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**Women's Liberation
and the Labor Movement**
—by Josephine Anders

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**Report on International Women's
Liberation Resolution to the
Christmas 1978 plenum of the RWL/LOR**
—by Morgan

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BULLETIN POLICY GUIDELINES

The Political Committee has adopted the following guidelines concerning the production of the pan-Canadian Preconvention Discussion Bulletin.

At its plenum, held September 2, 3, and 4, the Central Committee of the RWL decided to call a convention of the pan-Canadian section at Easter. All members and provisional members may submit written contributions to the pan-Canadian internal discussion bulletin on any subject. The pan-Canadian Preconvention Discussion Bulletin has been launched for the duration of this discussion.

1. All submissions to the bulletin will be produced, as simultaneously as possible, in English and French. This means that the timing of production of submissions will be affected by our ability to translate and typeset or stencil submissions in both nations.

2. All submissions must be typed, triple-spaced, with 40 characters per line on 8 1/2 by 11 inch white paper. Two copies must be submitted. One should be sent to Morgan, 334 Queen St. West, Toronto, and the other should be sent to Bulletin co-ordinator, 226 est rue Ste-Catherine, Montreal.

3. The priority for printing texts will proceed along the following lines: a) "Line" texts (i.e., those being submitted for vote) will receive top priority; b) All other contributions will be printed on a first come, first serve basis, to the extent possible. (Longer submissions take longer to translate and produce and therefore it may not always be possible to proceed on the first come, first serve basis.)

4. The suggested limit for length of contributions to the discussion (as distinct from line texts) is 30 pages, triple-spaced, 40 characters per line.

—Morgan, for the P.C.

Women's Liberation and the Labor Movement

The following is an edited version of the report presented by Josephine Anders to the December, 1978 Central 'Committee plenum discussion on the draft international resolution "Socialist Revolution and the struggle for Women's Liberation."

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This report and discussion are a continuation of the previous two discussions at this plenum on the World Political Resolution and why the RWL/LOR must turn to the industrial workers.

The report will concentrate on one aspect of the resolution: the relationship between the women's liberation movement, a social movement, and the turn to the industrial working class proposed by the World Political Resolution. Social movements like the women's movement and the Quebec national struggle are important components of the *politics* of our turn. The ability of the labor movement to take the political issues they raise and fight for them as their own will be crucial in the process of transformation of the unions into class-struggle instruments.

The debate yesterday on the turn, the Samuels et al. perspectives document, and the tour I have just completed with Morgan on the women's liberation resolution all indicate that we have differences on this point, and that means differences on the main, strategic axis of the international women's resolution.

My report will concentrate on explaining the strategic axis developed by the world resolution and will point to the error which Morgan and others are making in relation to it.

This will not be easy, since there are no written reports or contributions by Morgan. The resolution has been available for almost a year. We have had numerous discussions on the resolution in the two national women's commissions, the branches, and the Political Committee. In all of these discussions, Morgan, our women's liberation director, has raised important hesitations and differences with the resolution. The majority of the Political Committee, including Morgan, voted against the sections of the resolution dealing with child care and women's caucuses in the party. Yet still there is no written material available for comrades to study on the differences.

The differences cannot be ignored. We have just toured the country debating them, and Morgan's views were heavily reflected in the branch discussions. The report will draw out the main errors as I see them, and will then be submitted to the internal discussion bulletin. Let us hope that the next stage of the debate will be a written one.

Two Axes

What are the main differences?

The line of the resolution can be summarized as follows:

a) The axis of the struggle for women's liberation is derived from its interrelationship with the labor movement. It flows from the strategic goal of building a class-struggle left wing in the unions.

b) Women are both *part* of the working class and its *allies*. Thus, the struggle for liberation must be geared to achieving two interrelated goals: mobilizing women in their majority, in their own movement, *and* bringing them together with their allies. This is the only way women will be able to win.

c) To achieve this goal, the demands of the women's movement must be directed squarely against the common enemy, the capitalist state and the bosses.

Morgan's line contains a number of errors which have a consistent thread to them. These include:

a) A tendency to see the basic relationship between the women's movement and the labor movement as one of conflict, in which the interests of the two coincide only in the most general historic sense.

b) A confusion between the interests and needs of the labor bureaucracy and male workers. The idea expressed here is that male workers, as opposed to the labor bureaucracy, derive some kind of benefit from female oppression.

c) This relative privilege of male workers constitutes the basis for sexism in the labor movement, and inside the party.

If Morgan's reasoning were correct, the struggle for women's liberation would necessarily require two axes—one, the mobilization of women against the state and the bosses, and two, placing demands on men, who enjoy these privileges.

Such reasoning begins to go in the direction of the radical feminist current, which views men as women's primary enemy, and projects a corresponding anti-male strategy for the women's movement. It contradicts the line of the resolution.

In examining the differences, I will cover four main points.

1. The strategic axis of the document. Here I'll take up the relationship between the women's movement and the labor movement, the current state of the women's movement in Canada, and our tasks.

2. Morgan's errors on these questions. I'll demonstrate how the weaknesses she alleges are in the resolution are related to these errors.

3. The impact of the errors on our women's liberation work over the past year.

4. The extension of the errors into the internal life of the party with regards to the questions of childcare and caucuses.

1. The line of the resolution

a) The interrelationship between the women's movement and the labor movement

There are two essential ideas in the resolution. First, that class society oppresses all women. This constitutes the basis for women organizing as women, in their own movement, subordinating their struggle for liberation to nothing and no one before, during, and after the revolution.

The source of women's oppression is class society. Women's struggle for liberation must succeed in overthrowing capitalism to achieve its aims. Thus, the women's movement is of strategic importance to the socialist revolution. Our support to it is not a tactical question.

Women have the same interests as all workers, because they share the same goal, the socialist revolution. Neither they nor the working class as a whole will be able to win their struggle without uniting against their common enemy. Thus the resolution refers to women as 'allies' of the working class.

But women are also *part* of the working class. Moreover, they are an increasingly important part of the workforce. In most advanced capitalist countries, women make up between 30% and 40% of the work force. These working women stand at the intersection of two of the most powerful movements, the labor movement and the women's movement, and they will play a pivotal role in the struggle for both socialist revolution and women's liberation. They have the potential to show the way forward on both and to lead on both.

These two ideas are essential to grasp. If we go wrong on either one, we go wrong on both. If we see women only as part of the class, we will take a workerist approach, concentrating only on the economic aspects of women's oppression; if we see the women's movement as a self-contained movement which is separate from, indifferent to, or hostile to the working class as allies, we will fall into the radical feminist framework.

The essence of the concept that women are both part of and allies of the working class is that the goal of feminist militants is the same as that of the working class and all other movements of the oppressed: to fight as a movement and as women workers to transform the unions into instruments which fight for their needs. This will have to become the conscious strategy and perspective of the women's movement, because it's the only way women can win. This was explained earlier in the plenum by Lachance and Paquette in their reports on the World Political Resolution and on the proletarian turn.

To say this in no way lessens the importance of women fighting as women in their own movement. In fact, the women's movement will play a crucial, leadership role in the process of transforming the unions.

We see indications of this in the current strike of Steelworkers Local 6500 against Inco. It was the impact of the feminist movement, in particular of the women's committee formed within the Sudbury local, that unified the strike.

Going into the strike, the women's committee organized to put forward their specific demands, in particular for paid maternity leave. This demand was not negotiated away on the first round, as is usually the case. The union leadership made a special point of maintaining the demand even though there are only some 35 women left in the local following the mass layoffs of 1977. They explained that this demand would only cost the employer a few cents per employee, but that it was an important one for the sisters in the union.

As a result, not only does the strike have the active support of its female members, but this time, even the miners' wives, who turned against the strike in 1958 under pressure from the bosses, are solidly behind the strike.

The young, predominantly male leadership spoke openly to us about the impact of the women's movement on their consciousness as union leaders. They talked about the social responsibility of the union and the need for a united membership, which could only occur on the basis of the union responding to the needs of its female members.

Thus, the Inco process has inspired women workers and women in the community to look to the union as a fighting instrument. It's a small beginning, but indicative of what's to come.

The women's liberation movement is a profoundly progressive movement for the class struggle as a whole, because *it can make this kind of thing happen*. It's what resolution refers to as helping the class to think socially and act politically. It illustrates concretely the crucial importance of the independent women's movement to the class struggle as a whole.

Divisions in the Working Class

If we think through this experience, we can understand concretely how the women's movement, armed with a correct strategy and perspectives, will enable the working class to overcome the divisions instilled in it by the capitalist ruling class through centuries of bourgeois education and ideological brainwashing.

This question is important because these divisions are the main obstacle to the development of the political and social consciousness of the working class. The women's movement is progressive only if it serves to overcome divisions, not perpetuate them; the movement must link up with the working class as a whole, including the predominantly male membership of the key industrial unions.

It's important to be clear on this. The women's movement emerged during a time of quiescence of the labor movement and has tended to look on the labor movement with hostility—a hostility often provoked by the antiwoman politics of the labor bureaucracy.

In Canada, too, for the whole past period, the ideas and political thrust of the radical feminists have had an undue weight in the organized feminist movement.

The petty bourgeois, anti-male positions of this current are poison for the women's movement. They stand as an obstacle to developments like the Sudbury one.

While remaining intransigent proponents and builders of the women's movement, we fight within it against any anti-male direction. The women's movement must aim its fire not against men, but squarely against the main source of women's oppression, the ruling class and the state. It must reach out actively to forge alliances with our class brothers.

Unlike the radical feminists, we are confident that such alliances can and will be forged, because we are *materialists*. Working class men have no class interest, even in the short run, in maintaining women's oppression. As the women's resolution says, workers must come to understand that "their class interests are identical with the demands and needs of the most oppressed and exploited layers of the class." (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Volume XV, number 4, page 21.)

Even the most minimal demands today will be difficult to win without class unity; when a woman worker is laid off, the entire class is weakened because she becomes part of the growing reserve army of labor which keeps everyone's jobs insecure and wages down. The resolution explains this: "Since all wage structures are built from the bottom up, this superexploitation of women as a reserve work force plays an irreplaceable role in holding men's wages down as well." (*Ibid.*, p. 7.)

The working class is stratified. There are a thousand and one different advantages enjoyed by one worker over another. Those who are less discriminated against must be challenged to act in their *class* interests, and not in what might appear to be their short term individual interests—"interests" which are, in fact, illusory.

The women's movement must challenge male workers to support demands which simultaneously challenge their backward prejudices *and* draw them into common action against the bosses and the ruling class in a fight to remove the material basis for women's oppression. The more women stand up and fight as a movement for these demands, the easier it will be to convince men to join them.

The women's movement must win the class to champion all of its demands. Among the most effective in challenging chauvinism and placing concrete demands on the state are preferential-type demands. Demands for affirmative action and quotas in job hiring and promotion, against layoffs which discriminate against the young and the most oppressed—the "last hired"—are crucial. They strike at the very heart of the divisions in the working class, not just male and female, but white and non-white, young and old. Their whole thrust is to break women and other oppressed layers out of their job ghettos, to get them into the mainstream of production. Here they can bring the experience of their struggles to

bear on the process of transforming the unions, and give the oppressed, and the working class as a whole, more organized strength.

Demands for the socialization of child care, for women's caucuses and child care facilities in the unions, and for women's right to control their own bodies have a similar impact. Alliances in the struggle for such demands can be forged only by confronting the backwardness and prejudice of male workers, educating them to an understanding of the material effects of discrimination both on women and on the class as a whole.

Taken into the labor movement, campaigns on these questions begin to break down traditional assumptions and stereotypes. They help instill a *class* consciousness.

b) A crisis of perspectives of the women's movement in Canada

A proletarian orientation for the women's movement has always been necessary, and has always been our goal. But in the current political situation, it comes to the fore and is posed acutely. The movements of the oppressed must win the support of powerful allies, and aim for a *class* response to their needs if they are to make gains.

With its turn in 1975, the ruling class intends to drive back gains won previously by women.

Because of the world economic downturn, the ruling class must seek to increase its rate of profit by changing the rate of exploitation. Concessions will be wrung only through the mobilization of powerful forces. In fact, as we saw in the recent postal workers strike, such mobilizations are required even to defend basic rights.

This is a new situation for the women's movement. In the 1960s and early 1970s, women won important gains in Canada. Under the impact of the rising feminist movement both here and in the United States, the government was pressured to make concessions. It "legitimized" women's liberation by setting up government commissions and equal pay for work of equal value legislation; legal restrictions on abortion were eased; childcare facilities were expanded, etc.

But this process has halted. Since 1975, women have borne the brunt of the austerity program. The last few years have seen massive cutbacks in child care and other social services which affect women, large scale layoffs of predominantly women workers in the public sector, and a sustained attack on abortion rights from the right-wing forces. These attacks have gone virtually unanswered by the organized women's movement. With the exception of a number of demonstrations for abortion rights in Quebec, and some scattered actions against cutbacks in abortion and child care facilities in English Canada, the women's groups across the country have failed to respond on these issues. The March 8 actions last year were inadequate in putting forward clear demands which could rally women and their allies. In many cases, the actions were general "celebrations" rather than militant demonstrations which could hold out a fighting perspective for women. Even in Toronto.

the action was centered on broad themes rather than concrete demands.

The women's movement in Canada is experiencing a deepgoing crisis of perspectives as a result of these unanswered attacks. The old layers of professional and student women who founded the women's movement have been unable to provide the answers. As a result, the women's movement remains fragmented and demobilized. The radical feminist current is gaining influence in Quebec, and remains strong across English Canada. Actions by existing groups have tended to focus on the symptoms of the problem, such as rape and violence against women, rather than its root causes. Even in Quebec, the abortion struggle has reached an impasse because of the continued absence of any perspective of reaching out for union support.

This crisis of perspectives has continued despite the growing evidence that more and more women are willing to take action to defend themselves, particularly women in the work place. We see this in the Fleck strike in Ontario, where the Fleck women fought intransigently for union recognition against brutal police attacks at a time when few others in the labor movement were willing to take action against the offensive. The sheer courage of the Fleck women forced the United Auto Workers union in behind them. They recently won a victory and gained union recognition and their first contract.

Eight hundred women took to the streets in Vancouver recently in support of pro-abortion rights candidates for the Lion's Gate hospital board, massively outmobilizing the right wing.

March 8 actions in 1978 brought out thousands of women across the country. Notable was the increased support from union and NDP women, as well as formal endorsement by unions.

We are witnessing an increase in the formation of active union women's committees, especially in Quebec. The women's caucus in the Ontario Federation of Labor has consistently played a visible and organized role at OFL conventions. At the convention last year, it met every day and conducted a hard floor fight to get its demands considered, winning significant support from delegates.

This motion by women on the job is new and not accidental. These are the women who are directly threatened by the ruling class's turn. They must be driven off the labor market and back into the home to help solve the capitalists' economic crisis.

But it's precisely because of the economic crisis that women need more than ever to maintain their jobs. In most cases women's income is no longer an extra but an essential income for the family. Moreover, large numbers of women are single or themselves heads of families. As prices rise and the standard of living drops, families cannot survive on one income.

Women's increased integration into the productive process, combined with the economic downturn, poses an acute contradiction for the capitalists. Not only do these women because of their position in the workforce,

feel a certain power to defend themselves, but they are also reflecting the impact of a decade of women's liberation struggles. Far from acquiescing in their situation and putting up with part-time work or low paying jobs, women are tending to take the offensive. There are increasing attempts by women to get out of the traditional women's job ghetto and into the industrial arena. Not only is the pay better, but people sense the power of these unions to protect their jobs against the capitalist offensive.

Women's employment is now increasing faster than men's in industry. Women account for almost a quarter of the labor force in manufacturing industry. And the bosses feel pressure: the new Stelco plant at Nanticoke, Ontario, is incorporating women's facilities into its new plant, though they aren't talking about it! This is significant, since one of the big excuses given by employers for turning down applications by women is the lack of women's washrooms.

The evidence points to significant willingness by women, particularly working women, to fight back. But this sentiment is scattered and unfocused. It lacks leadership and perspectives. What must be done to channel it into a concrete fight back to defend past gains and take women forward?

Mass Action Perspective, Labor Alliance

The main weakness of the women's movement is not an organizational weakness that can be solved by better structures, but a political weakness, a weakness of perspectives and the lack of a correct strategy.

The fundamental question facing women is the following: what specific demands and issues should be raised in the current situation in order to most effectively mobilize women and their allies in a successful tightback?

Clear, concrete demands on the burning issues of the day must be advanced, such as the demands for affirmative action measures, for repeal of the abortion laws, for free, 24-hour child care facilities, etc. Struggles on these demands, which have the potential to connect up with the consciousness of large layers of women, can reach out and mobilize women in action against the state. Such struggles have been severely lacking over the past few years.

A clear, mass action strategy is required, as opposed to the counterculturalist, apolitical strategy of the radical feminists, or the lobbyist strategy of the reformists. Women cannot rely on the capitalist politicians or on self-help programs to solve their problems.

Women's goal must be to build a mass feminist movement, capable of mobilizing the vast majority of women in their own interests. It will have to be basically working class in composition and in its leadership. Only such a movement will be capable of standing firm under the impact of the deepening class polarization.

This must be combined with a consciousness of the character and intensity of the attacks facing women today, and the massive power it will take to successfully

confront the ruling class. A movement must be built which is conscious of its class interests, which reaches out to working women, and which looks to labor as an absolutely vital ally in its struggle, particularly labor's most powerful sector, the industrial unions.

The labor movement is changing under the impact of the world economic downturn. Today, rank and file members of the unions are becoming conscious that they are facing the same attacks that women have faced for several years. A new solidarity will be forged in response. Despite the bureaucracy's antiwomen policies, the rank and file will be receptive to supporting women's demands, as well as taking leadership from the women's movement, as the women from Local 6500 in Sudbury found out. The stronger the independent women's movement becomes, the harder and more clearly it presses for its demands, the faster this vital process will unfold. It is already greatly enhanced by the fact that more and more women are in the unions, are themselves part of the labor movement, including its industrial sector. It's these women who are in the best position to lead the process forward.

c) Our Tasks

Leadership from the revolutionary party is required to make this a reality. To date, the RWL has been powerless to give it. We have generally been absent from those unions where whole fresh layers of women are beginning to struggle. Nor have we been clear on the need to propose the kind of strategy and campaigns on concrete demands which could enable the existing women's groups to link up in action with women on the job.

Making the turn to industry is a pre-condition for correcting this situation.

We have to get our women comrades into the industrial unions, alongside the Inco and Fleck fighters, so that we can play the same pivotal role that they played—only more effectively, because we are veteran builders of the women's movement, and experienced revolutionaries, who have a conscious approach to class struggle politics.

As industrial workers, our women cadres will be at the point of maximum leverage to influence both sides of the process that has to occur: both providing a perspective for the independent women's movement, and taking the social issues, the demands of the movement into the union and to industrial workers, especially women, for active support. The comrades in industry in the U.S. were able to play a very important role in building union support for the recent ERA march in this way, as well as fighting within NOW as industrial workers to build the action as a mass action which reached out to the labor movement.

We have to combine this with an effort to provoke a discussion within the existing feminist organizations on perspectives. This should include the new situation facing women, the need for mass action in the streets on

clear demands in response to the attacks, the urgency of reaching out to women in the work place with these demands, and the necessity of allying with the powerful sectors of the labor movement, the industrial workforce. We should seize every opening to make this concrete: for example, the issue of abortion has come to the fore in response to the right wing attacks. Actions in response to the international call for abortion rights could be an excellent way to illustrate how to carry out all the elements of a mass action strategy aimed at winning the support not only of women, but their allies too.

2. Morgan's Position

a) The turn to industry

I want to deal with the reactions by Morgan and others on the tour to the relationship between the women's struggle and the industrial turn, because I think they show that the basic underpinnings of the correct approach, as outlined in the resolution of the United Secretariat, are far from understood. In fact Morgan's report to the branches, far from aiding our turn to industry, tended to orient our women cadres away from this perspective. If adopted, it would severely hinder our ability to lead the women's movement in this new period.

In every summary across the country, Morgan expressed opposition to the idea that we would send any large proportion of RWL women into industrial jobs. This view was echoed by Samuels in her report on the perspectives document yesterday.

Morgan's view is that our aim in building the women's movement in the labor movement is to talk to and work with women in their greatest numbers, that is, in the public sector unions. If we send our women into industry, she says, they may lead a few struggles of women, but they will mainly be talking to men, leaving the vast bulk of women in the public sector unions and the rest of the women's movement to organize themselves.

This view completely misunderstands the strategy outlined in the international resolution, and divorces the women's movement from the process of forging a class struggle leadership in the unions—a process which is critical for women as well as for the class as a whole.

Feminists *must* win over the industrial working class. The most conscious women must physically get in where the decisive leadership of the class struggle wing in the unions will be forged. Otherwise they will be powerless to lead their own struggle, or to have much impact on the course of these powerful unions.

Unionized women outside industry can, of course, play an important role. But the decisive leadership will come from the industrial unions, because of their sheer weight in society. They won't be won to champion women's struggle simply by women in the service unions and women's groups getting together and, through their sheer numbers, detonating some kind of correct response on the part of the predominantly male industrial unions.

If such a course would work for women, it would work for us too. We would be wrong to pose a colonization of

the industrial unions. We could simply continue to build up our presence in the public sector, build the independent movements, and hope to detonate a response in time from the industrial workers.

Women comrades, and the most conscious feminists, have to have as great a weight as possible in the industrial unions for the same reason that the party as a whole must. As industrial workers, our women comrades will be in the *best* position to lead the hundreds of thousands of women who will rally to the women's movement. And any woman who is serious about winning her demands will find a party of industrial workers, with influence among the powerful forces that can help her win her demands, a very attractive party. Many will join us, regardless of whether we have a fraction in their particular union. We'll be able to build bigger and stronger fractions in the service unions by decisively increasing our weight in the industrial sector.

The discussion in the branches showed further that we have a long way to go in absorbing what the women's movement is faced with and how it is going to win. One comrade said it was wrong to think that women couldn't win without backing from the unions. Another comrade said that in this period, women are being forced out of production, so we must turn our attention to the more subjective aspects of women's oppression, the problem of sexuality, prostitution, etc. Yet another even told me it was "patriarchal" and "bending to bourgeois ideology" to imply that women who were breaking out of their traditional jobs and going into industry would be in the vanguard of the women's struggle. This, she explained, was saying that women had to prove themselves, to show that they could be like men, in order to gain recognition. Besides, she said, industrial women workers earn more than women in the job ghettos, and would be viewed with suspicion by these women, just as men are!!

At best, such comments show a lack of understanding of the *class question* involved in the women's struggle. They certainly don't take as their starting point the need to construct a class struggle left wing in the unions, and the need of the women's movement to ally with labor, and be part of this process. At worst, they echo the anti-male, anti-union thrust of the radical feminists.

b) "Weaknesses" and "Omissions" in the Resolution?

Morgan spoke on the tour of a series of "weaknesses" and "omissions" she sees in the resolution. I will deal with two of them.

1) Rape and violence against women

Morgan's view is that the resolution doesn't deal adequately with questions such as rape, pornography, prostitution, etc. In her opinion, the demands included in the resolution on these questions—for an end to all laws victimizing prostitutes, the elimination of laws making rape victims the criminals, for the establishment of rape centers, etc.—are not the most important aspect of the problem since they are not very substantial. What

is important, she says, is to project an educational campaign on these questions, an ideological campaign geared towards educating male workers on questions of sexism, rape, and violence.

Campaigns of this nature, in my opinion, are not where we or the women's movement should be putting our energies. There are few concrete demands or transitional solutions which can challenge people to fight with you against the state. Rape and violence are part of the very fibre of capitalist society. Only the removal of the root causes will begin to lay the basis for their elimination. Our efforts should be focussed on exposing and challenging this root cause, putting forward demands which can eliminate the material basis for women's oppression. "Ideological" campaigns on the questions of sexism and violence center on the symptom, not the cause, and tend to end up in efforts to change individuals' mentality, rather than offering a concrete way to fight to change the material roots of the problem. Inevitably, they focus against men as men, letting the real oppressor, the capitalist states and the bosses, off the hook.

This kind of approach can lead directly into the double axis approach which was rejected by the resolution. Campaigns on questions such as affirmative action, the right to women's caucuses and childcare in the unions, etc., are a much more effective way to confront and combat sexism in the workers movement.

ii) Lesbian oppression

Morgan asserts in her branch report that the resolution is "not acceptable" on the question of lesbian oppression.

The resolution includes demands for lesbian rights in its program, and states clearly the importance of the women's movement fighting at all times against lesbian baiting. For Morgan, however, this does not go far enough. Her branch report and summaries explained that the resolution must include a more extensive analysis of lesbian oppression, since (she argued) lesbians will be the political vanguard of the women's movement.

Again, we should note that this view was consciously rejected by the committee that wrote the international resolution. It was not an oversight by the drafters.

First, though lesbians are oppressed as women, they suffer a special oppression as lesbians. Lesbian oppression and women's oppression are not identical. Each must be analyzed in its own right. This resolution is a resolution on women's liberation, not lesbian and gay liberation. The two are not synonymous, though lesbians are part of, and will play an important role in, the women's movement.

We reject the idea that the only "real" feminists are lesbians, that, as the Emma, Rhoda, et al. resolution *Lesbian and Gay Liberation and the Struggle against Patriarchy and Capitalism* claims, all women are repressed lesbians. Their resolution states clearly: "Lesbian and gay liberation is not just the struggle of an oppressed minority, but also for the liberation of the repressed

lesbian/homosexual desire of everyone." *Pan-Canadian Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 10, p. 9*)

Morgan's idea that lesbians will be the political vanguard of the women's movement reflects this confusion. First, lesbians are not a political vanguard. No social layer as such can be a political vanguard; the revolutionary party is the political vanguard. On many political questions, the organized lesbian movement in Canada has been quite backward. We saw this in Toronto in the attitude of WAVAW to defense of *Body Politic*, when some lesbian activists refused to defend the paper on the grounds that gay men were "faggots who raped children." At best, one would have to say that lesbians are politically heterogeneous. Your sexual orientation doesn't determine what your political views are. Lesbian doesn't equal revolutionary.

Second, they're not a social vanguard, either. The working class is the social vanguard. In that sense, it's the Inco women, the Fleck strikers who constitute a social vanguard in the women's movement, not lesbians.

Morgan's view indicates a mistaken tendency to start from a framework of gender, rather than class.

3. The Work of the RWL

Uncertainty on the main strategic axis for the women's struggle has taken its toll on the work of the organization.

The first several months of the RWL's work in English Canada were devoted to dealing with the questions of rape and violence against women. In four issues of the paper, with full page articles and editorials, we printed views on the rape question from the British section and ourselves. The cross country rape actions and the "Snuff Out Snuff" protests were the basis for the party's main activity and discussion in English Canada during this time.

The next four months were devoted to the building of March 8. While the action pulled in greater union support than in previous years, we were again heavily involved in debates with the radical feminists, carrying a major article aimed at them on the character of the party.

In this same time period, we sent Morgan out to Saskatchewan to help the branches with their orientation to the socialist feminist milieu, taking considerable time in the Bureau to sort out our approach.

Meanwhile, as early as November there were changes occurring in OWW in Toronto, and growing indications of activity in the union committees and caucuses.

In Toronto, 40 women participated in the union outreach committee for March 8. In this period, the Saskatchewan Working Women's Association was formed, with some several hundred women at its founding conference. This was followed by increased activity in the Ontario NDP women's committee, culminating in a conference of 300 women on the economic attacks on women last month.

Then there was the Inco strike and the Fleck strike. From May on, we have seen a steady stream of news articles in the *Voice* on these developments. But they were

only news articles. There has not been one discussion in any leading body of the party to assess the significance of these developments, to discuss the political issues and demands raised by them, or their relationship to our work in the union movement.

To this day, we have had no discussion on the question of affirmative action and discriminatory layoffs. The Saskatchewan comrades are grappling alone with the question of the character of the Saskatchewan Working Women's Association.

In addition, there has been growing motion across the country on the question of abortion. A demonstration of 800 followed a mass meeting of 1,000 in Vancouver; a meeting of over 100 was built in a week in Toronto; comrades report growing interest in the issue by the socialist feminist groups in Saskatchewan; a large forum was held by the Edmonton Women's Coalition.

Yet there has been no corresponding attention paid by the RWL to either the developments in the unions or the abortion question. We've had no in-depth articles, no attempt to build a cross country response to the International Abortion call, as there was for March 8 last year. We have to ask ourselves why.

Our women's liberation work, like our work as a whole, is increasingly divorced from where the radicalization is unfolding—in the unions, on the job, and amongst certain NDP women.

Equally as important, our lack of clarity on the strategic axis necessary to build the women's movement allowed comrades to miss the importance of the possibility for abortion actions in applying the main lessons of the International resolution. Through the building of abortion actions, we could have shown in practice what we mean by a fighting perspective of combating the ruling class on a concrete issue, reaching out for labor support, taking this important issue into the unions.

This discussion has been needed for some time. We must utilize it to clarify our differences and correct our errors, so that we can shift back on course.

But to do this successfully will also entail correcting the RWL/LOR's wrong line on child care and women's caucuses in the party.

4. Child Care and Women's Caucuses

a) Caucuses

A position in favor of women's caucuses within the party is completely consistent with the errors outlined above. Nor is it an accident that the international resolution opposes such caucuses, as some comrades in the branches have argued. The fact that they felt there was a contradiction shows once again the lack of understanding in the organization of the main line of the document.

Character of the revolution and the party

We have to go back again and place the question of women in the party within the framework of the class struggle as a whole. If we look at it in an isolated,

separate way, as Morgan does, we will go badly wrong.

The forms, structures and norms of our party are derived from two things: the character of the revolution we must lead, and the character of the party required to lead it.

We say that the revolution will have a *combination* of tasks: to elevate the working class to the position of the ruling class, to free the oppressed nationalities from the national oppression, and, in addition, to provide solutions to women's oppression.

However, while the tasks are combined, we put forward a single program for the revolution, not a collection of different programs.

Our organizational forms flow from this. We oppose any idea of a combined party, in the sense of a combination of different interest groups. Our party must be a united, centralized combat unit with a proletarian perspective. A federation of different wings and caucuses—Quebecois in one corner, women in one caucus and gays in another, will be incapable of uniting the class and leading it and its allies to victory.

The proletariat is heterogeneous. In the stage of transformation of the gigantic industrial unions into revolutionary instruments, this heterogeneity—the divisions by occupation, race, sex, age, etc.—must be overcome.

This is precisely when the need for a united, combat party will become most acute. It will have to speak for the most conscious elements of the proletariat, educating and winning over the most backward against petty-bourgeois and bourgeois influence. The party must be rooted in and have in its leadership the most conscious leaders of the most oppressed. But these will be comrades who lead the entire party, not just sections of it.

We must build such a party. Anything short of this will not work. This is our starting point in looking at our structures and norms, the needs of the party, the needs of our class.

Sexism—Incompatible with goals of party

We say that we must and we can do this. But what makes us think that it's really possible? Morgan, at least, considers the concept of the party outlined in the resolution idealist. She cites as evidence the situation of women in other sections of the International.

Quite the contrary, we believe it is possible to build such a party because we are materialists. Our party is completely different from the trade unions and other mass workers' organization. We are formed around a program designed specifically to lead to revolutionary change, and we have democratic structures which enable the membership of the party as a whole to determine that program and select the leadership. A common political bond unites comrades in the party, a common goal of overthrowing capitalism and common agreement on our basic program.

It is completely contrary to these aims and goals to permit racist or sexist behavior by our members.

Comrades who agree with our goals do not consciously promote sexism and racism. If they did, the party would expel them.

Where problems do exist, they are problems of consciousness, political understanding, and misapplication of our program. This can be overcome only through political education and correct application of our program in the living class struggle.

Political solutions versus therapy

There have been very real problems of sexist behavior and weaknesses in developing women cadres in many of our sections. The root of this is primarily political. The sections have had a wrong analysis of the strategic importance of women's liberation in the revolutionary process, and their work was distorted because of this. Many of our sections didn't recognize the importance of developing women leaders through the measures outlined in the document, nor did they enable the party, and especially its women cadre, to be strengthened and developed by correct participation in the women's liberation movement.

However, the International Women's Resolution marks a new stage in the political understanding of the International on this question. If studied and applied by our sections, it will mark a big change in the role of women cadre internationally.

Along with the majority of the British leadership, Morgan argues that, in addition to the measures outlined in the resolution, women's caucuses are necessary to fight against sexism in the party. The British section's Political Committee Discussion Bulletin No. 15 (*RWL/LOR Discussion Bulletin Vol. 1, No. 7*) states this position:

"Our program must be more than a list of demands on a page: it must be our day to day intervention in the class struggle. The struggle against sexism within our own ranks is the counterpart to the struggle against sexism in the working class. We must fight to make the unity of interests as meaningful as possible. . . caucuses of women comrades are *therefore* an important element in the steps taken by the IMG as a whole to understand and adopt measures to develop the struggle against sexism within the IMG." (ibid, p. 4)

According to the document such caucuses will take up the following questions:

a) consciousness raising: problems of political inadequacy, insecurity of women comrades, male chauvinism, conflict between personal and political life, children, marriage, relationships, political solidarity. It says all of these questions are one which women can't discuss with men or in front of men.

b) women's educational needs, the problems of women in the leadership: how to integrate new women into the organization, discussion of women contacts and recruitment.

There is to be a whole series of different caucuses for different levels of the organization—national caucuses.

leadership caucuses, and "conjunctural caucuses."

This formula unleashes a dynamic of a party functioning according to sex-division—to gender division. Duplicate it several times on each different level for gays, lesbians, oppressed nationalities, etc., and you have a federation of parallel and competing interest groups rather than a single, united combat party. Note that the second set of items to be discussed by caucuses—contact work, problems of leadership functioning, education, etc.—are all crucial questions for the party as a whole.

This is a far cry from the kind of party we need, and from the approach outlined in the resolution. It focuses on the faults and problems of individual comrades—male sexists and females who have trouble being strong—rather than seeking the solution in clarity of program and education of the party as a whole. It parallels the double axis approach that Morgan proposes for the women's movement. The IMG document says the struggle against sexism in our ranks is the counterpart of the struggle against sexism in the working class. This is precisely what's wrong with the document.

This approach will never solve anything. Contrary to the claims of the document produced by the IMG comrades, it turns women inward and away from the solution to the problem. It leads to a party looking for sexism under every stone, an intolerable atmosphere in the party.

There's a dangerous dynamic inherent in this kind of situation. We see it in the RWL not just between male and female comrades, but between Quebecois and English Canadian comrades, between gays and heterosexuals. Comrades making political criticisms are baited as "chauvinist" or "heterosexist"; their criticism is not considered on its merits. This seriously harms the party's capacity to discuss, decide, develop, and correct its political line.

The other side of the process is equally damaging: women can do nothing wrong, because they're women. A discussion in the Vancouver branch during our tour illustrated this graphically. Comrades were appealed to to abstain on a proposal to the branch from the women's committee, even if they disagreed with it, because of what it would "say" to the women's liberation milieu of a proposal made by an all-women's committee were defeated by a "male dominated" branch!

In Winnipeg, a woman comrade launched a personal attack on a male comrade for being patronizing. (The comrade had shaken his head during her remarks.) The chairwoman intervened to ask the comrade to stick to politics. But Morgan, in her summary, justified the personal attack, appealing to the chairwoman not to allow women to be divided.

What happens to the democratic, equal rights of all comrades, regardless of sex or race, in the party? What happens to the unity and the political integrity of the party? What about the mutual confidence and respect we must have for each other?

Not only will Morgan's proposal not solve the

problems of women comrades; if adopted, it will do great damage to the party. It contradicts every Leninist norm in the book.

Consciousness-raising groups in the women's movement serve a specific function. They are a first step in allowing women to identify the social, as opposed to personal, reasons for their oppression. They are often a short-lived experience for most feminists, who quickly want to begin to *do* something about their inequality, not just talk about it.

Comrades in the revolutionary party don't need such sessions to identify the roots of women's inequality. It's part of our political program. Internal consciousness raising sessions turn into their opposite. They take our understanding backwards, instead of forward, as consciousness-raising groups can do in the women's movement.

Experience in the RWL/LOR proves this. We have only to look at the women's caucus in the Quebec wing to see how ineffective such caucuses are. The women comrades met before last July's Quebec National Conference and attempt to formulate measures to overcome severe problems on this question in the organization.

Did anything change? No. Some of the comrades from Quebec tell me they think the situation there in terms of education and well-organized and prepared intervention into the women's movement is now worse than it was before the national conference.

It's like the problems which occurred between gay comrades and immigrant comrades in Toronto. They haven't been solved. And they won't be solved in any way by caucuses of the individual interest group concerned. Because there are political issues involved, in every case, and a political battle—which includes the norms and organizational character of the party—has to be fought in the party as a whole to clarify them.

It's discussion of the political issues involved, not discussion of personal problems and "therapy sessions" which will improve the situation. Our international has gone through a decade of current experience in the women's movement. Both in the International and in Canada we have a large layer of women comrades who don't need a ghettoized "therapy" approach to our role in the revolutionary party. We have the program and democratic structures we need. We are quite capable, if problems arise or persist, and if the leadership doesn't respond, of calling for tendencies around this question or any other question, and to unite with *anyone* who agrees with us. And there's no earthly reason why only comrades of the same sex would agree with one another. For example, I have bigger disagreements with Morgan on some of these questions than with some male comrades in the PC who agree with the main line of this report. We must look to the measures outlined in the resolution, not to caucuses, to strengthen our women cadre.

b) Childcare

The question of child care in the party is a much more

straightforward one, although the errors on this question form part of the same wrong approach Morgan takes on caucuses.

It's a simple question: the party does not have the resources of the state. Its sole purpose is to organize to lead workers to *get those resources*. *Workers join us on a program aimed at the state to do this, not because we can do for them what society at this point cannot or will not.* Workers, including women with children, will have no problem in understanding this.

The problem for us in the discussion is that the question of child care has been blown up all out of proportion by those who disagree with the document. Again, instead of starting from the needs of the class struggle and the party as a whole, they start from the disadvantages of one section of the party, women with children.

There are many equally disadvantaged groupings in the party. We can't start from the problems of this or that grouping. We have to start with the collective interests of the party as a whole. The party's concern is to maximize every single comrade's political effectiveness. We do this not through material compensation, for which we do not have the means, but through conscious attention to leadership development, education, and conscious regulation of the functioning of the party.

Within this framework, we pay special attention to the development of our women cadres, and to maximizing their political effectiveness. We take special measures, which are outlined in the resolution, to do this.

The party must recognize the problems faced by women with children in being active. Just as it does with other comrades' difficulties, it attempts, through the leadership, to find ways to reduce the impact of the problem. But we cannot be responsible, partially or fully, for solving the material problems of parents with children.

Comrades' family responsibilities—whether to children, aging parents, sick husbands, or whatever else—cannot become the responsibility of the party without changing our entire concept and purpose. One Winnipeg comrade explained that if we had the resources, and when we get them, we should be able to emulate the Black Panthers' free breakfast programs. That's not the kind of party we are building.

Women who come to the party looking to us to provide child care are looking for a different kind of party from the one we're building. We don't tell anyone we can solve their problems for them, partially or fully. We tell them to join with us and fight against the ruling class for what they need, that we are building a *political combat* instrument for overthrowing the state and laying the basis for all these problems to be solved. If they agree with our program, if the program we're fighting for meets their needs, they will join us. If they are looking for something else, they will go elsewhere. A common hatred of the capitalist system, a determination to give our lives over to fighting against it, a common program are what holds us together.

Our common agreement on how to build the party and move the class struggle forward is what we are; it's what we have to offer to all workers, male and female.

It's these things, not material solutions to the problems of capitalism, which will attract and inspire the best women revolutionaries to our ranks.

Summary

Morgan and Nadja attacked my report as factional. The comrades may have disagreed with the political ideas in it, but it wasn't a factional report. I said what I thought, politically, and that's what's required of every comrade. The goal is to get political clarity on two extremely important aspects of our work—our women's liberation work and the turn to industry. In the absence of written material, my report drew on the experience of the tour to take the discussion forward. I think both reports did that on one level.

Morgan's report took an important stand in favor of affirmative action and against discriminatory layoffs. Her report today marked progress in understanding some aspects of the relationship between the women's movement and the labor movement.

But this understanding is still limited. This was made clear by some of the comments made in the discussion in defense of Morgan's line.

Trixie's remarks were the clearest. She felt my report subordinated women's liberation to the class question in much the same way, she said, that Paquette subordinates the national question to the class question. She characterized my position as "economic reductionism" akin to the Maoists' approach to the women's movement.

The report will be submitted to the written bulletin; comrades can study it for themselves. It was crystal clear on our support for building an independent women's movement, and on the centrality of this movement to the socialist revolution. There are no differences in the RWL on this question. Comrades have to avoid false polemics and try to deal with the real differences. What's in dispute here is the exact relationship between the women's movement and the working class.

Morgan claimed that I gave no explanation in my report of why we should send our women comrades into industry. I spent the majority of my report trying to do just that. I'll repeat the main arguments again.

As women revolutionaries and as industrial workers, we can bring more *power* behind the struggles of women, and at the same time we can lead the crucial sectors of the class, the industrial workers, in the process of thinking socially and acting politically, by bringing the key issues and demands of the women's movement into the unions and the workplace.

Going into industry does not mean abandoning the women's movement. It means participating in it, leading it, as industrial workers who are active in the movement's political campaigns and organized groups. Morgan herself said we want to participate in the women's movement as union members. It is she who must explain why, if we have the choice (and I think we all

agree there's a radicalization occurring among industrial workers, male and female) we would want to participate from a position of weakness, as service workers, rather than from a position of strength as members of the big industrial unions. Service workers are more and more going to be looking to these powerful industrial unions for support and self defense against the ruling class attack. Women in these unions will look to a party with strength in the industrial unions and join it because of this strength, whether or not we initially have comrades in these unions. Our strength in the industrial unions in this crucial period will allow us to recruit and build fractions in the service unions. But not vice versa.

However, beyond the progress on questions like discriminatory layoffs, I found Morgan's report disappointing. She avoided all the controversial questions we encountered on the tour—the question of sexuality, lesbian oppression, the argument that women's struggles must be directed to fighting rape, violence, and sexual harassment. It's obvious from the contributions of Nadja and Emma, and from Morgan's summary that we have very big differences that we must discuss. What's most urgent here is that the comrades document their position so that the party as a whole can begin to be clear on where the differences lie.

The differences are very much related to the question of divisions in the class, how we analyse their material basis, and how the class can overcome them.

Nadja took much of her contribution time to explain to us that there is a material basis for women's oppression and the ideology that helps perpetuate it.

Of course there is. There's no difference on that.

But Nadja says that we don't need to look back to pre-class society, the material basis for sexism in the workers movement lies in the fact that men don't carry a double day of labor as women are forced to do.

This is wrong. Women's oppression is not based on a sexual division of labor, it's based on the needs of *class* society. It benefits only the ruling class, materially and politically. It keeps wages down, divides the class politically, and weakens it. Sexism is introduced into the working class through bourgeois ideology for these reasons. Its roots are not to be found in the "sexual-social division of labor between men and women" which Emma talked about, but in the needs of *class* society.

Male workers have no class interest, material or political, in acting as the agents of women's oppression. For example, the socialisation of domestic labor, and affirmative action are every bit as much in the objective interests of male workers as female workers. These are key weapons for *all* workers against the boss. The fight for such measures can unite the class in its common interest and lay the basis for a qualitative improvement of the lives of both males and females.

This is very important. If it weren't the case, we would be idealists to think that class unity were possible. Women would be counting on men's good will rather than on the compelling material interests which motivate a common struggle and the elimination of women's oppression.

If comrades fail to understand this, they will inevitably

begin to develop a sex-based analysis of women's oppression rather than a class analysis. This can only lead in an anti-male direction.

Nadja and Emma began to do this in their remarks. And in her summary, Morgan proposed an axis for the women's struggle aimed against the "social-sexual division of labor" between men and women. It doesn't have to be the main axis, she said, but it does have to be an axis. This is a concession on her part to a very wrong position.

There's a theoretical basis underlying the idea of the "sexual-social division of labor," or women's domestic role in the family as the material basis for sexism in the workers movement. It relates to the origins of women's oppression.

One of Morgan's criticisms of the document is that it has a lack of precision in describing the transition from pre-class society to class society. She says that there is evidence of women being bought and sold in the transition to class society. She tells us nothing new by noting this fact. Obviously history doesn't have neat dividing lines between one period and another.

But what must be discerned here is the historical trend. The transition period was the opener to class society. As such, it evolved features which were features of *class* society, not of the preceding period.

Does Morgan agree with this? Or is she raising the possibility that women's oppression existed in pre-class society? Some comrades in the RWL definitely *do* hold this view. Morgan must make clear where she stands.

We have to be absolutely unambiguous on this question. Because if it were true that women were disadvantaged in some way, or oppressed, in pre-class society, women's oppression would *not* be class based. It would be based not on the rise of class relations, but on some inherent weakness of women and male dominance. Women's oppression would be, at least in part, sex-based, and Morgan's double axis would be in order.

This gets us right back to the question of women's biological inferiority. It's either class society or women's biological inferiority that is responsible for women's oppression, comrades. There is no third road. And if you believe the latter, you begin to call into question the need for a socialist revolution and the elimination of class society in freeing women from their oppression.

Why should women focus their energies on overthrowing class society if this is not the root of their oppression? And if women, one half of the working class, have not material interest in the socialist revolution, doesn't the revolution become impossible?

I suspect that confusion on the origins of women's oppression is in part responsible for the differences that are beginning to emerge.

Morgan must now answer the question: does she agree with the historical trend and political conclusions put forward in this report? Or does she think that women's oppression is based, at least in part, on a "social-sexual division of labor" which pre-dates class society?

These are far-reaching questions, the answer to which can help us clarify a whole range of confusions and apparent differences on our women's liberation work.

**Report on International Women's
Liberation Resolution to the
Xmas plenum, 1978 of the RWL/LOR
(Edited report)**

Introduction

This was not an easy report to put together, both because of the scope of the resolution itself and because the debate is at different stages in different components of the organization. The recent tour on the international women's liberation document only covered the English Canadian branches; the differences on child care and caucuses were only discussed in the prairie branches; the resolution has not yet been discussed in the Quebec wing of the organization (although a national 'stage' is scheduled a couple of weeks from now).

I was faced with the necessity to attempt to cover some of the main points of the document at the same time as addressing some of the questions which have already been raised in discussion across the country. In addition, there are aspects of the resolution which were not discussed seriously during the tour, especially those concerning our concrete work around women's liberation within the unions. These are very important for the organization to discuss, given the present debate on the character of a turn to the labour movement.

Therefore the report will combine the report given on tour with some new questions. For some comrades this will mean some repetition, although I have attempted to present some of the key points of the text in a somewhat different framework. It also means that I cannot take up some of the weaknesses of the document which I have raised previously. Specifically, I am referring to imprecisions in the analysis of the historical development of women's oppression, omissions in the section on the workers states, underdevelopment of the understanding of the role of sexual repression in women's oppression and the impact which this has on the present women's movement, etc. Another limitation which should be acknowledged: the English-Canadian centric character of my examples.

Importance of the Document for the Fourth International

It's appropriate to begin with a quote from Mary Alice Water's pamphlet: *Marxism and Feminism*. "On the questions of women's liberation...broad layers of revolutionaries are only now starting to work back to—or up to—positions that were established by the Bolsheviks some fifty years ago. Humanity has paid an incalculable price for the break in the continuity of Marxist traditions during the last half-century."

Putting aside whatever critiques would now be made of the Bolshevik positions and whatever differences exist in analyzing the effect that this break in continuity had on the Fourth International, there is one point which is very clear. This document is the first major text and discussion of the overall analysis of women's oppression to be conducted on an international scale by

revolutionary Marxists since the 1920's and the 3rd and 4th congresses of the Communist International. There had been considerable written and oral discussion on this question for forty or so years before and after the turn of the century, corresponding to the last international rise of the women's movement. This discussion was *not* confined to issues pertaining to the suffrage struggle but included a whole range of rather important questions concerning the organization and struggles of working women, their participation in left parties, female sexuality, abortion and birth control, etc. With the decline of that rise of the women's movement, the accompanying decline in the struggles of the workers movement as a whole, and the rise of Stalinism, almost a 50 year hiatus in political discussion and debate began within the workers movement on questions concerning women's liberation. The retreat to reformist/Stalinist conceptions was rather rapid. I do not mean to imply that there were no struggles by women from the 20's to the 60's—there were. For example, of women workers during the thirties, of the organization of Spanish women by the anarchists into the 20,000 strong *Mujeres Libres* during the Civil War. But there was not an international rise of the women's movement throughout those years, and this was profoundly reflected within the workers movement.

As a result, there were few discussions and little elaboration in the sections of the Fourth International. It has been *this* rise of the women's movement, beginning in the late sixties, that has demanded of the International that it elaborate its analysis of the character of women's oppression and the strategic role of the struggle for women's liberation within the struggle to overthrow the capitalist state and establish a communist society.

In this light, this document is a profoundly important acquisition for the Fourth International. It poses clearly the critical necessity for full education and discussion within all of the sections of the International. The document is both a summation of the earlier positions of the revolutionary left on women's oppression and a development of that analysis based on a) the experience of previous struggles, especially of developments within the workers states and b) the changes which have occurred in latecapitalism and the character of the women's radicalization that this has produced. It is also, in my opinion, *a beginning*. The Fourth International is at a threshold point—it is only now really opening a debate and discussion on theoretical, programmatic and practical questions concerning women's liberation which will deepen and extend in direct relation to the growth of the women's movement and the rise of the class struggle as a whole.

Strategic Points of the Document

Within the framework of the struggle to destroy capitalist society and establish a communist society, what is necessary for the liberation of women to occur? In answering this question we are talking about a process which begins in struggle prior to the revolution even

though the revolution itself only establishes certain crucial pre-conditions for women's liberation.

The first accomplishment of the document in answer to this question is its reassertion of the basic analysis elaborated by earlier Marxists, especially Engels. I mean by this: the fact that women's oppression is rooted in the development of class society and most particularly in the patriarchal family of class society; that women's responsibility for the reproduction of the future labour force is the determining factor in relation to their role within production and their overall status within society as a whole.

But the document takes this basic understanding and the conclusions drawn from it concerning the necessary changes required for the liberation of women and presents them within a fuller framework which the past 50 years experience has made more possible. To express this general framework in one sentence we can say: the liberation of women involves an inextricably combined struggle to end class exploitation *and* the social division of labour between the sexes which exists in class society as a whole. This division of labour serves only the interests of profit at this stage in human development and it exists to maintain class and sexual oppression. The waging of this struggle requires a fundamental transformation of all human relations.

What are the key components of this struggle? Four central axes can be identified.

First, the winning of full formal democratic rights for women, the end to all forms of discrimination in the law. I won't elaborate on this point since it is rather straight forward, though not in the least unimportant—especially in the colonial and semi-colonial world.

Second, for the economic independence of women. This requires not only the *full* integration of women into social production, but also their *equal* integration, otherwise they will not be economically independent. This means a battle on a number of fronts, which I will return to later—including equal pay, preferential training and hiring in traditional male occupations, maternity/paternity provisions, unionization, augmentation of salaries of female workers, etc. It is a fight to break down the social division of labour between the sexes *within* production, a fight which was not understood fully by earlier marxists because they could not see fully the way in which 'women's waged labour' would be so highly ghettoized within social production under capitalism.

Third, the establishment of full economic independence must be accompanied by a simultaneous struggle to create the conditions for the elimination of the patriarchal family. It is here that women's oppression is rooted—in the division of labour in society as a whole which places primary responsibility on women for the reproduction of the future labour force, whether or not they are also involved in wage labour.

The importance of society as a whole assuming responsibility for the physical and social reproduction of the new generation, for the elimination of privatized

domestic labour, was understood by earlier marxists but they placed their greatest emphasis on integrating women into production. They tended to overestimate the effects of this integration because a) they did not have a full understanding of the effects of the double day on women and the degree to which this would affect their labor force participation (kinds of jobs, women's attitude towards them, unionization difficulties, etc.), but also b) because they tended to assume an almost automatic decline of the family and the taking over of its tasks by the state, even within capitalist society.

This process of ending the split between socialized production and privatized reproduction of the labour force (which requires not only socialization of the tasks of reproduction, but an end to private appropriation of the fruits of socialized production) has profound implications for the ending of the division of labour between men and women and the elimination of women's oppression. Fundamentally, it is a struggle to create the material conditions for the replacement of the family. But it also involves a long term challenge to the roles which the family inculcates, to ensure that it is not armies of *women* cooks who run the collective eating facilities of the new societies (a trap which Kollontai herself fell into), nor the women/mothers who educate and nurture the new generation.

The final aspect I want to emphasize necessary for the liberation of women, an aspect intimately related to the preceding ones, is the struggle by women to gain control over their own reproductive functions, their own bodies *and* to win the possibility to define their own sexuality. It will result in the possibility of separating sexuality from reproduction, of controlling one's own body—for abortion on demand, for safe and full access to contraception and against forced sterilization—which is fundamental to women being able to define themselves as sexual subjects, not as objects defined in relation to men. The control by women of their own fertility is central to rejection of a reproductive role which is defined by patriarchal class needs.

Similarly, it will be the struggle against all forms of sexual objectification of women and for the full defense of the rights of gays and lesbians to love members of the same sex that fills out the full dimensions of this aspect of the struggle of women against their oppression.

It is these axes which constitute the major aspects of the specific struggle against women's oppression.

The Autonomous Women's Movement

I want to look now at another key strategic point within this document: the necessity for an autonomous women's movement. It is important to examine this question from two perspectives: a) Why women need such a movement for their own liberation; b) Why this movement is necessary for the working class as a whole to fulfill its historic task of ending class exploitation.

The struggle for women's liberation is a *form* of the class struggle and women's oppression is rooted in class

society (all of which have been patriarchal in character), but it is not reducible to class exploitation. All women are oppressed, though working class women doubly so; the elimination of women's oppression is not by any means completed through the elimination of class exploitation.

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It is for this reason that the resolution of socialist democracy states: "More specifically, it should be pointed out that momentous struggles will continue through the process of building a classless society, struggles that concern social evils that are rooted in class society, but will not disappear immediately with the elimination of capitalist exploitation or wage labour. The oppression of women, of national minorities, and the oppression and alienation of youth are archetypes of such problems, which cannot automatically be subsumed under the general heading "class struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie except by divorcing the categories 'working class' and 'bourgeoisie' from their classical Marxist, materialist definitions and foundations, as is done by Maoists and various ultraleft currents.

"Political freedom under workers democracy therefore implies freedom of organization and action for independent women's liberation, national liberation, and youth movements, i.e. movements much broader than the working class...not to speak of the revolutionary Marxist current within the working class."

What is said here refers to the post revolutionary period. During that time, the existence of an autonomous movement of women will be crucial for ensuring full and democratic debate on economic and social priorities, for waging a long-term battle for the end to the division of labour between men and women, for the replacement of the family through the socialization of its tasks and for an end to the authority relations, sexual repression, atomization of individuals, and so on, which is inherent in the family. This long battle for the transformation of social relations will also be a key factor in countering tendencies towards bureaucratization in the new workers states. The international document is extremely clear, as was Trotsky, in describing the role that the maintenance of the family, and thus of women's oppression plays in reinforcing the control of the bureaucracy. Trotsky was also clear about the role of women's liberation in creating a new society—"In order to change the conditions of life, we must learn to see them through the eyes of women" (*Problems of life*).

It is the same conception which underlies the profound importance of the autonomous women's movement prior to the revolution. Because women's oppression is not reducible to class exploitation and because that oppression is also a fundamental mechanism for dividing and weakening the working class which gives working class men a relative immediate

16 privilege in relation to women, the autonomous movement is fundamental to ensuring that women's demands are not subordinated. Only by organizing autonomously—whether in the neighbourhoods, the factories, offices and campuses, by leading their own struggle and fighting for their demands can women ensure that their needs are not ignored because they will not be taken up spontaneously by men. The organization of women into their own groupings/their self-organization and struggle within the mixed organizations of the working class is a form of the self-organization of the masses—of the masses of women. It is a more developed form of democracy than exists in the institutions of bourgeois democracy.

But the strategic importance of the women's movement does not only lie in women ensuring that their demands are put forward—that the revolution is one which seeks their liberation. The mobilization of the masses of women in struggle will be a crucial determinant in the ability of the working class to lead the revolutionary process. On this point, I don't want to pose the question defensively as there was a tendency to do at the turn of the century. Then, it was often said—"women are backward, how do we ensure that they are not mobilized by reactionary forces." There was truth to this in the following sense: without a women's movement and without a correct response, over time, by the workers movement to the demands of women, the conservatizing pressures on women as a result of the character of their oppression (specifically the weight of the double day) can, and has, created openings for the bourgeoisie to divide the working class. The mobilization of women by the right in Chile is but one example.

However, it is much more important to pose the question in offensive terms. What is the revolutionary potential of the struggle for women's liberation and the role that the women's movement can play, in relation to working class struggles as a whole, *if* that movement fights on a correct basis?

Its greatest potential lies in breaking the stranglehold of reformism within the workers movement. To demonstrate this, I want to focus on the impact that women's struggles can have within the unions—in four different ways:

First, the struggles of women challenge the division between economic and political struggles which is central to the reformist conception. Because of the character of women's oppression, when women unionists begin to radicalize, issues which do not directly pertain to the narrow wage relationship between boss and worker are very quickly raised: for example, childcare, abortion rights. By linking issues in the workplace to broader social questions of daily life in capitalist society, the struggles of women help to break through the economist consciousness of many unionists. They demonstrate the necessity for the working class to understand the broader dimensions of class relations in capitalist society, for it to mobilize in support of political demands against the state which go beyond questions directly concerning the wages and working conditions. They assert the correct priority of human needs over profit in a wider sense.

Second, and closely related to the above, the

mobilization of working women for specific workplace demands challenges the division of labour which exists within production—divisions which weaken the working class and are consciously and deliberately maintained by the bourgeoisie and its state. The ghettoization of female workers, pay differentials and workplace hierarchies, the use of women as part-time workers, etc, all contribute to these divisions. The challenge to this superexploitation by women workers and the winning of male workers to the correct understanding of their historic interests is fundamental to the unification of the working class and the recognition that its class interests are identical with those of the oppressed.

Third, the fight for democracy within the unions is integrally tied up with the struggles of women workers. This includes demands for full participation within union leaderships, for childcare during union meetings, for women's caucuses, committees and cross union formations so that the demands of women can be best articulated and advanced and the rejection of sex-defined roles within the union movement. All of these contribute critically to teaching male workers what real workers democracy is and to undermining the control of the bureaucratic leaderships which is predicated on non-democratic modes of functioning.

Finally, because of the rapid way in which radicalizing women workers come to understand the combined character of their oppression *and* the fact that their bottom rung location in the labour market means that they have little to lose, *when* they begin to struggle they are often very militant. Not only do they provide leadership in demonstrating how to fight, but also because of the weak support from the union leaderships, they pose acutely the importance of active and militant forms of solidarity. In the past year, the very determined and difficult strikes by female workers have demonstrated this very clearly.

This potential which exists in the struggle for women's liberation, makes extremely clear its importance for the forging of a class struggle left wing within the workers movement. Such a class struggle left will not be built if it does not make the demands of women workers a central concern.

Given the resistance of the reformist leaderships *and* the backwardness of most male workers we are talking about a long term battle within the workers movement. We cannot afford to underestimate the difficulty of this battle. The last big rise of working women's struggles around the turn of the century makes this absolutely clear. There was *considerable* resistance by male workers to the demands of women. In the fight for equal pay, women often received support from men on the grounds that winning the equal pay demand would mean that female workers would not be used to replace male workers. Women workers were often forced to organize into their own unions because of the resistance to females joining male dominated unions. There was widespread backwardness concerning the question of abortion rights for women. Even among the

revolutionary current, the justification for abortion would often be expressed only in terms of the need to free women for production. The issue of sexual harassment by bosses and foremen was never seriously debated—though there was widespread harassment and forced prostitution. Twenty percent of the strikes by female workers in France in one year at the turn of the century were provoked because of this very question, yet it never received generalized attention by the workers movement as a whole.

The problem of sexism within the working class itself is a fundamental obstacle to its unification. But, on the other hand, when the working class comes to understand the importance of the struggle against women oppression it will have taken a massive step forward in its capacity to fulfill its historic project.

If this struggle is not waged successfully, the anti-capitalist potential of the women's movement risks erosion and/or deflection by the bourgeoisie and the reformist. Its success is foremost dependent on the *strength of the women's movement* and its *political orientation*.

Our Perspectives

It is useful now to examine more closely some other aspects of this document by looking more concretely at the question of our perspectives. The approach I want to take is: how can we strengthen the women's movement and give it the correct political perspectives.

To restate some points on which there is general agreement. In the past few years it has been clear that the main ideas of the first feminist wave in North America have spread far beyond the original youth/student and professional layers of women. This spread of feminist consciousness has been greatly accelerated by the austerity drive and the accompanying ideological reaction. Women have been hard hit by the cuts in social services, layoffs and unemployment, restricted abortion access, rising violence towards women as the social crisis deepens, and by a general right-wing counteroffensive on the ideological front. All the previous gains have been threatened—and in many cases eroded. At the same time the *capacity* of the movement to become much more massive and proletarian in character is beginning to be demonstrated.

The result, as the European document notes, is that there "is a universal tendency for the women's movement to shed its characteristics as a movement external to the workers movement and its struggles and demands. The very breadth of the movement has hastened its emergence within the ranks of women workers. Independent initiatives by women within the mass organizations of the working class, especially the unions, have multiplied in the last couple of years". Even if today, in Canada and Quebec, this process is in its initial stages compared to some European countries, it is nevertheless extremely important. And it occurs within the context of a developing radicalization within the working class, the factor which has been key to the

degree of radicalization of working women in other countries.

We can particularly note the following signs of this radicalization: a) The small, but militant struggles by the Fleck, Parkland, Toronto Public Health, Ottawa Banknote and YUSA workers, all of which assumed some degree of a feminist dimension. b) The growth of caucuses and official women's committees within the unions. The latter have emerged especially within the CSN and CEQ in Quebec, and both types of formations have developed in a number of unions in English Canada, in both the public and private sector. c) Similarly there are a number of efforts towards cross union groupings of women, though some remain very embryonic. (Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and BC.) d) Finally we have seen the beginnings of the mobilization of union women, as union women, in actions such as March 8th and in strike support activity.

Why is this radicalization of unionized women so important to us? I have already referred to this partially in the section concerning the impact of the struggles of working women on the unions and the fundamental role that this will play in the development of a class struggle left, and the transformation of the unions into revolutionary instruments. But some additional points must be made. Working women are already semi-organized by the labour market. If they are unionized their strength in organization is much greater. This organization, which greatly enhances the possibility of winning demands and the high visibility of union women when they move into struggle present powerful possibilities for reaching large numbers of women. And they do this within the context of established structures of the workers movement (even if they take their own initiatives). This can give them a stability and continuity which often does not exist in the formations of women outside the unions. This is especially true if they are able to develop cross local/cross union women's formations. And it is here that the interrelation between the women's movement and the workers movement can find its fullest expression—not just physically, but politically—making concrete the reciprocal interaction between the two and acting as the locus for the strongest manifestations of feminist class consciousness.

Unionized women will become, over time, an absolutely central component of the women's movement and its leadership. This underlines the fundamental importance of the presence of revolutionaries in building this component of the women's movement. Our role will be critical to the capacity of this component to challenge the reformists leaderships, (who are quite capable of moving to coopt the feminist radicalization within the unions) and to build a real class struggle left. In addition, prioritizing our location within the union movement is the most effective way to demonstrate to other components of the women's movement the real possibilities for building a proletarian women's movement which has a class struggle perspective and the process by which the workers movement as a whole can

be won to support women's liberation.

The centre of gravity of the women's movement is shifting towards the unions. We will be marginalized in relation to the women's movement as a whole if we do not proletarianize and take up the political battle within the workers movement. The last year has begun to demonstrate this clearly. On March 8, 1978, our efforts to mobilize union women occurred largely from the 'outside', which placed real limits on our impact. The same has been true in relation to strike support work. A similar point can be made concerning our relation to socialist feminists within the movement. We must engage in comprehensive discussion and exchange with these cadres of the movement, but the superiority of our class struggle perspective will not be convincing unless we can demonstrate it in practice. Such a practice has many dimensions, but the most fundamental is building an organization which is physically and politically implanted in the mass organizations of the working class.

What does this mean for where we want to be in the unions? The vast majority of women workers are in clerical, service, sales and communications jobs, many of which are in the public sector. It would be playing ostrich to deny that very often the traditions of struggle are weak, the degree of proletarian consciousness highly uneven and the number of experienced trade union activists limited in these new sectors of the working class, especially in English Canada. A large percentage of these sectors is non-unionized. However, this has been true at each stage in the development of the organized female component of the working class and revolutionaries have always understood the necessity to organize and strengthen the fighting capacity of the most oppressed layers of workers.

However, given the explosivity of the radicalization of women workers as it deepens and the fact that struggles in these sectors are often against the state, it would be equally ostrich-like to fail to recognize the crucial political role that workers in these areas can play, in precisely the way I point to earlier. We already see this in union like CUPE, the Quebec Common Front, nurses and teachers in BC, and so on. Or we could point to the role of bankworkers in a number of countries. It is not an accident that CUPE plays the political role it does within the labour movement, in spite of the weakness of its union traditions.

Revolutionaries have a central role to play in building this component of the women's movement. We must have a strong presence where the majority of organized working women are to be found. This is necessary both in order to develop its considerable potential for struggle and in order to prevent the bosses and their state from exploiting the divisions within the working class between the dominantly (or largely) female and dominantly male sectors. And we should not underestimate the impact that women militants from these sectors will have in the central conventions and conferences of the labour movement if revolutionaries, among others, are active in organizing such women

into cross local and union bodies such as OWW.

But this raises the other side of the equation: our attitude towards the dominantly male sectors of the union movement. Here, for reasons which should be obvious, we are concerned with the majority of the big industrial unions, not the craft unions. What are our perspectives towards these unions in relation to building the women's movement? It is vital that our own comrades, male and female, and left wing militants in these unions fight to mobilize them in support of the struggles of workers in the female dominated sectors. There has not been a very strong tradition of such support, which is reflected in a weak response to calls for support to specific struggles, a largely passive attitude towards efforts to unionize women in the new sectors and in a general attitude which denigrates the importance of 'female work'. The role of male comrades in combatting these attitudes and winning real support should be a central aspect of their work.

I want to look more concretely at the role that women workers in these sectors can play. There are important concentrations of women in the industrial unions (which *do not* include CUPW). In many cases they are dispersed into small plants or are in weak sectors with little clout, such as textiles. In other cases, their concentrations are greater and they can play a very important role, especially in unions like the UAW where the female members are 12 percent and growing and in which the spread of women's committees is equal to that in other sectors.

By fighting to get into such jobs these women challenge the social division of labour between the sexes within production, and by fighting the many forms of discrimination which they experience once inside, they play a crucial role in a very concrete process of breaking down divisions and winning male workers to an understanding of the oppression of women. The success of the INCO women is a clear example. And the traditions of unionism in this sector can reinforce the militant capacity of such women. Finally, their presence within these unions will be an extremely effective lever in winning those unions to the support of struggles in the sectors where women are far more highly concentrated, and to the understanding of the importance of putting the necessary resources into the unionization of women in the female job ghettos.

Our own women comrades can play an undeniably important role in this process. It will not be easy, given the resistance of the bureaucracy *and* of male workers, but it is a necessary part of a lengthy process of winning the working class as a whole to active mobilization in support of women workers.

So, we must avoid a false debate over where our women comrades should seek union jobs—we must be in *both* the traditional male and the traditional female (or high female concentration areas) of the union movement. Which specific unions we should colonize must be determined on the basis of the political possibilities which exist. So, for example, it is more useful for our women

comrades to be in CUPE than in the textile unions, to be in UAW than OPEIU, to be in CUPW than the Teamsters.

Our Programme for Women in the Unions

We cannot make the massive turn of the organization toward the unions that we are proposing unless we begin to grapple immediately with the character of our programmatic intervention. I would like to be able to be more extensive, but time limits so I'll raise what I consider to be the key axes of our intervention in order to get the discussion going.

In a situation of high unemployment, an absolutely central element of our work has to be defense of women's right to a job. The keystone of this defense must be the fight for the 30 hour week without loss in pay. We have been weak in raising this demand in general, but specifically we have failed to explain the dimension of this as it affects women. The tendency to layoff women first, to make massive cuts in the female dominated sectors, to move towards more part-time female work: all of these measures must be exposed and answered with the demand for the sliding scale of wages and hours. This fight must be tied to fighting the deterioration of working conditions with respect to the rhythm and intensity of work which tends to be the most extreme in female sectors.

The demand for the 30 hour week to ensure no loss of jobs, but also to give workers more free time, must be combined with the demands for social services, especially child care. We are not in favour, as is the CP, of reducing the working hours of women in order that they will have more time to perform domestic labour in a situation where austerity deepens the load of the double day on women.

I want now to examine more closely the main points of our program which lead in the direction of 'defeminizing' and 'feminizing' occupations—which challenge the division of labour between the sexes in production. It's a fact that women workers are lowest paid and least qualified, that they are channelled into female job ghettos and areas of work which are systematically devalued, that they are underemployed in relation to the skills they do have.

Our program must recognize these realities. As is the case concerning the 30 hour week, many of the demands which are crucial to changing the situation of women workers, are not limited to women in their importance and intent.

Especially in the female dominated sectors of the labour force we must fight consistently for: a) massive unionization campaigns. Only one quarter of working women are unionized and this is not a small problem in relation to the unification of the working class. In this context the lessons of the SORWUC campaign—concerning *how* to organize women workers must be generalized within the labour movement as a whole where resources *do* exist for such unionization drives. b) For union determined minimum wages. The struggle of

the Quebec common front was an expression of the way in which such a demand can be advanced in struggle. c) For the general augmentation of salaries in the dominantly female sectors in proportions which go in the direction of catching up with the higher paid, largely male, sectors. d) This is closely related to the militant and active defense of the right to strike in the public and parapublic sectors. e) For cross-the-board increases which tend towards equalizing salaries and decrease the gap between higher paid (usually male) workers and lower paid (usually female) workers in mixed sectors. f) For Equal pay. The most important element of this battle must be that it is the willingness to mobilize in struggle for this demand which is the central mechanism for ensuring that the principle of equal pay is respected. For this occur effectively it means a full, concrete discussion within the union itself so that all its members are committed to the principle. This should be tied to what is a longer term battle—the idea that the unions themselves should determine what is equal work. This framework is the only way to overcome the dangers of job evaluation schemes and joint union/management committees which have developed. In this context the question of equal pay for equal work versus equal pay for work of equal value (which has been adopted by a number of capitalist states) becomes a secondary issue. g) For the recognition of the level of skill training and education which women have achieved. It is not a question here of advocating job hierarchies tied to educational qualification, but we do need to fight for the recognition of the level of qualification of women (and immigrants, for example) since the qualifications of men are much more likely to be recognized in wages. We raise this within the context of a fight for general raise in salaries of the lowest layers and the long term fight for a single rate by category: the maximum.

In the dominantly male sectors, (and in many mixed occupations) the key battle is for preferential treatment—for real mixed training and occupation in all sectors.

a) For preferential training quotas for women in all male dominated occupations and for preferential hiring of women trained. For general preferential hiring of women in the male bastions.

b) Similarly, for on-the-job training, again preferential, where appropriate, with the necessary child care provisions if such training is not conducted during working hours.

c) Against discriminatory layoffs. This question has been hanging fire for some time and a number of comrades have been either unsure or opposed to this demand. I've done a lot of thinking about it and now believe that it is correct. I cannot elaborate the arguments fully here, but the following points are important. Any battle along these lines must be subsumed within the general context of a refusal of all layoffs. But where layoffs occur we must fight to ensure that the percentage of women within the plant is not reduced, otherwise the gains which women workers have made in

breaking into the male dominated sectors can be liquidated with one stroke of the pen. This fight is first and foremost aimed at convincing male workers of the importance of defending the gains of women workers, because it will involve some kind of double seniority system. Comrades should read the SWP material on this question.

It should be made clear that these elements of our program do not divide neatly into points we raise in dominantly female sectors and those in dominantly male sectors. For example, preferential methods can be applicable in numerous situations. Similarly, across the board increases.

Also, a number of these demands, especially those relating to equal pay, working conditions, compositions of those hired, etc. begin to raise questions of workers control and we must develop our understanding of how to pose this.

In addition to the foregoing, we argue for full maternity/paternity leave (the Quebec comrades have had some very important experience concerning all the aspects of this question recently). We should also fight for paid leaves for either parent for care of sick children. In both cases the challenge to the division of labour in relation to domestic responsibilities is an important element of the fight.

I mentioned earlier the importance of the fight for increased social services. This is similar in importance to the winning of the workers organizations as a whole to the support of abortion rights for women and for the rights of lesbians and gays.

I do not have the time to elaborate on these questions because I think their importance in all areas of work, not just the unions is widely agreed upon. The central point to emphasize is the way in which debating these questions within the unions provides a central axes for explaining the full dimensions of women's oppression and avoiding any tendencies to reduce that understanding to the view the women workers are only a super-exploited layer of the working class a la the Maoist view.

Two final points regarding our union intervention around women's liberation. As the radicalization of women within the unions develops, the issues of sexual harrassment and violence towards women, general sexist treatment of women and even issues such as dress codes, the relationships between secretaries and bosses, etc are increasingly being raised. Often demands relating to these questions can be concretized in relation to bosses and foreman, as occurred recently in BC, where the union struck over the issue of sexual harrassment. But this is not always the case; sometimes the harrassment comes from male workers. Our response to this involves a long term educational battle within the workers organizations in which both female and male comrades have an important role to play. The refusal of women to submit to the myriad ways in which they are sexually objectified goes hand in hand with the other aspects of the fight against oppression.

Finally, all of the foregoing elements of our program within the unions will not be taken up actively unless we simultaneously fight for the kind of participation by women within the unions which allows them to advance their demands. I won't elaborate on this because it was dealt with earlier, except to note the elements: full integration of women into the union leaderships, formation of caucuses and committees, childcare during union meetings, and so on. One question which we have to examine more closely than we have is the relationship between the formation of all-women caucuses and formal women's committees of the unions. Our attitude to such formations is determined tactically, but we do need to specify the tactical considerations which we must take into account.

I have talked a lot about our women's liberation work in the unions and the role of the union component of the women's movement. It is not, however, the only component of the women's movement. In fact, in the context of an overall rise of workers struggles, including that of women workers, the growth of the rest of the women's movement will be stimulated and accelerated and a more intense interaction will develop between the women's movement and the union movement and among the different components of the women's movement. To quote the new European document:

"While the women's movement has found an increasing echo in the workers movement, it maintains all its capacity for independent mobilization. This enormous potential is revealed in the battle for free abortion on demand. The independent women's movement is therefore able to stimulate the radicalization of broad layers of women, students and wage earners who remain outside the activity and organization of the workers' movement". The struggle of Italian women for abortion, (which unionized women supported, but in which they were not the crucial component) or the mobilization of Spanish women, (many from the neighbourhoods) demonstrate this clearly. The rise of the movement as a whole is very evident.

The capacity of the movement, *as a whole* for independent initiatives is central to a) accelerating the radicalization of unionized women and strengthening their capacity to demand and win union support; b) to mobilizing the masses of women not unionized (only one quarter of working women are), who do not perform wage labour or who are not in proletarian occupations. The vast majority of these women *are* working class women.

It is the mobilization of the whole movement which is the condition for waging effective mass political actions and campaigns directed against the state or in support of specific struggles. Take the question of abortion. Unions have often been won to verbal support, but most are a long easy from active mobilization, especially on any sustained basis. The role of the women who are outside the unions is as crucial to sustaining such a campaign, as those within. Indeed it has often been *more* crucial in maintaining the momentum of an active struggle since of-

ten the energies of union women focus on the day-to-day internal union and job struggles which confront them. It is the combination of the different components in struggle which can give the movement the strength which it requires.

Campaigns and support actions are the major mechanisms for unifying these different components and bringing to bear the maximum weight on the workers movement and winning its support for women's demands. In Canada and Quebec these campaigns are also important means for building bi-national unity. In this context I want to look briefly at the role of three types of campaigns/actions of the movement.

First, March 8th. These actions are important expressions of the full strength of the movement and they lend themselves very easily to the participation of union women (and mixed union contingents in demonstrations). We argued last year for an orientation to mobilizing union women in an attempt to begin to re-establish the original tradition of March 8th when it was launched by Zetkin and others at the 1910 conference of socialist women. As one of the Quebec comrades said recently, we want March 8th to become for the women's movement what May Day is for the workers movement. The actions last year were not only a first breakthrough in English Canada in the mobilization of union women (in Quebec this occurred some years ago), but they were also an important step for the unity of the movement as a whole and for bi-national unity of the women's movements. We should continue to fight to establish March 8th as a day of unity which seeks to mobilize the masses of working women, although we must acknowledge that the process will be uneven, depending on many factors. We must be clear that while March 8th actions are not a substitute for campaigns for specific demands they are nevertheless an important political moment in the life of the movement.

Briefly, one further point on this question, which relates to our internal differences. Before the accusations regarding who is in favour of a turn towards union women becomes lost in the realms of fantasy, some comrades who are now supporting the 'industrial turn' perhaps must be reminded that it was they who were opposed, or skeptical about attempting to mobilize union women last year. Even more disturbing, after the possibility that March 8th holds for mobilizing union women has been demonstrated, they have again opposed placing any importance on these actions. It would appear rather contradictory with their stated orientation.

The second kind of campaign I want to examine briefly are those which make concrete, focused demands on the state. Specifically, I want to refer to abortion. At this point in time, the abortion issue does not have the same capacity to mobilize union women, in English Canada at least, that it has in other countries. But this is not because there is not an objective necessity for such a campaign, but rather because the women's movement in English Canada has not taken up this question seriously beyond the regional level and it has certainly not had an

active orientation taking the issue into the unions. We have to argue very strongly the importance of doing this—not only because of the weight which it can give to such a campaign, but because of the overall political impact that this question can have within the unions, in linking the different components of the women's movement, and in challenging economist conceptions among union members. And this campaign obviously holds real possibilities for a bi-national and international development of unity.

It is through the development of such long term campaigns as the fight for abortion rights (among others) that the masses of women will be able to be mobilized.

Thirdly there are campaigns and actions in solidarity with working women's struggles. It is not an accident that the women's movement in Ontario, especially, has been so willing to mobilize in support of Fleck and YUSA. The same is true for the support of Parkland workers in Edmonton. There are many women outside the union who understand the need for the unity of the movement, for an orientation to working women, and who recognize the importance of these struggles as examples of militancy. Similarly it is not an accident that the only mobilization in support of INCO in Toronto was initiated by the women's movement (its union component, through OWW and its non-union component) not by the bureaucracy or by local unions. I also think that it is not an accident that the RWL did not understand the importance of our fully mobilizing for this action.

The reason for this is both a result of not having a sufficient presence of women comrades within the unions and of not understanding sufficiently the role that the women's movement as a whole can play in relation to workers struggles and the reformist leaderships. Again, the point is a simple one: it is the full strength of the different components of the movement in unity which not only maximizes the possibility of winning gains, but also of winning the support of the labour movement itself for women's struggles.

Therefore, while our priority is to get women comrades into unionized situations and to play a primary role within the autonomous women's movement as *union women*, we cannot allow this perspective to cloud our understanding of the strategic *necessity* for a movement which is much broader than the union component and which is able to mobilize non-unionized women. Nor can we forget that by maximizing the reciprocal interaction between the different components of the women's movement, we help to focus its full strength. Such an approach is crucial if the women's movement is to win the support of the workers movement for its demands, if the movement is to play the vanguard role of which it is capable within the workers organizations and if the women's movement itself is to develop a class struggle orientation.

Women's Caucuses

In justifying its position against women's caucuses, the International text refers to the differences between revolutionary organizations and all other organizations of the workers movement. Essentially, it says that revolutionary Marxist organizations are based on a program which represents the historical interests of all of humanity, attempting to synthesize the experiences, demands and interrelations between the struggles of all of the exploited and oppressed towards a strategic line of march. Its leaderships are elected to defend such a program. On this basis, the document argues, there is no inherent contradiction between the program, leadership and ranks *because* of this program, and that therefore there is a unity of interests between collective leaderships and women members of the organization.

The document correctly points out that such a unity of interests and purpose does not exist within the traditional organizations of the working class. Autonomous formations of women develop with the function of developing the collective confidence of women and ensuring that the struggle against women's oppression occurs; to force those organizations to take up this struggle, sometimes by moving out independently. The organization of such women's formations within the mass organizations is an elementary form of democracy within organizations which are not internally democratic.

But to assert the kind of total and complete distinction between the revolutionary organization and all others, as does the document, is idealist.

First, there *can* be contradictions between the program, leadership and ranks of the revolutionary organization. That is why we have the conception of internal democracy that we do. They may not be *inherent* contradictions, but they can be real enough.

In addition, the unity of interests at the programmatic level is not always fully developed and expressed at a practical level: in intervention, in the daily life of the organization. For example, there are sections which have very little intervention on women's liberation where there are no (or very few) women on leadership bodies, where women comrades have been raped. Even here in Canada, we can look back to the days in the fifties and sixties when the LSA bookstore in Toronto sold pornography.

The revolutionary organization is not immune to the ideology of capitalist society, which does create divisions. Some groups are seen as, and see themselves, as inferior to others. These divisions have not only an ideological basis, but also a material one in capitalist society. Men have a relative privileged position in relation to women, which they tend to defend.

This is why we cannot assume—and it rarely happens—that a dominantly male leadership will be conscious of all the problems faced by women comrades, let alone understand the correct kind of intervention required into the women's movement. Indeed, it would be rather difficult for such a leadership to really com-

prehend the experiences of women members. These are the reasons why we seek to fully integrate women into leadership bodies of the revolutionary organization. Our motivation is based on political necessity, not moralism.

So, inequality already exists between male and female comrades, caucuses do not introduce it. Without a conscious fight, the practice of an organization will be distorted by sexism. We must fight to make the unity of interests as meaningful as possible and not a programmatic abstraction. But we also cannot be idealist. We cannot fully eliminate the inequalities which result from materially different conditions in society. Only a revolutionary transformation creates the possibility for this. However, insofar as sexism acts as a barrier to the revolutionary party adequately fulfilling its political tasks, it must be effectively challenged.

This cannot be done by women in the organization alone. It requires a collective effort by the organization as a whole to overcome. The question becomes: what are the best mechanisms for ensuring that this occurs? The document lists a whole series of measures, all of which are crucial: a) political elaboration and debate. The International text is a very important step forward in this area; b) sustained intervention by the organization on the questions of women's liberation, and especially active participation within the women's movement itself, which plays a very important role in strengthening women comrades; c) the establishment of appropriate women's commissions and fractions to develop and elaborate our practice and program; d) systematic education around the historical, theoretical and political questions concerning women's liberation; e) conscious efforts by all levels of the organization to ensure non-sexist conduct; f) deliberate efforts in the education, political development and leadership training of women comrades. Such preferential methods are necessary to help overcome some of the effects of female socialization. g) Finally, if a serious battle must be waged, the formation of tendencies, or even factions, addressing the situation of women in the organization and/or the organization's intervention.

Where then do caucuses fit in? Many sections of the international do not undertake these measures in anything like a full manner. In some sections, especially where there is no strong women's movement, the programmatic understanding of women's oppression is weak; serious manifestations of sexism have occurred, very serious ones. Even in sections which have a much better record, there is seldom, if every, a high enough level of consciousness of the problems faced by women comrades. And as the sections of the international become larger, especially those that experience rapid growth, there will be many new problems which will develop of this character.

Caucuses are often an important mechanisms by which women comrades begin to express, collectively, their concerns. Sometimes the first mechanism. It can be very

difficult for individual women to raise concerns, especially since the character of women's oppression mitigates strongly against a spontaneous understanding that problems are general and not individual. Caucuses function to identify problems—going beyond the feeling that they are individual, helping to overcome difficulties of expression, feelings of inadequacy and fear of humiliation. They can give confidence, mutual support and synthesize the experiences of women in the organization, in order that the discussion and debate can be carried into the organization as a whole. They can only propose the measure which can be taken to the appropriate leadership and decisional bodies. It must be the task of the whole organization to deal with the problems, through all of the appropriate structures and with the support of men who are in agreement.

The international text refers to the record of caucuses. It says that repeated experiences have shown that caucuses do not help to resolve the problems that led to their formation, that they create centrifugal tendencies. What is the basis for this 'brief' balance sheet? In the RMG this was not true. In the IMG, which recently voted by an overwhelming majority in favour of the right of women to caucus, this does not appear to have been the case. In France, as I understand it, centrifugal tendencies did develop. But was this because of the formation of caucuses or was it because of the existing problems in the section concerning the situation of women and the character of the response. Clearly, one of the results was a major convention of the organization, focusing precisely on the question of the women's liberation work of the section.

If such balance sheets are going to be drawn, we have the right to know on what basis they are being drawn. Certainly, not all of the caucuses which occurred in the RMG were useful. Some were, some were not. But they did not create centrifugal dynamics. If the logic of caucuses in a revolutionary organization is centrifugal, then this would be doubly the case within the unions. Again this does not appear to be the case.

Nevertheless, it *is* the case that caucuses reflect an abnormal situation, a serious failure of the organization to effect the unity of interests in its fullest sense within its own ranks. For this reason I am not arguing that they should be permanent structured mechanisms within the organization. But until the measures listed above can be more or less fully implemented, if that will ever be the case, caucuses can play a positive role in identifying problems and raising debate as to their resolution. Their role should be limited: providing the basis for women to identify their concerns about sexism within the organization, problems with the development and integration of women members, and conceivably, in cases where the organization does not take seriously an intervention around women's liberation, to acknowledge this and make proposals. It's when the role of caucuses is not limited, that centrifugal tendencies can develop.

Women should have the right to caucus, but the recognition of this right has to be accompanied by a

clear understanding of the function which they can fill as a prelude to full discussion within the organization as a whole. They are *not* solutions, rather part of the process of resolution.

Childcare

What does the international text say with respect to this question? First, it explains that "Women members of our organization face special problems, both material and psychological, stemming from their oppression in class society...double day, fewer financial resources, lack of confidence, timidity, fear of leadership. These obstacles to the recruitment, integration and leadership development of women comrades must be discussed and consciously dealt with within the party." The text then points to a series of measures relating to education, political development and leadership training which require conscious attention. (We should note here, that any extra attention to the development of women comrades involves both personnel and financial resources of the organization).

The text goes on to assert that the party cannot be materially responsible for trying to eliminate the economic and social inequalities among comrades, that it cannot try to assure the social services that capitalism does not provide. This is followed by the statement that it is not the responsibility of the party to organize childcare for comrades as a general policy, nor can it impose child-care duties on any comrades. This is qualified with the proviso that "where necessary, leadership bodies should discuss the problem and help the comrades affected to collectively find a solution." (And if there is any ambiguity about the last sentence, in the drafting of the document the point was made clear: that the parents should organize collective solutions.)

The final point that is made is: 'But we will have it at public meetings to make broader social forces conscious of the special problem women face in regard to child care.' No-one has yet explained to me the logic behind dealing with the problem that women with children encounter when we present our public face, but not dealing with it internally.

If we examine the totality of this argument, its inadequacy and its contradiction with the whole of the preceding analysis of the text is rather striking. Some of the arguments have a rather obvious straw character to them.

It is true that the revolutionary organization cannot try to assure the social services that capitalism cannot provide. If it could, if other groupings in society could do likewise, then at least part of the project of the revolutionary organization would be placed in question. No-one is arguing that everyone should pool their wealth and redivide it, that the organization should provide 24 hour child care in order that comrades with children can sell their labour, search for jobs, etc. No-one is arguing that we should attempt to construct a little utopian society in the womb of the old. Thus, in a general sense, the revolutionary organization cannot be materially

responsible for eliminating the economic and social inequalities among comrades.

But the revolutionary organization can, and does, assume responsibility for a whole number of measures relating to the recruitment, integration and leadership development of women comrades, those from oppressed nationalities, etc, which do involve organizational resources. Marline's example of the importance of overcoming illiteracy in some sections is very relevant.

The reasons why we allocate special resources for such cadre development is in order to increase the democratic participation of members of the organization, to maximize the leadership and interventional capacity of the organization. We take such measures precisely because we seek to build an organization which *does* lead the struggles of all of the oppressed and exploited. The reasons are eminently political. If, because of extreme inequalities, we cannot integrate comrades who suffer particular forms of oppression we will not be able to perform the vanguard role to which we aspire.

Concerning the specific question of childcare, the framework must be the same. We all agree that women members face additional problems linked to their activity as militants. That is why we advocate the other measures that are noted in the text. One of the most crucial of these is their responsibility for children, which unlike other aspects of domestic labour, cannot be ignored or left. You can forget about the dirty dishes, but you can't forget about your children. This is the case for both male and female parents, but in situations where two parents are involved, the heaviest burden almost always falls upon the woman.

We cannot eliminate the double day for women with children. What we must recognize is that when parents become militants, in a certain sense this means they have a triple day. They have meetings to attend during that period of the day when their domestic responsibilities must be met. This is the case even in larger organizations where the pace has been reduced.

This heavy burden produces enormous problems for such comrades, no matter how committed they are to the revolutionary project. If we do not address this problem, we will lose many parents as members, especially those who do not have the financial resources to seek alternative forms of childcare. We need only examine the pressures on the few parents who are presently members of the RWL/LOR for the point to be made.

Whatever the revolutionary organization does, whatever responsibility it takes for assisting with childcare, it cannot overcome the fact that the political activity of parents, especially women parents, is necessarily inferior to that of an active militant without children. But what we can do is attempt to make it easier for comrades in such situations to maintain a degree of activity as militants, to fulfill political assignments and feel capable of exercising the basic rights and responsibilities of membership. What we are doing when we help to provide childcare is compensating for the most extreme inequalities which determine the ability of comrades to

be any more than paper members of the organization.

What does this mean about our conception of the kind of organization that we are trying to build? The first thing we have to realize is that the organization that we are trying to construct will not be the same as, will not recruit the same kind of people, as we have experienced in the last 10 years. The vast majority of women members of the organization were recruited as young single militants, many of whom decided not to have children. The few that have, or have been recruited after having children, have encountered serious difficulties.

If we seek to build a mass organization, a proletarian organization, the question of childcare and militantism will become much greater. The masses of workers in this society have children; a growing number of them are single parents. This is a social reality: the existence of a new generation in a society in which the family remains the basic unit responsible for raising children. We are no longer confronted with the question of militants making personal decision to have children after joining, but with the fact that many of the militants we will wish to recruit will already have children.

We will want these militants to be integrated at all levels of the organization, many will be leaders in mass areas of work. Our willingness to assist with childcare in these circumstances has a clear political basis.

For single parents, if we make no effort to assist their being able to participate as militants, they will become inactive or resign. For couples, the burden will fall, in most cases, on the woman. For male parents, whose companions are not members, the burden will fall again on the women—who will then not be very easy to recruit. This reality is reflected again and again throughout the history of the revolutionary movement. For the Bolshevik party the results were obvious. It is not an accident, that where there were children, only the male played a leadership role. Alexandra recruited Trotsky, but *she* stayed in Siberia with the kids.

The difference between then and now is the enormous leap in consciousness on the part of women concerning this issue. Women who radicalize have a very clear understanding of the effects of their domestic burden. And they simply refuse to tolerate it anymore when they become militant. They express this refusal in every arena of struggle; it is increasingly becoming an issue within the unions. It just does not wash to expect that women parents will be content with a relation to the revolutionary organizations which is in complete contradiction to what they demand in other areas of political work. Revolutionary commitment doesn't make one more able to tolerate the inability to be a militant. We do not want to build a revolutionary organization—indeed we will not be *able* to build a revolutionary organization—which is based on a conception that serious revolutionaries have sense enough not to have children.

These are the basic considerations which should provide the framework for the organization making a commitment to attempt to compensate for some of the

most extreme inequalities which determine the ability of comrades to be militants of the organization. Once there is general agreement that childcare assistance is one of the measures which we take to facilitate cadre development and activity, the extent of those measures, and their character becomes a questions of the resources of the organization, taken within the context of other vital tasks.

Let's look briefly at some of the concrete questions. For example, a branch of 10 members with 5 parents cannot possibly provide adequate childcare assistance, especially if the parents themselves are faced with severe financial difficulties. A branch of this size cannot do many things. On the other hand, in Rouen, France, one of the largest industrial implantations of the French section, the organization helped to establish a childcare centre for the children of militants.

Another concrete aspect: from the point of view of the interests of the children *and* the efficient allocation of resources, collective childcare measures are usually more appropriate than those organized around individual households.

Whether we ask comrades to volunteer for childcare, whether we help to pay for professional collective care for major meetings, whether we give individual financial assistance to parents who do not have the resources to even contribute sustainers, etc., all of these questions must be worked out in the concrete on the basis of needs and the resources of the parents and the organization. There are a large variety of possibilities.

On the question of whether comrades should be 'required' to do childcare. This seems to be a rather obscurantist way of posing the debate. We do not force comrades to take assignments which they are opposed to, which they do not have the time to fulfill, which they do not have the ability to perform. But we *do* attempt to politically motivate why comrades should take tasks which the organization has decided are important. And we attempt to find the means whereby they can best fulfill these tasks. If there are comrades who do not wish to do childcare, who are unable to relate to children, it would be senseless from the point of view of both the comrades and children concerned to "require" that they do childcare.

Finally, in order that there be no misunderstanding, whatever measures the organization undertakes to assist with childcare cannot be a substitute for the sustained and vigorous battle which we must wage for the provision of childcare facilities by the state and by the mass organizations of the working class for meetings and activities.

Summary

I want to make four points.

First, with respect to aspects of Josephine's report. Some comrades supported her comments concerning the relationship between the women's movement and the worker's movement, but not very many. I think it's going to be very interesting to find out what is the position of

the comrades in her current on this question. I would like to know (because nobody did defend Josephine's position in a serious way) whether other comrades deny that there *is* a conflictual character to the relationship between the women's movement and the workers movement, and if not, what therefore is the relationship between both movements. If sexism within the working class is simply an ideological import of the bourgeoisie or of the union bureaucracy then it should be easy to eradicate. If sexism is only a problem of the union bureaucracy, then is reformism only a problem of the union bureaucracy? Is national chauvinism among the working class only a problem of the union bureaucracy? If you think this, it raises some very important political questions.

When we say that there is a conflictual *character* to the relationship between the two movements, we are saying that women will have to *fight* to have the working class take up their demands, that the building of an alliance between the two movements, *will take a struggle*. That implies conflict in order to achieve unity. To deny this is to underestimate the strategic importance of the women's movement.

The other aspect of this question is the issue of whether working class men have a relatively privileged relation to working class women, i.e. is there a material basis for sexism. (Here, for the purposes of the edited summary I want to quote from Nadja's comments during the discussion at the plenum.)

"There is, in Josephine's report, the suggestion that there is no material basis for sexism within the working class. As if ideology could exist for centuries without a material base! Without discussing the pre-capitalist developments, today we can say that the relative privilege which males have over females within the working class, consists of the fact that they do not have to carry on the double day of labor, that they have access to jobs to which women do not, and to participation in all forms of public and social life as a result of this social division of labor.

"And these crumbs which they have, are the basis for them continuing to fight for these relative privileges in the absence of a vision which can show them a different way of being and a different kind of interest. This kind of sexism exists within the working class and there is a basis for it *and* it will exist within the revolutionary organization, especially as we proletarianize."

In response to Josephine's critique of my views on sexual repression, which I did not raise in this report. Briefly. A component of the radicalization of women in this rise of the women's movement has been a series of questions relating to the sexual repression of women. *Repression, not oppression*. If you don't understand that there is a close relationship between women's inability to control their fertility and the sexual repression that they then experience, then the Catholic church can explain it to you very easily. The relationship is extremely clear. I am referring here to a struggle by women on a number of levels (which are related) against the repression and

sexual objectification which they face. The struggle includes questions concerning violence against women, sexual harassment, pornography, etc., and also the question of the way in which lesbians are seen.

Josephine says with regard to these issues (except abortion) that there are no transitional demands (or few). That all we can do is get rid of the root causes. Well my question to you is, how long do we wait? It is the mobilized power of the greatest number of women, not only around demands like abortion, but in actions like the Reclaiming the Night demonstrations, even if they only raise limited demands on the state, which are absolutely crucial to asserting a different way of women seeing themselves and being seen by men. And we cannot have a passive relationship to this. We have to debate and discuss it within the workers movement and through the mobilizations of the women's movement. I am not arguing that it is a priority axis of our intervention, but it is an axis which we cannot neglect and most of the sections of the Fourth International have not neglected it. Thirdly, comrade Rossi's comments. She said that she was very pleased that I had made a real shift in my report. My first question to her is: when did I ever say that I didn't agree with any of the points in my report. It's true that the report that I gave in the Toronto branch (and elsewhere) was a different report. I did this because I thought that there were some other, rather central strategic points relating to this document which had to be raised and choices have to be made. The only point on which I have had reluctance, (and I want to be clear on this), is the question of discriminatory layoffs. I worked out my position and put it forward in this report.

Rossi also implies: "Morgan now says it's a priority to get into the unions, she recognizes the centrality of abortion." Josephine knows the kind of reports which I gave to the women's fractions during the tour. She was there, she got bored out of her mind hearing them. She knows that those reports included: the necessity to get our union work together, because we had not been doing it, in spite of the decision which had been made; the need for us to develop a program in order that we could do it effectively; the need for us to be able to use this program not only inside the unions, but also in order that we could talk to women outside the unions about the kind of struggle which has to be made by working class women; the necessity for an abortion campaign. If we want to make these kind of balance sheets, I'm ready to make them.

The comrade also knows that I wrote the Easter plenum text on our women's perspectives which said that it was a priority for us to shift our resources towards our women's liberation work in the unions. Now this same comrade was one of the women's liberation coordinators in Toronto. If she's making a self-criticism on this front, concerning the failure of Toronto to implement those perspectives, fine. It would be more honest than an attack on my positions. This same comrade, supported by other members of T1 also argued against March 8th, a campaign which has considerable potential for

mobilizing union women and which is also a binational campaign. Similarly she argued against the women in the International Women's Day Coalition (who wanted to relate to the struggles of working class women) holding a meeting on unemployment and discussing the programmatic questions involved.

Now, I have a question for the comrades of T1. I've made clear my position on the role that I think that women within the industrial *and* non-industrial sectors of the working class can play in relation to the construction of the women's movement as a whole. I have not yet heard an answer, once, in any debate, about how you *do* conceive of the construction of the women's movement as a whole and what relevance this has in relation to those sectors of unionized women which are dominantly female and which are not in industrial unions. I would like to know your answer and I want to know it in the concrete so that we can have a concrete debate. Do you think we should have any women comrades in that sector. If so, why?

Finally. On the question of the relationship between our union work and our work outside the unions. It's *necessary* for us to maintain a presence in formations like

the IWDC, EWC, etc. We can a) do it as union women and b) in order to do it we have to have a concrete orientation for these women in terms of how they can address the needs of working class women. That means, first of all, an orientation to solidarity struggles and strike support work. On this question, the IWDC has a better record than the RWL. Secondly we must fight for the women in the IWDC to understand that it's through campaigns which will mobilize the largest number of women, and which are taken *in* to the union movement, that we will be able to best build the women's movement. And that involves not only campaigns like abortion, but a whole number of other questions. These women do not yet understand this clearly. Third, it means developing (so that we can discuss with women outside the unions also) a programmatic understanding of the way in which women must take up the struggles within the union movement, against the bosses and against the state. I've tried to begin that process in my report. It also involves discussing proposals like the Working Women's Charter campaign which has been waged in Britain, as a mechanism for unifying women inside and outside the union movement.

