

NOTES

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A thesis for a future study

These two articles are based on group discussions held over the past year. Although highly interpretive, they will give the reader some sense of what a typical discussion is like at the weekly Thursday night meetings.

WORDS FROM ACTIONS: 1968

Speech given in Washington, D.C., to the main assembly of the Jeannette Rankin Brigade on January 15, 1968.

Speech given at a citywide meeting of radical women's groups at the Free University in New York City on February 17, 1968.

Speech given at an abortion repeal rally in New York on March 24, 1968. The rally demonstrated support for the activities of Parents' Aid Society, Hempstead, L.I., and its founder William Baird, in birth-control education, abortion referral counseling, and litigation against laws prohibiting such work.

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THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE U.S.: A NEW VIEW

What does the word 'feminism' bring to mind? A granite-faced spinster obsessed with the vote? Or a George Sand in cigar and bloomers, a woman against nature? Chances are that whatever image you have, it is a negative one. To be called a feminist has become an insult, so much so that a young woman intellectual, often radical in every other area, will deny vehemently that she is a feminist, will be ashamed to identify in any way with the early women's movement, calling it a cop-out or reformist or demeaning it politically without knowing even the little that is circulated about it. Indeed, the few historians of the women's rights movement in the U.S. complain that the records have been lost, damaged, or scattered due to the little value placed on them. Anyone who has ever researched the subject knows how little is available, and how superficial, slanted, or downright false is the existing information.

I would like to suggest a reason for this. It is the thesis of this article that women's rights (liberation, if you prefer) has dynamite revolutionary potential, that the Nineteenth Century WRM¹ was indeed a radical movement from the start, that it was tied up with the most radical movements and ideas of its day, and that even to the bitter end in 1920, there was a strong radical strain which has been purposely ignored and buried. To show this, we will have to dig out and completely review the whole history of the WRM in the U.S., to weigh just what it meant in political terms, and to understand the political and economic interests causing these distortions.

The early Women's Movement was radical. Remember that to attack the Family, the Church, and the Law was no small thing in the Victorian Era. Few people realize what a grass roots movement it was, nor know of the tortuous journeys made by dedicated women into the back woods of the frontiers, and door to door in the towns to speak about the issues or to collect signatures for endless petitions which were laughed right out of the assemblies. In those days, the meagre funds that kept the WRM going were not from wealthy male donors, you can be sure, but were the nickles and dimes of housewives and laundresses. From the beginning the WRM identified itself with women in the working class. Susan Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and several others, the most militant of the movement, appeared as delegates to the National Labor Union Convention as early as 1868, before any attempts to organize female labor had ever succeeded. Other early labor organizers, such as Kate Mullaney or Augusta Lewis, were feminists. This is not to mention the better known radical origins of the WRM in the Abolitionist Movement and in the ideas of women radicals such as Fanny Wright or the Grimke sisters. The Movement was built by women who had literally no civil status under the law, who were pronounced civilly dead upon marriage, or who remained legal minors if they didn't marry, who could not even sign their own wills or have custody of their own children upon divorce, who were not allowed to go to school at all, let alone college, were, at best, equipped with a little knowledge of embroidery, French, or harpsicord as their sole political education, who had no political status or weapons whatever. And yet, today, we hardly remember that less than a century ago, even after the Civil War, more than half of this country's population were still slaves under the law, women by law not owning even the bustles on their backs.

Indeed the Women's Movement from the first was tied up with anti-slavery forces in this country. It was due to their work in the Abolitionist Movement that many women first became aware of their own slavery. It is an added irony that the first Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848 came about as a

¹Women's Rights Movement, sometimes confused with one of its branches, the Suffrage Movement.

result of the ire felt by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton when they were denied seating at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in England in 1840.

Today again, women are beginning to move largely on the inspiration and impetus from the Civil Rights Movement in the Sixties. And indeed the Black Struggle and the Feminine Struggle always seem to run parallel in this country. Both were aborted, their energy drained off, at about the same time, and it is only recently that they have begun to demand to know what happened, to analyze what went wrong and why.

And, just as with black history, there is a suspicious blank in the history books when it comes to the WRM, one of the greatest struggles for freedom this country has known. Little girls are taught to believe that all their rights were won for them a long time ago by a silly bunch of ladies who carried on and made a ridiculous display, all to get that paper in the ballot box.

Why is this? Why are little girls familiar with Louisa May Alcott rather than Margaret Fuller, with Scarlett O'Hara and not Myrtilla Miner, with Florence Nightingale and not Fanny Wright? Why have they never heard of the Grimke Sisters, Sojourner Truth, Inez Milholland, Prudence Crandall, Ernestine Rose, Abigail Scott Duniway, Harriet Tubman, Clara Lemlich, Alice Paul, and many others in a long list of brilliant courageous people? Something smells fishy when scarcely fifty years after the vote was won, the whole WRM is largely forgotten, remembered only by a few eccentric old ladies.

May I suggest the reason for this, why women's history has been hushed up just as Negro history has been hushed up, so that the black child learns, not about Nat Turner but about the triumph of Ralph Bunche, or George Washington Carver and the peanut.

And that is that a real women's movement is dangerous. From the beginning it exposed the white male power structure in all its hypocrisy. Its very existence and long duration were proof of massive large-scale inequality in a system that pretended to democracy. Both the Abolitionist Movement and the Women's Rights Movement, working at times together, at times separately, threatened to tear the country apart, and very nearly did during the Civil War. (If the feminists then hadn't been persuaded to abandon their cause for "more important" issues, i.e. other, men's issues, the history of the Women's Rights Movement might have been different.)

The history of the struggle for suffrage alone is an absolutely incredible account of tooth and nail opposition from the most reactionary forces in America. The work involved to achieve the vote was staggering. Carrie Chapman Catt estimated that:

To get the word "male" out of the Constitution cost the women of this country 52 years of pauseless campaign.... During that time they were forced to conduct 56 campaigns of referenda to male voters, 480 campaigns to get legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters, 47 campaigns to get state constitutional conventions to write woman suffrage into state constitutions, 277 campaigns to get state party conventions to include woman suffrage planks, 30 campaigns to get presidential party conventions to adopt woman suffrage planks in party platforms and 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses.

(Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *WOMAN SUFFRAGE AND POLITICS*, New York, 1923, Chas. Scribners Sons, pg. 107)

Defeat was so frequent and victory so rare, and then achieved only by the skin of

the teeth, that even to read about it is grueling, let alone to have lived through it, or to have devoted oneself to the struggle.

We ought to question this. Is it possible that male chauvinism was the sole cause? Certainly it played a large part, perhaps underlying all the other forces obstructing the movement. Remember that in that period, male power was as taken for granted as once was the Divine Right of Kings, that it was so entrenched, unquestioned, and absolute that even demands for the mildest reforms were dangerous and struck those in power as ludicrous.

However, there was even more to it than that. Eleanor Flexner, in *Century of Struggle* (Atheneum, Harvard U. Press) examines the anti-suffrage forces that fought to such great lengths. She finds several institutions involved in denying the vote to women:

1) **CAPITALISM:** The big industrial states of the North were among the last to give in. Oil, manufacturing, and railroad lobbies worked secretly against suffrage, not only because the big liquor interests were threatened by an early alliance of the Women's Christian Temperance Union with the Suffrage cause, but also because the WRM had from the beginning been identified with the labor reform, and "creeping socialism" in general. Let's not forget that women were and still are a cheap labor supply. The vote could have worked against that. (An interesting fact that Flexner brings out in this connection is that the Women's anti-suffrage committees were a female front for big money interests. Records show that 4/5 of their contributions came from MEN, generally in quite substantial sums. We can credit the women in these groups with being the first organized Aunt Toms.)

2) **RACISM:** The second large bloc to fight woman suffrage to the bitter end was, you guessed it, the Southern States. In those days they openly stated the connection between the black struggle and the feminist struggle that is better disguised today. For, to grant the vote to women would not only enfranchise another HALF of the Negro race, but would call attention to the fact that suffrage was NOT universal. With 51% of the population looking out for corruption at the polls, the 14th amendment might get enforced as well as the 19th.

3) **GOVERNMENT:** "The political machines which were uncertain of their ability to control an addition to the electorate which seemed relatively unsusceptible to bribery, who were militant, and bent on such disturbing reforms as the abolition of child labor, and worst of all, cleaning up politics." FLEXNER, Op. Cit., p. 299.

4) **THE CHURCH & THE FAMILY:** Maybe none of the other causes listed goes so deeply to the root as this one. Judaeo-Christianity has always espoused the inferiority of women, pointing to Genesis for proof of women's temptress nature, her special role, her mission to be fruitful and multiply and after Eden, to multiply the pain and submission to man.

The family unit based on women's responsibility for childrearing, on male supremacy and thus her submission to male authority and the sexual double standard, was severely threatened at its core by any talk of change. After all, who could know at that time that the movement could be stopped with only partial or surrogate freedoms? They saw clearly, that to follow through on Women's rights would mean abolition of the traditional family structure, which certainly gave these men quite a few advantages.

5) **THE LAW:** The facade which reinforced and guaranteed the status quo.

Thus the revolutionary potential of Woman Power was recognized by the men in power as the real threat to their system and, as so often happens, it was recognized more clearly by the enemy than by some of the crusaders themselves. Even with the

Suffrage Association later turning conservative in their obsession with getting the vote at all cost, and in their zeal practically assuring the male power structure that if they were granted the vote they wouldn't USE it, the establishment wasn't convinced. It took 53 years from the first state suffrage referendum in Kansas in 1867 to the final ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920. And even then there was so much stalling that from January 10, 1918, when the amendment was finally passed (by the EXACT 2/3 majority required) it took two years and nine months to get it ratified. And then it passed by only a miraculous two votes. When all else had failed, the losing minority even tried the desperate tactic of crossing the state line into Alabama to prevent a quorum until they could undermine the majority vote.

But though these forces finally appeared to give in, they did so in name only. They never lost. For by that time, the barrage of campaigns, this pooling and concentration of all energy onto the limited goal of suffrage (which in the beginning after all, had been seen only as a preliminary, a weapon with which to wrest real political power) had depleted the Women's Rights Movement. The monster of the vote had swallowed everything else. Three generations had come and gone, the masterplanners were all dead. The later women who had joined in to work for the clear cut issue of the vote had never had time to develop a broader consciousness, to see where the vote fit in. By that time they could hardly remember that there had been anything else to fight for. By the time the Suffrage Movement disbanded the Women's Rights Movement was dead. The opposition had had its way.

For what is the vote worth finally if the voter is manipulated? Every husband knows he's not losing a vote, but gaining one. Today, some 50 years later, women still vote as wives, just as they govern as wives. Lurleen Wallace symbolized the puppet political position women have in this country. Margaret Chase Smith has been the only woman Senator elected independently of any connection with husband or father. And where are the woman mayors? In 1968, Jackie Kennedy correctly told a reporter that "in my family politics are left to the men," while Lady Bird, the highest lady of the land, provides an exemplary model for the young ladies with her concern for Easter outfits and beautiful highways.

Though as often quoted to show progress, one third of all women work, they work in the worst sense of the word; that is, they have merely added a new exploiter to the old one. For they are concentrated in the service occupations, at the bottom rung of the employment ladder, in jobs that no one else will take. As for earnings, latest figures show that even black male workers make more.

The average woman earns approximately \$2,827 annually, a little over half the average man's earnings (\$4,466). Despite the talk about bitchy businesswomen, how many businesswomen do you ever see? How many women in any managerial or decision making position? How many professionals? Ninety five percent of all professionals are still male. Academic opportunities are shrinking, not growing; even the women's colleges and magazines are run by men. Nor does anyone mention the fact that future prospects look even dimmer. The routine jobs that were granted to women, a lollipop to appease their hunger for real and important work, will be the first to go, come automation. Perhaps men will have their way after all, and women will go back to the home they never should have left.

What went wrong? Why did the Women's Rights Movement fail?

1. BY SELLING OUT THE CAUSE FOR "MORE IMPORTANT" ISSUES:

Women, more than any other oppressed group, were easy to convince that their struggle should be delayed for "more important issues." This may be due to the special conditioning which women undergo from the beginning to please rather than disturb - to put the interests of the male or the child above their

own. Whatever the reason, many of them sold out on their own cause too often.

First, in the Civil War, the back of the tough little W.R.M. was broken when the energy of women was channelled into war work. After the war, the movement had to be built up again from scratch. Only the staunchest feminists insisted that the word SEX as well as Color go into the Fourteenth Amendment. The Abolitionists, who had been glad to accept the alliance with women all along, suddenly decided that now it was "the Negro's hour," - that the cause of women was too unimportant to delay for a minute any advances in the liberation of the blacks. Needless to say they had forgotten that HALF of the black race was female, so they sold out their own cause as well. Once again the principle was proved that unless oppressed groups stick together, and on alliances of self-interest rather than do-goodism, nothing can be accomplished in the long run to dismantle the apparatus of oppression. As long as it remains to be used on one group, it can just as easily be employed on another.

Later, in World War I, the same thing happened. Most of the Suffragettes bent over backwards to prove their patriotism. They were sensitive to the charge that they cared more about their own interests than the good of the country. Only the militants kept at it, acknowledging the war only by such slogans as "Freedom Begins at Home." Naturally they were baited for this, and vilified. But they were right in knowing that if they gave up now they would never get the vote. For once, they were needed in the labor force; if only temporarily for the "war effort," and thus they had a certain bargaining position.

They knew that then their citizenship could be questioned by no one, whereas after the war there would be the usual conservative backlash, the attempt to put them back in the home. And indeed it is no accident that the Amendment finally passed when it did, right before the end of the War, in 1918.

In this regard we should keep in mind that revolutions anywhere are always glad to use any help they can get, even from women. But unless women also use the Revolution to further their own interests as well as everyone else's, unless they make it consistently clear that all help given now is expected to be returned, both now and after the Revolution, they will be sold out again and again, just as they were in Algeria.

2. BY SINGLE ISSUE ORGANIZING AS OPPOSED TO ORGANIZING TO RAISE THE GENERAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

Many organizers labor under the illusion that they can "use" an existing, already, "hot" issue to build up their own cause. I think this is a delusion, that in fact it does not save time or effort, but can really set a movement back or even destroy it. To reach the people "where they are at" when they are in the wrong place, is a false approach. Rather, we should be concerned with educating them at all times to the real issues involved. If there ARE real issues, people will catch on soon enough.

An example of this failing in the Women's Rights Movement was the alliance with the Women's Christian Temperance Union. After the Civil War, when the solid base of the W.R.M. had been broken, it seemed opportune to use whatever women's organizations there were as a platform to promote genuine women's issues. The staunchest feminists were against this alliance. Others, notably Frances Willard, argued that she could "use" the temperance issue to further women's rights, since temperance was "where the women were at." It not only failed, but it set back the vote fifty years. Once the W.R.M. became allied in the public mind with the unpopular temperance issue (justly unpopular, I might add); once it was associated, not with freer women, but with a straight-laced, self-righteous Mother, once the big liquor interests stepped in...Well,

the rest is history.

Again, Stanton and Anthony made a mistake merging their radical feminist National Suffrage Association with the timid provincial American Suffrage Association. The National was concerned with the vote only as the means to a much broader end. They were against any type of partial suffrage and favored instead applying pressure on Washington to amend the Constitution. But Stanton and Anthony were getting old, and with many misgivings, they finally merged with the "better organized" American, a single issue organization, devoted strictly to suffrage, and working on the state level. Again, they might have saved fifty years.

Once the pressure was taken off Washington, the Suffrage issue sank into the "doldrums" until years later, when Harriet Stanton Blatch, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's daughter, returned from England with a set of new tactics, and a renewed pressure for the National Amendment, an approach that had lain dormant since her mother's time. It must also be stressed that the later militants were not single-issue oriented like the others. Their strategy was better because they approached the problem fearlessly from a broader perspective.

Again, we can see how this principle operates on the international level as well. Women in socialist countries or situations, such as Russia or the Kibbutz, have been used in the economy, but because a tremendous raising of consciousness did not occur during the revolutionary period, because they were TOO concerned with THE revolution and not THEIR revolution, because their definition of themselves did not change radically but was only reformed on certain ISSUES such as Labor, they found themselves later not only not free, but perhaps in an even worse position. They simply had added certain new jobs to their old ones. Now they work harder.

I would like to conclude from all this, that contrary to what most historians would have us believe, women's rights were never won. The Women's Rights Movement did not fold because it accomplished its objectives, but because it was essentially defeated and mischannelled. SEEMING freedoms appear to have been won. Let's investigate these briefly:

1. SEXUAL Though its true that women wear shorter skirts than they used to, I would suggest that this happened not so much in their interest as because MEN preferred it that way. After all, girls are still sent home from high school in winter for wearing pants to keep their legs warm. Mini-skirts are impractical, requiring constant attention to one's sitting posture, constant emphasis on one's sexual nature. High heels, girdles, garter belts, nylons and all the other trappings of the chic modern woman may appear more natural, but in fact are almost as uncomfortable as the corsets and bustles ever were. For though women may strive for a 'natural' look, they do indeed strive. Girls today are as concerned about 'image' as ever. And they are still sexual objects. Only the styles have changed.

As for sex itself, I would argue that any changes were as a result of male interests and not female. Any benefits for women were accidental. A relaxing of the mores concerning female sexual behavior was to HIS advantage; there was a greater sexual supply at a lower or nonexistent cost. But his attitudes haven't changed much since the good old Professional Whore days.

2. LABOR As stated above, though one third of the women are employed, they have merely taken over the shit jobs. Even when they earn as much as their husbands do, the equal work does not grant them a new equal status in the family; rather,

they are considered to be "helping out." And when they come home, there's still that housework to do, the child care, the cooking of supper. ("The woman's work is never done.") So that here again, the change resulted in male advantage; that is, the woman took over the menial jobs he didn't like, jobs that she had no commitment to, and would give up any time in favor of marriage or babies, if he so desired. (Then he could argue as an employer that he couldn't hire her for the good jobs or give her equal wages for equal work when she'd just turn over and get married.)

3. WOMEN & MONEY This is the one you never hear the end of: How the women control all the bread and spend it on whatever they please. But, the advertisers and manufacturers want it that way, though in their personal lives they will be the first to berate the little woman for spending all that money. It doesn't take much to figure this one out. This is a consumer economy, one that needs fulltime consumers of useless products for its very existence. What better target than a class of semi-educated semi-conscious unhappy people, who also have some access to the budget money? It is no accident that the domestic pages are full of cartoons depicting irate husbands chewing out Big Mama for always going shopping whenever she's unhappy. So let's start putting the blame where it belongs: on that same husband when he's in his office doing market research.

4. LEGAL RIGHTS A Canadian documentary on the Women's Rights Movement, WOMEN ON THE MARCH, showed that the Canadian Supreme Court had once handed down a decision declaring that, no, women were NOT people. Later, there was a lot of fanfare when the decision was reversed. A plaque was even presented to someone, I forget who. And that's about where it's at. Now we are declared human in certain books, but though some legal rights have been won, as with the Negro, it's quite another thing to have them actually enforced. More often they are distorted or even used as grounds for more severe exploitation, i.e. "See what you've done now that we've given you your freedom?"

But such advances so hard won, and yielded with such ill grace, turned out to be a big hoax, and we're finally catching on. There are several important lessons to be learned this time around if we don't want to be subtly subverted again.

To capitulate briefly, these are:

1. Never compromise basic principles for political expediency.
2. Agitation for specific freedoms is worthless without the preliminary raising of consciousness necessary to utilize these freedoms fully.
3. Put your own interests first, then proceed to make alliances with other oppressed groups. Demand a piece of that revolutionary pie before you put your life on the line.

Shulamith Firestone

WOMEN RAP ABOUT SEX

"If you don't want to sleep with him, he assumes you're hung-up and then you have to stay up the whole night anyway convincing him you're not!"

"Yeah, it's almost easier to go to bed and get it over with."

"But see, this emancipation thing has simply become a new line. Don't fall for it!"

"That's easier said than done. I mean, would he ever BELIEVE it was his halitosis, even if you could tell him?"

(Laughter) "'Yeah, buddy, hate to hurt your feelings but you SMELL!'"

(Timidly) "Don't you ever sleep with a guy just because he's lonely?"

"Baby, I don't do charity work for nobody."

"We've got to learn to sleep with people because WE want them, not because THEY want us - not to prove anything to them, not to make them feel better about their masculinity, not out of weakness or inability to say no, but simply because we WANT to."

"Can't you do it just because you're horny?"

"Well, if it's so simply physical, why don't you masturbate? Or go write a poem or something? Why do you have to involve someone else to gratify your needs? We're certainly bitter enough when men exploit us just to satisfy their need . . ."

"But what if you're both horny . . ."

"That's just mutual masturbation. Now, real desire for another person is something else again. I see masturbation as physical need detached from any person."

"Let's talk about masturbation. We always seem to avoid that."

"Do you think we masturbate as much as men, or do we just feel guiltier admitting it?"

"I think we probably masturbate less and confess it less."

"I disagree. I think we masturbate just as much."

"Well, in either case, guilt is the root. The question is why do we feel guiltier? After all, male masturbation is much more freely discussed."

"Maybe we're afraid to take pleasure in our own bodies. We've never really owned them."

"But also - we're afraid of direct pleasure. I mean, this is all inter-related. If our bodies are for the man's pleasure, our pleasure in sex comes only through giving pleasure. There it is, vicariousness again."

"Women don't make love to men. They make love to themselves through the men. It's narcissism."

"Narcissism is just one more type of response to a vicarious sexual role."

"But you know, we miss out. We're kept so busy playing love object, we miss out on masculine beauty."

"You can see that in art, too. It's completely distorted. The only time masculine bodily beauty was celebrated was by the Greeks or Michelangelo, who were homosexual. That's the closest we've come to the female view of the world."

"But there is greater concentration on woman's pleasure in the 20th century, isn't there? All this talk about orgasms and everything?"

"Yeah, well then how come we still don't have them?" (Laughter)

"God, I'm so glad to hear someone admit it! I thought Everyone else had them but me..."

"You know, just asking your partner when it's over, 'Did you come?' isn't the same as being concerned all along."

"Yeah, it's that old 'did you come, did you come, did you come' until you could scream."

"Or until you lie."

"Oh, so you lie too?"

"I really think we ought to examine what's going on. He asks you when it's all over if you came. Well, what good will that do you by then? If you did come, the question is crude; if you didn't, it makes you feel guilty. What's really happening is that responsibility for the failure is being subtly shifted to you so that you'll blame yourself for being frigid instead of blaming him for a bad trip."

"You know that old saying...There's no such thing as a frigid woman, only an insensitive man."

"But can't you just smell the male chauvinism all over that? Man, the great lover, playing on woman like a violin — woman the sensitive instrument. Balzac again. They don't produce our orgasms too, you know."

"Why this obsession with frigidity and orgasms? Frankly, I get bored with the subject."

"Too much Wilhelm Reich going around." (Disgustedly) "All these books and manuals about women written by men."

"Well, I know I'd give up an orgasm in a minute for some good lovin'. Orgasms aren't all there is to it, hell no."

"You know, despite what they say, I believe it does take emotional involvement. And with the present situation..."

"At the risk of sounding naive...I've been listening to this for an hour and no one has mentioned love." (Ferocious laughter)

"Love?"

"God, if I waited to fall in love, I'd be climbing the walls!"

"Yeah, forget love. If you even just like him..."

"Forget like. I'd be happy if I could only respect the guy a little bit."

"Respect — forget it. If you can even talk to him at all, you're lucky."

"Even just small talk. About the morning orange juice."

"If you can even stand to wake up next to him..."

"...can stand having his head on your pillow!" (A shocked silence)

"Do you realize what we're saying? Not only have we been sleeping with guys we don't love, but with guys we positively can't stand."

"What are we doing it for?"

"Well (with a sigh), looks like we're back where we started. Doing it for every reason but the right one."

"This is frightening. I mean, we shouldn't have to give up concern for good relationships to prove we're free."

"Because men really aren't free either. They just like to think they are."

"Yeah, we don't want to become whores like men." (Laughter)

"It's true — sensitive men admit they're unhappy sleeping around. They feel cheap and empty too."

"That Don Juan-Playboy Mystique is just as false as its reverse, the Terrible Tramp."

"But let's not confuse the degree. Sure, they're unhappy too in the role of empty conqueror. But after all, they must get something out of it or things wouldn't be that way."

"A man's sense of personal worth comes through his cocksmanship, in the Playboy mystique. It's the old business of raising your self-image by lowering someone else."

"Well, all we ever got was pure sexual exploitation, pure and simple."

"We should try to get to the roots of this, though. Sheer resentment isn't the answer. Let's look at it. No birth control, right? Women stuck with child-rearing. Who takes the consequences of sex? Women. Therefore who is less eager for sex? Women. Problem: how to get her into bed by any means necessary — without having to worry about a big bunch of kids to support. Well, of course he resorted to lies, seduction, dishonesty. Get it in and get out before you're trapped. O.K. Women wised up. Result: fewer were seducible and the sexual supply went down. The race was on. And in classic, male competitive manner — he who could get it in the most women with the fewest consequences was the winner. It's really very logical."

"Yeah, with the pill now, we have to be careful not to imitate the situation that grew out of all that. We have to liberate ourselves beyond even that sexual pseudo-freedom men supposedly have."

"What a job..."

"They're so damaged, poor bastards. But how can we do it alone? A free woman needs a free man."

(Glumly) "I used to think sex was exciting because if there was going to be a real personality confrontation anywhere, it'd be in bed. But I found out they were as blank in bed as out."

"Sometimes, you know (with a sigh), you'd almost rather play ping-pong."

Shulamith Firestone

THE MYTH OF THE VAGINAL ORGASM

Whenever female orgasm is discussed, a false distinction is made between the vaginal and the clitoral orgasm. Frigidity has generally been defined by men as the failure of women to have vaginal orgasms. Actually, the vagina is not a highly sensitive area and is not physiologically constructed to achieve orgasm. The clitoris is the sensitive area and is the female equivalent of the penis. I think this explains a great many things. First, the so-called frigidity rate among women is phenomenal. Usually we are told that it is our hang-up if we don't have an orgasm and most women accept this analysis. But men are hung up too, and they have orgasms, so I think we must look for causes elsewhere.

What actually happens is this: there is only one area for sexual climax (although there are many areas for general sexual arousal) — the clitoris. *All orgasms are extensions of sensations from this area.* Since the clitoris is usually not directly stimulated in the conventional sexual positions, we are left "frigid." The only other kind of stimulation is purely psychological, the kind of orgasm achieved through fetishes or thinking or dreaming about someone. But this kind of orgasm is *not* caused by friction with the vagina and therefore cannot be considered a vaginal orgasm. Rather, it is a psychologically caused orgasm which manifests itself physically in the clitoris. Of the orgasms that are caused by physical contact with the clitoris, there may be many degrees of intensity, some more localized and some which are more diffuse and sensitive. The physical organ which causes them, however, is the clitoris.

All this leads to some interesting questions about conventional sex and our role in it. Men have orgasms essentially by friction with the vagina, not with the clitoris — which is external and not able to cause friction the way penetration does. Women have thus been defined sexually in terms of what pleases men; our own biology has not been properly analyzed. Instead, we have been fed a myth of the liberated woman and her vaginal orgasm, an orgasm which in fact does not exist.

What we must do is redefine our sexuality. We must discard the "normal" concepts of sex and create new guidelines which take into account mutual sexual enjoyment. While the idea of mutual enjoyment is acknowledged in marriage manuals, it is not followed to its logical conclusion. We must begin to demand that if a certain sexual position or technique now defined as "standard" is not mutually conducive to orgasm, then it should no longer be defined as standard. New techniques must be used or devised which transform our current sexual exploitation.

Anne Koedt

WOMEN OF THE WORLD UNITE —
WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR MEN!

(The following is a "conversation" put together from various comments made by women and men on the subject of women's liberation.)

"Women's liberation doesn't have the immediate importance of black liberation or ending the war in Vietnam — the revolution."

"That statement shows you have no concept of the oppression of women. It's true that women are not being killed off as a group in the great numbers that black people and Vietnamese are, or in such obvious ways. But 10,000 women die each year from abortions because the men who run this country have decided that a woman may not control her own body. Women are dehumanized and put into service roles like black people. More of us can "make it" economically, if we are willing to prostitute ourselves as wives of upper or middle-class men. House niggers. But basically we are economically exploited, psychologically oppressed and socially kept in 'our place' by men and by a capitalist system that has institutionalized male supremacy—in a more subtle way than the cave-man but just as destructively."

"But other people are more oppressed than you."

"That may or may not be. It seems rather futile to argue about who is the most or more oppressed. If you're being stepped on, you don't stop to argue about whether the foot on your neck is heavier than the one on the neck of somebody else. You try to free yourself. And where it's the same foot, you work together. There may be several things holding you down at once. If you're a woman, it's men and the capitalist system. If you're a black woman, it's also racism."

"Are you saying that women shouldn't fight in other struggles?"

"Of course not. Women will never be free in this country as it now exists because nobody can be. So you have to fight to change the whole thing. But we could change the economic system and women could still be victims of male supremacy, just as black people could still be victims of racism. To assure that this doesn't happen, women have to organize themselves to fight male supremacy."

"You make a lot of analogies to the black movement. How do you see your relationship to black women?"

"At the moment, our group is largely white. Occasionally a black woman will come to meetings and that's great. Our meetings are open to all women. However, there is a reluctance on the part of white women to assume that black women want to be part of an 'integrated' group. We figure black women may want to get together themselves first. Furthermore, we're all sisters but some of our problems are different. Many militant black women see their struggle as a fight alongside their men for survival; some say that only middle-class white women can afford to worry about their freedom as women. Some non-white women are beginning to organize on the woman issue, however, so apparently there isn't complete rejection of the idea. Hopefully all women will eventually be able to get together and fight for certain programs. This should result in a lessening of white supremacist attitudes, too, as white women get together with non-white women around similar needs. We will fight such racist practises as using maids to do the personal dirty work that men should be sharing equally with us."

"But women don't have it so bad. There are women doctors, lawyers, architects. Women are in almost all the fields open to men."

"Almost is a big word. Besides, the number of women in creative and well-paying jobs is very limited. There are black legislators, lawyers, doctors and even a black man on the U.S. Supreme Court, too, but that doesn't make the masses of black people less oppressed. Also, women get lower pay for the same jobs and they have to work harder to rise in those jobs—just as black people do."

"Don't you know women control most of the wealth in this country? They also control individual men, not overtly but indirectly. Women have the real power, baby."

"First of all, we don't want to wield power as it is wielded under the present system—to oppress, to destroy people's humanity. But even if we did, we don't have anything like real power. Much of that wealth is held by women nominally, for tax purposes. They don't make decisions about it. They aren't on the corporation boards of directors. They don't run industry, the military machine, the governmental structures. It may be true that women exert forms of indirect control over individual men, and it's an ugly phenomenon. Women manipulate 'behind the scenes' and use 'feminine wiles' because most of them have been denied the chance even to think of themselves wielding power openly. Look how managers go through all sorts of changes with male workers if they put a woman in a position of authority. 'Feminine wiles' is a product of women's struggle for survival—it's a plastic sword, a paper tiger, phoney, nothing. It's devoid of self-respect."

"But men are exploited, too. They do mostly unrewarding work. They are not allowed to be full human beings either."

"True. But men still oppress women. So in addition to fighting to change the capitalist system, women must also fight for recognition of their humanity."

"It sounds like you hate men."

"When a man says that, it's a self-defense tactic—trying to put feminists in a hate bag, the way whites do to black militants. When a woman says it, it's usually because she doesn't see her own oppression. She doesn't see that she lives in a world of male supremacy, not limited to the U.S.A. or to the capitalist system. From the beginning of history, women have usually been seen by men—and therefore by themselves—as the lesser of the sexes. In periods of economic necessity, women have been allowed out of the home but quickly put back when that need ended...and told that's where they always belonged. The ideas are so old that it's no surprise women cannot see what has happened to them."

"Are you trying to be like men, then?"

"Our demand is not for equality. Who wants to be like men! We are trying as women to define ourselves. We not only reject the definitions that men have given us, but reject becoming like men."

"Your ideas may be all right for you personally, but why must you impose a particular life style on other women? Some women really want to serve a man in the traditional way; they just naturally want to be housewives."

"That sounds like the 'happy slave' argument for the South—a great rationalization for continuing oppression. There are at least two things wrong with your point. First, no woman in a modern Western society has grown up in the absence of

lifelong pressure to seek submissiveness, to want to be a housewife, to define herself in terms of the dominant male society. So no one can say for sure that such attitudes and goals are innate in women, that they come 'naturally.' Women have never had a chance to find out what they really want; no one knows what a woman would choose if she were free psychologically and technically.

In the second place, it doesn't seem really probable that anyone would want to be no more than a housewife if all other avenues were open. Housework is uncreative, no matter what the mass media say about it in their relentless drive to sell a new cake mix or floor wax. Anyone who has ever done that kind of work for an extended period knows it is endless, repetitious drudgery with—worst of all—no relevance to the larger human community. It provides a pathetic sense of being needed, of identity, to many women. But anyone who thinks she feels good as she surveys her kitchen after washing the 146,789th batch of sparkling dishes isn't being 'natural'; she's literally lost her mind."

"Hey, I know a lot of men who wash dishes. Haven't you ever met a hen-pecked husband? Or just a nice guy who believes in helping?"

"Man, that dish-washing argument has moth-holes by now. The point is that such actions, no matter how much better than the man who won't do anything in the house, don't alter the assignment of roles. Housework remains the woman's job and then the man 'helps.' If men started staffing nursery schools, that might reflect a real change in attitudes and roles. But the same man who will wash dishes wouldn't be caught dead in a job taking care of very young children—unless he could dress it up as some kind of sociological experiment. Listen, children should have an alternative also—to be cared for by men or women, or both."

"If giving women all possible alternatives includes the choice never to have children, what happens to the human race?"

"Society cannot lay the responsibility for continuing the race solely on women. If there is any responsibility here, it's the responsibility of society to offer women all possible choices by developing new technology for continuing the species in other ways—so that the task not be unilaterally imposed on women."

"But what about the women who say that giving birth was the most extraordinary experience of their lives—would you deny them that?"

"It's true that some women say that. Others find childbirth exciting but no more so than various other experiences. Some women begin to enjoy children only when the kids attain a more developed humanness. It seems possible that those who find childbirth their most outstanding experience haven't yet had access to other experiences. Again, what we want is a society in which women who want to try it can do so and those who don't can not try it without being made to feel guilty, inadequate, 'unfulfilled.' "

"Are you also advocating an end to families—putting all kids in nurseries? Kids need mother love or they'll grow up neurotic."

"'Love' is a word screaming for redefinition. In sexual relationships, it often means dependency; it's a weapon for control, it's someone making an object out of someone else in order to satisfy ego and security needs. People become a kind of very elaborate, expensive furniture in each other's lives. 'Mother love' can usually be translated as a woman finding her identity through another person. That's a terrible burden on the child, with each generation transferring the burden on to the next. It's also a paralysis of the woman's human development.

We believe that there is such a thing as humanistic love; that everyone needs to experience it; that you cannot love if you have not had the experience of being loved. But there is little social history to prove that the conventional, nuclear family produces such love—that it produces the happiest people. It usually turns out lonely runners in a rat-race rather than members of a human community. Its essence is like that of capitalism; it projects children as possessions and as the responsibility of individuals. But children are as much the possession and responsibility of the community as the land, the waters, the air and all resources available to man through nature.

Just what new forms should replace today's nuclear family—a combination of social and private care, totally socialized care, the extended family or whatever—is not for us to determine. Men too have a responsibility for working that out. More important, we reject the idea that women must come up with a perfect formula for the human race before their demands for liberation are met. We want to get The Man off our backs; don't expect us to guarantee him a comfy chair to sit in after ward."

"Well, even if that's all true, don't you think life would be duller without the spark of sexual difference? Don't you secretly dig the kinds of little tensions between men and women?"

"Yeah, yeah—flirting is fun. A man opens a door for me, I thank him, he smiles—and electricity ripples through us both. A year later, I'm flushing out a diaper and he's opening other doors."

"No, I don't mean only lovers—just men and women working together, for example. There's something special about the relationship which doesn't exist between two people of the same sex unless they're homosexual."

"That's still the undercurrent of conquest. Of course there are differences between men and women. But when men bring them up, it's usually with some form of inferiority in the back of their minds."

"Ho hum. Well, what's your program?"

"If there is anything we can learn from the black liberation movement, it is that the primary job is consciousness-raising. Malcolm X said it about black people in 1964 and it's equally true for us:

"You can't give a people a program until they realize they need one, and until they realize that all existing programs aren't...going to produce...results. What we would like to do...is to go into our problem and just analyze...and question things that you don't understand so we can...get a better picture of what faces us. If you give people a thorough understanding of what it is that confronts them, and the basic causes that produce it, they'll create their own program."
(from "At the Audubon", MALCOLM X SPEAKS)

It is amazing how quickly we have been able to affect the consciousness of some women already. They see themselves as members of a group for the first time instead of believing their problems to be individual. Then they say, "Hey, I like women!" And that's a real breakthrough."

"Well, I still think most women want things the way they are. They may demand equal pay or less drudgery but they still want to have the same kinds of personal relationships with men that people have had for centuries. It's in nature."

"A lot of women who say they just want to play the traditional roles are simply fearful—or unable to imagine other ways of being. Old roles can seem to offer a certain security. Freedom can seem frightening—if one has learned how to achieve a certain degree of power inside the prison. We don't seek to impose anything on women but merely to open up all possible alternatives; we do seek choice, as one of the functions which makes people human beings. We want to be free people, crippled neither by law or custom or our own chained minds. If there is no room for that in nature, then nature must be changed."

"Well, all I can say is you must be a bunch of lesbians."

"That's the one people always pull out last. It's the kind of tactic the ruling class uses when it feels threatened by anyone who challenges it. Queer-baiting is no different from Red-baiting. Let's deal with the issues."

Carol Hanisch
and
Elizabeth Sutherland

WOMAN AS CHILD — Notes from a Meeting

The Radical Women of New York, formed for discussion and action on the subject of women's oppression and liberation, has adopted the following outline for its consideration over the next few months: Woman as Child; Woman as Adolescent; Woman as Student; Woman as Single Woman; Woman as Worker; Woman as Head of Household; Woman as Wife; Woman as Mother; Woman as Aged; Woman in Male Power Structure; Woman in Capitalism; Woman in Socialism; Woman in Revolution. There have been four crucial questions raised in each of the discussions: Woman as Sex Object; Economic Dependence/Independence of Woman; Female Inferiority: Male propagation — Female internalization; In whose interest is Woman's oppression. The following is a summary of ideas raised at a group meeting during the first discussion of Woman as Child.

The group began by considering prenatal prejudices — that is, concepts and preferences parents may have about the sex of their children even before the children are born. In a discussion of reasons many parents would prefer to have a male child, especially for their first, several feelings and myths emerged. Among them were:

1. A "royal" image and tradition of the male child as the continuation of the family line and name. This is closely connected to the fact that -
2. Both men and women are prejudiced against women, think men more interesting, exciting and real; and feel that a family of women is weak, dull and somehow unimportant.
3. A woman who regards the lot of women as hard might fear to bring another sufferer into the world.
4. Girls, as they grow older, require more care than boys, and remain dependent longer on their parents. This feeling is of course partly based on the very real advantages men have as wage earners. But the group was interested in why the feeling persists even in families where a daughter would not, theoretically, be more of an economic liability than a son.

5. A boy should be the oldest sibling—the second head of the family.
6. A daughter may appear as a sexual competitor to her mother in a Freudian sense.

Some parents, probably not many, would prefer a girl. A woman might feel that she knows women better than men and would therefore feel closer to a daughter than to a son. A man might fear that he would eventually end up competing with a son in one way or another, and would therefore like to have a daughter and avoid this complication. (The assumption here, of course, is that women are naturally subordinate to and supportive of men so that the parent-child relationship between father and daughter could remain relatively unchanged even as the daughter became an adult.

Still another reason some parents would prefer a daughter to a son is the prevailing assumption that little girls are easier to take care of than little boys; that they are more docile, more verbal, less aggressive, less active and generally less trouble than boys. Since the existence of innate temperamental differences between boys and girls is difficult to prove, in view of their differential treatment at an early age, the group began to examine some environmental influences on girls which might account both for parental expectations and for the eventual realization of these expectations.

In general, certain kinds of behavior are systematically discouraged in girls that may be tolerated or even encouraged in boys. One such type of behavior is the overt expression of hostility and aggression. Because anger and hostility seem to be important feelings in children (not to mention adults) and their expression an important aspect of self-expression, the more severe curbing of aggressive behavior in little girls is actually a suppression of their sense of self. One possible result of this suppression may be the development of more covert expressions of hostility (bitchiness) and, perhaps, more verbal expression in general.

Little girls are further inhibited by being encouraged, more than boys, to keep themselves clean and quiet. Their concept of themselves as doers and explorers is thus diminished, preparing them for later roles as spectators and sexual objects.

In boys, boisterous and even eccentric behavior can be tolerated as expressions of manliness and individuality, while girls tend to gain approval more by looking pretty and by conforming to certain adult standards of deportment. This may make girls less confident in themselves and create in them a greater need for outside approval at an early age. Because their aggressive, explorative and adventurous tendencies have been more severely suppressed (that is, these certain aspects of self have been rejected) their sense of their own worth is subverted, and they must rely more heavily on others to help reestablish it.

The question of how these "others" come primarily to mean men is probably a good one for discussion of woman as adolescent.

Jennifer Gardner

THE JEANETTE RANKIN BRIGADE: WOMAN POWER?

A lot of energy and a good few months of our early formation period were spent preparing an appropriate action for the Brigade peace march in Washington, D.C., the largest gathering of women for a political purpose since the heyday of Jeanette Rankin (the first woman elected to Congress from Montana in 1919). The Brigade was a coalition of women's groups united for a specific purpose: to confront Congress on its opening day, Jan. 15, 1968, with a strong show of female opposition to the Vietnam War.

However, from the beginning we felt that this kind of action, though well-meant, was ultimately futile. It is naive to believe that women who are not politically seen, heard, or represented in this country could change the course of a war by simply appealing to the better natures of congressmen. Further, we disagreed with a woman's demonstration as a tactic for ending the war, for the Brigade's reason for organizing AS WOMEN. That is, the Brigade was playing upon the traditional female role in the classic manner. They came as wives, mothers and mourners; that is, tearful and passive reactors to the actions of men rather than organizing as women to change that definition of femininity to something other than a synonym for weakness, political impotence, and tears.

So that we came as a group not to appeal to congress, but to appeal to women not to appeal to congress. Rather we believed that such a massive gathering should be used to devise ways to build up *real* political strength.

To drive this home, we felt that a dramatic action would be least offensive and most effective. In addition to a speech written and delivered to the main body of the convention on Jan. 15, and reprinted below, we staged an actual funeral procession with a larger-than-life dummy on a transported bier, complete with feminine getup, blank face, blonde curls, and candle. Hanging from the bier were such disposable items as S & H Green Stamps, curlers, garters, and hairspray. Streamers floated off it and we also carried large banners, such as "DON'T CRY: RESIST!" Kathy Barrett of the Pageant Players, a New York street theatre group, worked with others on simple but effective costumes for the funeral entourage. We had a special drum corps with kazoo, and a sheet of clever songs written by Beverly Grant and others. Peggy Dobbins wrote a long funeral dirge lamenting woman's traditional role which encourages men to develop aggression and militarism to prove their masculinity. There were several related pamphlets, including one written by Kathie Amatniek which elaborated on the following progression:

TRADITIONAL WOMANHOOD IS DEAD.

TRADITIONAL WOMEN WERE BEAUTIFUL...BUT REALLY POWERLESS.

"UPPITY" WOMEN WERE EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL...BUT STILL POWERLESS

SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL!

HUMANHOOD THE ULTIMATE!

Finally, by way of a black-bordered invitation, we "joyfully" invited many of the 5,000 women there to attend a burial that evening at Arlington "by torchlight" of Traditional Womanhood, "who passed with a sigh to her Great Reward this year of the Lord, 1968, after 3,000 years of bolstering the egos of Warmakers and aiding the cause of war...."

The message inside read:

Don't Bring Flowers...Do be prepared to sacrifice your traditional female roles. You have refused to hanky-wave boys off to war with admonitions to save the American Mom and Apple Pie. You have resisted your roles of supportive girl friends and tearful widows, receivers of regretful telegrams and worthless medals of honor. And now you must resist approaching Congress playing these same roles that are synonymous with powerlessness. We must not come as passive suppliants begging for favors, for power cooperates only with power. We must learn to fight the warmongers on their own terms, though they believe us capable only of rolling bandages. Until we have united into a force to be reckoned with, we will be patronized and ridiculed into total political ineffectiveness. So if you are really sincere about ending this war, join us tonight and in the future.

Later, 500 women split off in disgust from the main body of the convention to call a counter congress. Although predictable under the circumstances, nevertheless it was unexpected. We were not really prepared to rechannel this disgust, to provide the direction that was so badly needed. There was chaos. The women were united only in their frustration, some calling for militancy of any kind at that late date, others for more organization for the future. They were all keenly disappointed, and fully aware of their impotence.

It was a great moment. But we lost it. And we learned the value of spontaneity, of quick and appropriate political action, the value of learning to size up a situation and act on it at once, the importance of unrehearsed speaking ability. For I think one good guiding speech at the crisis point which illustrated the *real* causes underlying the massive discontent and impotence felt in that room then, would have been worth ten dummies and three months of careful and elaborate planning.

The measure of that impotence was the very fact that the number of marchers was, for the first time in years, accurately reported: the march was no threat at all to the Establishment. By the same token general coverage of such a large march was slight or nonexistent, handled by minor reporters who had to work or wring some human interest value or slight sexual titillation from the fact that a few younger women could be spotted at this dull and hennish hotel teaparty. But where minor reporters failed, *Ramparts* succeeded. They had to use odd agile photography, distorted quotations, and a whole lot of incorrect facts, granted, but succeed they did. (Even *LIFE* couldn't have done better, had they been interested in trying.)

Letters of protest poured in from women in radical groups around the country. But *Ramparts* just chuckled, patted the little women on the cheek, published a few (out of context) and went on its more important radical business.

Despite all this discouragement and the small returns on all our labors, the Washington experience was not entirely wasted. We learned alot. We found out where women, even the so-called "women radicals" were *really* at. We confirmed our worst suspicions that the job ahead, of developing even a minimal consciousness among women, will be staggering, but we also confirmed our belief that a real women's movement in this country will come, if only out of the sheer urgent and immediate necessity for one.

Shulamith Firestone

FUNERAL ORATION FOR THE BURIAL OF TRADITIONAL WOMANHOOD

You see here the remains of a female human being who during her too long a lifetime was a familiar figure to billions of people in every corner of the world. Although scientists would classify this specimen within the genus species of *Homo sapiens*, for many years there has been considerable controversy as to whether she really belonged in some kind of *sub*-species of the genus. While the human being was distinguished as an animal who freed himself from his biological limitations by developing technology and expanding his consciousness, traditional womanhood has been recognized, defined and valued for her biological characteristics only and those social functions closely related to her biological characteristics.

As human beings, both men and women were sexual creatures and they shared their sexuality. But the other areas of humanity were closed off to traditional womanhood...the areas which, as has already been noted, were more characteristically human, less limited by biology. For some reason, man said to woman: you are less sexual when you participate in those other things, you are no longer attractive to me if you do so. I like you quiet and submissive. It makes me feel as if you don't love me, if you fail to let me do all the talking...if you actually have something to say yourself. Or else, when I like you to be charming and well-educated...entertainment for me and an intelligent mother for my children...these qualities are for me and for me alone. When you confront the world outside the home—the world where I operate as an individual self as well as a husband and father—then, for some reason, I feel you are a challenge to me and you become sexless and aggressive.

If you turn me off too much, you know, I'll find myself another woman. And if that happens, what will you do? You'll be a nobody, that's what you'll be. An old maid, if I haven't deigned to marry you yet. A divorced woman...with some children, no doubt. Without me, you won't even have your sexuality anymore, that little bit of humanity which I have allowed you. And even if you manage to solve that problem in some kind of perverse way, it's going to be hard for you.

What kinds of jobs can you get to keep yourself in comfort? I control those few interesting, challenging ones. And I control the salaries on all the other kinds of jobs from which my fellow men who work at them will at least get the satisfaction of more *pay* than you. And I control the government and its money which, you can bet your tax dollar, isn't going to get allotted for enough good nursery schools to put your children into so you can go out to work. And because of all these things, there can always be another woman in my life, when you no longer *serve* my needs.

And so traditional Womanhood, even if she was unhappy with her lot, believed that there was nothing she could do about it. She blamed herself for her limitations and she tried to *adapt*. She told herself and she told others that she was happy as half a person, as the "better half" of someone else, as the mother of others, powerless in her own right.

Though Traditional Womanhood was a hardy dame, the grand old lady finally died today—her doctor said, of a bad case of shock. Her flattering menfolk had managed to keep her alive for thousands of years. She survived the Amazon challenge. She survived the Lysistrata challenge. She survived the Feminist challenge. And she survived many face-liftings. She was burning her candle at one end on a dull wick and she went out slowly, but she finally went...not with a bang but a whimper.

There are some grounds for believing that our march today contributed to the lady's timely demise and this is partly the reason we have decided to hold her funeral here.

The old hen, it turns out, was somewhat disturbed to hear *us*—other women, that is—asserting ourselves just this least little bit about critical problems in the world controlled by men. And it was particularly frightening to her to see other women, we women, asserting ourselves together, however precariously, in some kind of solidarity, instead of completely resenting each other, being embarrassed by each other, hating each other and hating ourselves.

And we were even attempting to organize ourselves on the basis of power...that little bit of power we are told we have here in America...the so-called power of wives and mothers. That this power is only a *substitute* for power, that it really amounts to nothing politically, is the reason why all of us attending this funeral must bury Traditional Womanhood tonight. We must bury her in Arlington Cemetery, however crowded it is by now. For in Arlington Cemetery, our national monument to war, alongside Traditional Manhood, is her natural resting place.

Now some sisters here are probably wondering why we should bother with such an unimportant matter at a time like this. Why should we bury Traditional Womanhood while hundreds of thousands of human beings are being brutally slaughtered in our names... when it would seem that our number one task is to devote our energies directly to ending this slaughter or else solve what seem to be more desperate problems at home?

Sisters who ask a question like this are failing to see that they really do have a problem as women in America...that their problem is social, not merely personal... and that their problem is so closely related and interlocked with the other problems in our country, the very problem of war itself...that we cannot hope to move toward a better world or even a truly democratic society at home until we begin to solve our own problems.

How many sisters failed to join our march today because they were afraid their husbands would disapprove? How many more sisters failed to join us today because they've been taught to believe that women are silly and a women's march even sillier? And how many millions of sisters all across America failed to join us because they think so little of themselves that they feel incapable of thinking *for* themselves...about the war in Vietnam or anything else. And if some sisters come to conclusions of their own, how many others of us fail to express these ideas, much less argue and demonstrate for them. because we're afraid of seeming unattractive, silly, "uppity." To the America watching us, after all, we here on this march are mere women, looking silly and unattractive.

Yes, sisters, we have a problem as women alright, a problem which renders us powerless and ineffective over the issues of war and peace, as well as over our own lives. And although our problem is Traditional Manhood as much as Traditional Womanhood, we women must begin on the solution.

We must see that we can only solve our problem together, that we cannot solve it individually as earlier Feminist generations attempted to do. We women must organize so that for man there can be no "other woman" when we begin expressing ourselves and acting politically, when we insist to men that they share the housework and child-care, fully and equally, so that we can have independent lives as well.

Human qualities will make us attractive then, not servile qualities. We will want to have daughters as much as we want to have sons. Our children will not become victims of our unconscious resentments and our displaced ambitions. And both our daughters and sons will be free to develop themselves in just the directions they want to go as human beings.

Sisters: men need us, too, after all. And if we just get together and tell our men

that we want our freedom as full human beings, that we don't want to live just through our man and his achievements and our mutual offspring, that we want human power in our own right, not just "power behind the throne," that we want neither dominance nor submission for anybody, anyplace, in Vietnam or in our own homes, and that when we all have our freedom we can truly love each other.

If men fail to see that love, justice and equality are the solution, that domination and exploitation hurt everybody, then our species is truly doomed; for if domination and exploitation and aggression are inherent biological characteristics which cannot be overcome, then nuclear war is inevitable and we will have reached our evolutionary deadend by annihilating ourselves.

And that is why we must bury this lady in Arlington Cemetery tonight, why we must bury Submission alongside Aggression. And that is why we ask you to join us. It is only a symbolic happening, of course, and we have a lot of real work to do. We have new men as well as a new society to build.

Kathie Amatniek

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF RAMPARTS MAGAZINE

Dear Sirs:

I take offense and serious objection to the tone of your article on "Women Power," in the February 1968 issue. Your attitude was condescending throughout, and your analysis of radical women's groups, including the "Women's Liberation Front" (a misnomer—radical women have not, to my knowledge, agreed to call themselves a "Front") amounted to a movement fashion report.

"The Miniskirt Caucus," the section describing the younger women radicals, treated them with the same approach that a society columnist might. Emphasizing clothes, personalities throughout, the authors never dealt with thought, action, or political content. The article was even replete with stylish photos: Ruby Dee, Leslie Parish, and an obviously model-posed picture of Marilyn Webb and Anne Scheer—I had to take a second look at the cover to make sure I wasn't buying *Glamour*. Clothes do not make the woman, but it is obvious that the playing up of fashions with regard to women perpetuates their status as sexual objects, and this is the basic form of oppression women must struggle against.

Your glorification of the Establishment ideal is completely bewildering. "Besides having a sense of Establishment chic and style, the Brigade ladies are *frighteningly* (my own italics) businesslike." The term "frighteningly" here reveals the threat posed by women breaking out of pre-established social roles, even through doing something as mild-mannered as appearing businesslike. The duty of a radical publication, far from encouraging establishment behavior, is to promote the shattering of social molds, and the substitution of new liberating thought, action, and life-styles.

The most revolting reportage and analysis came under the title "The Radicalizing of the Religious Woman." Here the rationale of women being psycho-physiologically different from, and inferior to men is reiterated. "This sense of the *simplistic* ability of women to clean up the mess of the world...pervades the thoughts of the Brigade women. It is such an *instinctive, irrational* feeling that it makes real sense...." (italics my own).

In short, radical change in America can be effected by pitching irrational, instinc-

tive women against "the chaotic, male-dominated society."

Included in the article are many references which reinforce the patronizing attitude of its authors. The beginning is possibly the most obnoxious—"A late afternoon mist clung like a corset to the backcountry highway." the conception of the idea of the Washington demonstration as a pregnancy and its birth "nine months later." Also the traditional imagery of a little old lady batting someone over the head with an umbrella is used in reference to Rankin's stance against government warmakers. You might as well have talked about "coons" eating watermelons. Whether these references are used deprecatingly or with complete ignorance of the oppression of American women makes no difference—they imply prejudice and a corresponding political naivete.

This prejudice against the "second sex" is all the more difficult to realize and combat because it is highly exploited by the fashion industry, because it is reinforced by universal sexual frustration, and because the problem has never been subjected to an in-depth analysis and a vision of the liberated woman has never been created. Being kind, I say that your article makes no contribution in this field—a field where radical research is sorely needed.

Besides the reactionary political approach, the authors make a historical blunder. HUAC, they say, was dealt its death blow in 1964 when Dagmar Wilson presented flowers to its committee members. In fact, the Berkeley eruptions of 1964 were far more significant in exposing the fascist nature of HUAC. The only reason the story was brought up was to demonstrate how "cute" women can be when dealing with the government. The authors applaud Wilson's use of the traditional concept of Womanhood as being passive, and gentle. By presenting flowers to the men, she made them realize that women in this country were incapable of posing any serious threat to the system; the case against Women's Strike being dismissed immediately thereafter.

Certainly as long as American women keep floundering in their "fragile" approach to themselves, life and the U.S. government, they will never develop the human hardiness which is necessary for the long struggle ahead.

Lynn Piartney

ABORTION RALLY SPEECH

I would like to address this speech to those women, and there are few enough here, who had the guts to show up at this rally. There are many many more out there who could not make it. Many who are afraid to take a stand on an issue as important as their own self determination. Many who are terrified even to express support for a man who did more than merely support them, but a man who took the risks that they should have taken.

For Bill Baird now faces the absurd ten year jail sentence that really we women should have to face, if anyone must.

But I didn't come to excoriate other women. For I must confess that even I after months of work in women's liberation, had my fears about coming out openly for free abortion. Before hundreds of people? Perhaps to be quoted? God, what would my father think?

Let's face it. Woman is scared shitless. And she has good reason to be! She has been told to shut up and stop talking a million times. On a higher level, when she expressed concern for personal relationships she is told haughtily that she is too subjective, too wrapped up in her own problems. If she dares to have a self, she is termed selfish, and unfeminine. If she dares to have an opinion, she is called shrewish and opinionated. She has been told to stay at home, where she belongs, and not to meddle in important affairs, to "leave the driving to us."

Now, how can we be surprised that this woman has chosen to stay at home today? Oppressed, suppressed, depressed and repressed all her life, we can hardly now expect to find her here standing up for herself against that huge male power structure which has always put her down, the awesome authority of which she well knows.

How can we now expect that she be here, when that life-long intimidation in her is so deep-rooted that even if you put her in solitary for twenty years she wouldn't dare to *think* un-kosher thoughts or to question her position in this society. For she has internalized its values, she has accepted, and indeed in many cases she has *become*, its low estimate of her human worth.

But despite all this, the need for an abortion frequently starts a woman thinking. And let us not kid ourselves, it is not a distant Aunt who faced this problem. We ourselves do. And if by some accident, any of you women here at the rally have avoided it, you can count yourselves lucky or bless the pill. For you know as well as I that you are the exception and not the rule. Think about your female friends. I'll bet you that those of them who have had the problem outnumber those who haven't.

So we have a young woman faced with an unwanted pregnancy; if she doesn't act fast, she knows that nothing short of a miraculous miscarriage can save her from the frightening prospect of twenty years of unprepared-for childbearing, that will necessarily be, in this society, entirely on her shoulders.

In all good faith and trust she will approach her man first. Shocking what she is likely to hear, and many do, is a complete denial, something on the order of "Hell, no, it ain't mine." If she's lucky, or higher class, he may choose to assume some responsibility: that is, he will send her to an illegal doctor, perhaps help her to scrape together some money if she has none. Sometimes he will grudgingly even marry her, in which case she will never hear the end of it. And if she doesn't hear about it explicitly, she will have to be doubly grateful to him, reinforcing her already dependent position.

And if she is already married, and surprisingly, most women in this position are, her lot is not much better. She will be stuck with the full responsibility for rearing an unwanted child, but to rebel against this is to face grave personal danger, financial extortion, illegal action, blame and the resulting guilt feelings.

In all these cases the woman finds that even if the man helps her, he is helping her with HER problem, not THEIR problem, that in the end she is the one who must take the risks and pay the price for their mutual relationship with blood. And the same men exclude her from the lawmaking process which decides her fate! Think about it! How many women represent you in the law-making bodies of this country? The few that there are are not chosen as women, but as wives, wives of this or that man, or because of their reactionary politics. It is a grand convention of dogs deciding the fate of cats. And now the Blumenthal Bill comes around, providing loop-holes in the male law. So! Some dogs have decided that certain cats should be allowed to break their rules. Well, thanks. But, sir, we're getting tired of all this gratitude. We're tired of *having* to feel grateful, like house servants glad that at least they are not the field hands out there picking cotton. Who gave you lawmakers the right to make us *have* to feel gratitude? Those bodies belong to us. We don't have to appear in your courts proving our mental incompetence to you before we can avoid forced childbearing!

We refuse to be your passive vessels becoming impregnated for the greater good of society. We want a society that exists for our good as well as yours! We are not just grease between men, links between generations, not just the mothers of sons and their future wives! We are tired of being pawns in a male power game. Tired of being bought and sold and traded and used to sell your deodorants and hair sprays.

In short, we are tired of paying for the sins of men. For I often wonder if we have even gone beyond the Old Testament in which, if a man took a girl in the field he could get off the hook easily by simply paying her father for her destroyed value. No one ever asked *her* what she thought about it. She was nothing more than a piece of damaged chattel then, and even now, over two thousand years later she is still only a piece of property, a commodity for the use of man. Even that unwanted child in her, that undeveloped life, is more important than the living woman who bears him.

So: we must say to those bishops and pompous lawmakers and self-righteous men, we will no longer be shoved around. We will no longer submit to your definitions of what we should or should not be or do to become truly feminine in your eyes. For unless we have a part in creating the laws which govern our fate, then we will refuse to follow those dictates and laws.

There was a wistful note at the end of Bill's interview on WBAI. He said something to the effect that, who knows, perhaps some day women will really get angry. I thought about that. Because some of us, still very few, *are* getting angry. And we are getting angry *now*. I hope Bill will not have to wait for his Utopia quite so long as he thinks. I hope that it will be very soon when we approach him, en masse, strong, organized, conscious, and say:

We sincerely thank you, Bill Baird, for your great sacrifice. You and people like you have helped us immensely in our struggle to become aware. And now, sooner than you predicted, your wish has come true. We are angry at last. So angry that we no longer need you to fight our fight.

Shulamith Firestone

WOMEN AND THE RADICAL MOVEMENT

Within the last year many radical women's groups have sprung up throughout the country. This was caused by the fact that movement women found themselves playing secondary roles on every level...be it in terms of leadership, or simply in terms of being listened to. They found themselves (and others) afraid to speak up because of self-doubts when in the presence of men. Their roles ended up concentrating on food-making, typing, mimeographing, general assistance work, and as a sexual supply for their male comrades after hours.

As these problems began being discussed, it became clear that what had at first been assumed to be a personal problem was in fact a social and political one. We found strong parallels between the liberation of women and black power struggle, being oppressed by similar psychological/economic dynamics. And the deeper we analyzed the problem, and realized that all women suffer from this kind of oppression, the more we realized that the problem was not just isolated to movement women.

It became necessary to go to the root of the problem, rather than to become engaged in solving secondary problems arising *out* of that condition. Thus, rather than storming the Pentagon as women, or protest the Democratic Convention as women, we must begin to expose the eliminate the causes of our oppression as women. Our job is not *only* to improve the conditions of the movement any more than it is to only improve the condition of professional working women. Both are reformist if thought of only as ends in themselves; and it ignores the broader concept that one cannot achieve equality for some members of one's group while the rest are not free.

In choosing to fight for women's liberation it is not enough, either, to explain it only in general terms of "the system." For the system oppresses many groups in many ways. Women must learn that the *specific methods* used to keep her oppressed are to convince her that she is at all times secondary to man, and that her life is defined in terms of him. We cannot speak of liberating ourselves until we free ourselves from this myth and accept ourselves as primary.

In our role as radical women we are confronted with the problem of assuring a female revolution within the general revolution. And we must begin to distinguish the real from the apparent freedom.

Radical men may advocate certain freedoms for women when they overlap their own interest, but these are not true freedoms unless they spring out of the concept of male and female equality and confront the issue of male supremacy.

For example, men may want women to fight in the revolution because they need every able bodied person they can get. And they may need women to join the work force under a socialist economic system because they cannot afford, like capitalism, to have an unemployed (surplus) labor force not contributing work, being supported by the state. And men may therefore advocate state nurseries so that mothers are not kept from work.

But has the fundamental concept of women changed? Do these changes mean that men have renounced the old supremacy relationship, wherein women must always be defined in terms of her man? Has the basic domination changed?

It is important to analyze the history of revolutions in terms of special interest groups. The American Revolution was a white male bourgeois revolution. The issue was being able to freely make a profit without England's interference: the Declaration of Independence was specifically written to justify independence from England. It

was a document which guaranteed rights neither to the blacks or to women. Crispus Attucks, one of the first black men to lose his life for the revolution, was fighting in a vicarious revolution - the white revolution. Betsy Ross sewing the flag was participating vicariously in a male revolution. The rights gained were nor for her.

It is always true of an oppressed group that the mere fact of their existence means that to a certain extent they have accepted their inferior-colonial-secondary status. Taught self-hatred, they identify instead with the oppressor. Thus such phenomenon as blacks bleaching their skin and straightening their hair, and women responding with horror at the thought of a woman president.

The economic revolution - i.e. change from capitalism to socialism - can also be viewed in terms of male interest. Under capitalism, the majority of men were exploited and controlled by a few men who held the wealth and power over their lives. By changing the economic structure to socialism, this particular economic exploitation was eradicated.

Women in the Soviet Union fought for and supported the revolution. But whether out of genuine hope that non-domination and non-exploitation would be applied as liberally to them, or worse, out of a lack of even a minimum awareness that they themselves were important, the Soviet revolution remained a male power revolution, although many new benefits fell to women. The Soviet Union is still primarily male governed; women's integration into the labor force meant simply that she transferred her auxiliary, service relationship with men into the area of work. Soviet women are teachers, doctors, assistants, food handlers. And when they come home from work they are expected to continue the submission role to men and do the housework, cooking and assume primary responsibility for the child-rearing.

It is important for radical women to learn from these events. The dominant/submissive relationship between men and women was not challenged. Not confronted. We were asked by them instead to equate our liberation with theirs...to blame our inferior conditions on the economic structure rather than confront the obvious male interest in keeping women "in their place." We never insisted upon as *explicit* a program for freeing women as the man had demanded for freeing himself from economic exploitation. We never confronted men and demanded that unless they give up their domination over us, we would not fight for their revolution, work in their revolution. We never fought the primary cause, hoping instead that changing the secondary characteristics would win us freedom. And we ended up with a revolution that simply transferred male supremacy, paternalism and male power onto the new economy. A reformist revolution that only improved upon our privileges but did not change the basic structure causing our oppression.

A black revolutionary today would not be satisfied knowing only that the economic structure went from private to collective control; he would want to know about racism. And you would have to show him how white power and supremacy would be eliminated in that revolution before he would join you.

Until we make such similar demands, revolution will pass us by.

Anne Koedt

R*O*Z'S P*A*G*E

LETTER TO STAUGHTON LYND

Odd, that the first substantive piece on women's liberation run by the *Guardian* is written by a man, Staughton Lynd. The *Guardian* wouldn't dare do this to the Black Movement, nor would they accuse the Blacks of overstating their case.

A few corrections — the women's movement didn't arise because radicals are growing older and musing about child rearing. Women's problems unfortunately begin not after college but with prenatal conceptions, and go on beyond menopause. From childhood on, emphasis is placed on how we appear rather than who we are, and when we try to assert our humanism we're accused of being domineering bitches or worse bullydikes.

The Women's Movement began because we're tired of not being taken seriously. Even within the radical movement we are relegated to service: typing, mailing and food preparation, with sexual services on the side.

WE CONDEMN

Males who continue to say "Chick" after being told to stop.
Stephanie Harrington and Blair Sobel who write against fashion with chique, and a fashionable flair.
All those male leftist publications who are idolizing guerilla women.
Too horrible to mention: *Vogue*, etc, etc.

QUOTABLE QUOTES +++

"Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment. Social progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the fair sex (the ugly ones included)."

letter, Karl Marx to Kugelmann, December 12, 1868

"In any case ladies cannot complain of the International, for it has elected a lady, Madame Law, to be a member of the General Council."

letter, Karl Marx to Kugelmann, December 12, 1868

AUNT TOM OF THE MONTH

Helen Gurley Brown
Author: *Sex and the Single Girl*
Editor: *Cosmopolitan*

MALE CHAUVINIST OF THE MONTH

Staughton Lynd
National Guardian Article
May 15, 1968

MOST CHAUVINIST PUBLICATION

Ramparts

OVERHEARD....."Well, how would YOU like to be married to the oppressor?"

WE SUPPORT

Linda Le Clair: Barnard martyr for equal cohabitation rights.

Grace D. Cox: President, Women Lawyers Association - prosecutes those who practice job discrimination because of sex.

Bill Baird: Crusader for abortion law repeal.

Doctors Rappaport and Lawrence: abortionists, recently arrested. Dr. Rappaport has already served nine years in jail for performing abortions.

ON STAUGHTON LYND'S "GOOD SOCIETY"

In his recent article "A Good Society" (*Guardian*, May 18th, 1968) Staughton Lynd raises two main questions about women's liberation: why women's liberation has 'come to the fore' and what the connection is between this new movement and white response to ghetto rebellion. Now that a male hero of the left has said it, women's rights is to be taken seriously — it's what to rap about. But was it taken seriously? Sure, after the disclaimers and qualifications, women's rights look as safe as any man interested in protecting male supremacy could wish. Leaving the family intact, not even Warren Hinkle let alone Staughton Lynd would be threatened.

The question of the impetus for the liberation of women is explained by Lynd as a matter of the movement's growing up. I doubt that many women would explain it that way. No institution in this society, much less the campus, allows sexual equality for women. We women who experienced life on campus know how vital our education was considered (it wasn't), we know that grad schools don't want us (except in traditional professions), we know that the movement bought the traditional roles bit too. (Men may not have noticed women's exploitation before they considered having children but we could not escape it.) We have watched men organize, speak, conduct workshops and write about the movement for us for years; we watched while we organized (the food, papers), spoke (answering the phones, and sometimes to each other—but not often enough) and sat in workshops and maybe read articles (though men usually didn't know what we thought about all that). But our time was not lost. We learned that we must organize for our own liberation.

Historically, there is a close parallel in the development of the early abolitionist women who also learned their lessons well gaining skills and belief in human equality. Their failures serve as a second lesson: to work in other people's vineyards and neglect your own is wrong. Until black power, we lacked the courage to declare our struggle as primary. (It is traditional for women to be told to put aside their needs for the needs of others.) Like these earlier women, we have raised our consciousness through our involvement in the movement.

What are the sins of women's liberation? The reader is reassured that women's liberation is not a 'diversion' or an 'indulgence'. But we have, according to Lynd, used the wrong words (exploitation rather than a euphemism), and challenged the prior right of Mere Important Issues (Is that the point? I don't remember men folk worrying about whether blacks or the poor or Indians came first in the struggle for human dignity), ignore 'proper channels' (the refuge offered by relationships with men). What about movement relationships? Even in permanent ones, he works and she keeps house and babies or she gets a job so he can work in the movement. Exceptions are rare; most others temporary.

In essence "A Good Society" rationalizes a place in the movement for women's liberation — a safe place that won't shake any priorities men folk have decided. Male definitions about what women's liberation means, couldn't possibly mean, where it counts and where it doesn't, where the struggle will be fought and who the enemy is. (Lynd acknowledges struggles which pit black against white, soldier against officer, wageworker against capitalist, but young people and women against patriarchal authority, no. Is the oppressor or agent of oppression so difficult to recognize?) We've had enough of male answers to women's problems. And not having women heroes on the left now we will make our own answers. If we have anything to say to movement men at this point it is — Fuck Male Standards! We don't care what you want. And if you want to be liberated, go tell it to men. We can make our own movement.

Judith Gabree

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