger and birth control, one book review of a novel, and one on society's attitudes toward women's sexuality and how that underlies the attitudes on abortion. That is totally inadequate. There is a fine article by Gwyn Griffith of the YWCA on her first experience on a demonstration - a good article for attracting inexperienced women. Where is there an article by a Marxist explaining why we participate in the abortion coalition and how we see feminism relating to the struggle for a socialist society or aren't Marxists openly part of the coalition? We are all aware of the importance of a press to any movement, and the decision to transform what was projected in the TWC debate as an educator into what is now just a mobilizer is typical of our work in this area.

I have already dealt with our coverage in Labour Challenge. Comrades have commented that both our press and other literature are not circulated adequately at the coalition meetings. In spite of frequent commitments to change that, the complaint consistently recurs. Both it and the problem of educationals stem from an incorrect understanding of what we are doing in the coalition.

4. We have to assign forces to other areas of women's liberation work. Occasionally that has been done; the situation varies across the country. In Toronto our assignments are sporadic - for example no one has been assigned to work in the Women's Place. Where comrades do work in other areas, their work is uncoordinated and the direction of their intervention not clearly worked out. The leaders of our women's liberation work often seem disinterested in other areas - for example we operated almost completely on our own in women's studies courses last year. All of our women's liberation work has to be integrated and consolidated. This will mean among other things that fraction meetings will have to be held on some regular basis - in Toronto we have had two since last September.

5. We have to understand clearly and motivate accurately and honestly our reasons for abortion work to other women. Our abortion work has been incomprehensible to other feminists because we motivated it incorrectly and over-emphasized it while refusing to participate in other situations.

6. We have to develop a programme around other issues in women's liberation, particularly on union struggles and day care. I hope to make a preliminary attempt at day care in this pre-convention discussion - but obviously this

is a movement wide task - to which comrades should be assigned. They should follow developments in the daily press, attend conferences and periodically report this material in our press and branch meetings. Working out this programme is a process in which we must consciously intervene.

Finally, some comrades will disagree with this document because of its assessment of the non-primacy of abortion. Some comrades may react to it by saying, "Yes, I agree with the document but I think this line is the same as the line of the P.C. document." Then I would urge those comrades to vote for this document. And I would urge them to vote against the P.C. document because: the amendments in the revised version change our line without either critically examining our past experiences or analyzing the reasons for the change; the document incorrectly motivates our abortion work; and it fails to develop a programme in other areas of work. The P.C. document clearly fails to meet the needs of our movement in Women's Liberation and must be rejected.

February 20, 1973.