

AGAINST FEMINISM

**Link the struggle for our rights
to the struggle for socialism!**



**Criticism of the Committee to Struggle for Free Abortion
and Contraception on Demand
by ex-militants of the Committee,
sympathizers of the CCL(ML).**

Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist)

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

The first edition of Against Feminism! Link the Struggle for Our Rights to the Struggle for Socialism! appeared in March 1977 and was rapidly sold out. We consider it important that it be made available today so that it may serve to destroy feminist ideology which is very often a major obstacle in the fight for women's emancipation and for socialism.

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Introduction

On the women question, as on all other questions (unions, national oppression and international situation), opportunists and revisionists try to hide their bourgeois, anti-Marxist theories under a cover of progressive-sounding language. Since it was founded, the CCL(ML) has undertaken a determined struggle against right opportunism in the workers' and the Marxist-Leninist movement. As part of this struggle against opportunism, we, ex-militants of the Committee to Struggle for Free Abortion and Contraception on Demand, and sympathizers of the CCL(ML), have criticized the Committee (now the Committee to Struggle for Free Abortion).

This Montreal based group, which expelled us in November 1976 for upholding a communist point of view on women's oppression, is an ardent defender of feminism.

We must remember that feminists, reformists and revisionists excel at keeping women cut off from the revolutionary movement. Thus, to assure that the women of the working masses take their rightful place in class struggle, we must unmask these traitors to the working class.

Marxism-Leninism teaches us that socialism is the only path that can assure women's emancipation; the experience of the Chinese and Albanian woman confirms this. In Canada we are now in the period of construction of an authentic communist party, the indispensable weapon in the struggle for socialism. And in this struggle to win the most advanced elements of the working class to communism we must above all struggle to win them away from bourgeois ideas!

This is the aim of this sum-up.

Feminists: Mouthpieces for the Bourgeoisie

Feminists use the just struggles for women's democratic rights, such as the struggle for free abortion and contraception on demand, to spread their opportunist garbage and maintain a certain level of credibility in progressive circles. Some people might say that feminists work with women, that they fight for abortion and contraception; that they support the struggles of women and of the masses everywhere, that they fight against chauvinism and against the state and the bourgeoisie.

But our practice with the Committee and its analysis of women's oppression proved that this is not the case.

For those of us who really wanted to do something for working class women, our experience with the Committee's referral service and with how it waged the struggle for free abortion on demand was enough to show us that the struggle was headed right into a reformist dead-end.

Every day we had to refer women to facilities in the New York City because according to the therapeutic committees, they didn't "qualify" and so were not accepted at hospitals here.

So working women had to find, earn or more often than not borrow \$130.00; leave Friday evening by bus, travel the whole night, take a taxi half-way across New York City the next morning to have the abortion, pay some bourgeois doctor \$85.00, catch the next bus back at 1:00 pm, arrive home Saturday night, and go back to work Monday morning. And for women from Chicoutimi or the Gaspé it meant an entire week-end of bus travel.

While bourgeois women can pay a doctor friend to give them an abortion, the women of the people have to go through private agencies that charge them from \$250 to \$500, depending on how far the pregnancy is advanced. As for immigrant women without visas most of the time they end up going to quacks.

Meanwhile the feminists limited the struggle for free abortion on demand to press releases about the Morgantaler case!

And, although the feminists seem to support just struggles (housing, food cooperatives), they admit themselves that they do in spite of themselves, that there is no solidarity involved.

Feminists themselves don't have links with the masses. As a result, they are forced to keep up appearances and to support the neighbourhood groups in order to reach housewives. But when these groups unmask reformism, and develop into class struggle organizations, the feminists keep their distance. They refuse to get involved with the masses on the pretext that Marxist-Leninists are stealing "their housewives." Behind closed doors, they busy themselves creating "their" community groups, like the Community Women's Health Centre and the Committee to Struggle.

Instead of putting forward the unity of working class men and women in class against class struggle, and waging the struggle against chauvinism, feminists prefer to organize autonomous groups. By doing so, they divide the working class, and abandon the struggle against chauvinism.

Two-Line Struggle in the Committee ends in expulsion

Faced with this dead-end, we felt the need to give ourselves a scientific theoretical base, Marxism-Leninism, and to use it as a guide to action.

When we came into contact with communist ideas, we began to understand the full effects our feminist ideas on the working class.

At first, we didn't think our participation in the Committee contradicted our decision to develop a Marxist-Leninist criticism of feminism. In effect, we were making a subjective analysis of feminism because we were still taken in by the movement's progressive appearance, because it claimed it was for socialism.

In the two-line struggle in the Committee, in our criticism of feminism, we had to stand up to the resistance of bourgeois elements. The most striking example of this was our expulsion from the group. The feminists, unable to defend their line against a scientific analysis, turned to bourgeois methods: anti-democracy and anti-communism.

Fight Right Opportunism

Under the just leadership of the CCL(ML), we understood that by putting forward a feminist line, we were refusing to arm women with the tools they need to end their oppression once and for all. We referred women to hospitals or to New York City without ever undertaking the struggle against the bourgeois state for the withdrawal of the law. Like the bourgeoisie, we kept women away from class struggle by keeping them in their kitchens. Like all opportunists, we sacrificed the proletariat's longterm interests, the struggle for socialism, for a few immediate advantages for a handful of women.

We are now convinced that the proletarian line can win only in the determined struggle against all bourgeois and opportunist ideology, wherever it shows its face. At first, we used Marxism-Leninism to understand the links that existed between the struggle for free abortion and contraception on demand and class struggle.

Now, we want this sum-up to serve as a tool to denounce feminist ideology and to stress the importance that the people must accord to the democratic struggles of women.

Militants expelled from the
Committee to Struggle for Free
Abortion and Contraception on Demand,
sympathizers of the CCL(ML)
March, 1977.

Feminists and the Struggle

for Abortion

In Canada, and particularly in Quebec, we've heard a lot about the question of abortion. Every year thousands of women are subjected to the Canadian state's reactionary abortion policy. The arrest and many trials of Dr. Morgentaler are principally responsible for bringing this situation into the public eye.

While in Canada the struggle for abortion has been limited to the legal battles of one doctor, in several imperialist countries (USA, France, Italy, etc.) it has been at the origin of wide, great mobilizations. In most of these countries, feminists have used this just struggle to spread their bourgeois ideas about women's liberation. In Quebec they have done the same thing.

The Committee to Struggle for Free Abortion: Organizational Base of Montreal Feminist Movement

The Committee to Struggle for Free Abortion and Contraception on Demand was set up in 1974 by women from various mass groups. Political leadership came from the Women's Centre (a now-defunct Montreal feminist group). The Committee was supposed to become a mass organization uniting all individuals who wanted to fight for the right to abortion.

The Committee is mainly known for the referral service it offers to women who want an abortion. The group made itself a name through its participation in International Women's Day, March 8, 1976, when it delivered a speech presenting the basic points of its political line. The speech was backed up by three other "Marxist-feminist" groups, the Remue-Menage Press (Editions Remue-Menage), the Neighbourhood Women's Health Centre (Centre de Santé des femmes du quartier) and Kitchen Theatre (Theatre des Cuisines).

Feminists have always limited women who wanted an abortion to the individual solution offered by the referral service. Yet it was this service which gave the Committee a certain credibility among progressive circles in Montreal and the rest of the province. Women militants from outside of Montreal who want to work with women often come to consult the Committee, hoping to learn from its years of experience of working with women on the abortion question.

These women don't always know that **the Committee is first and foremost a feminist group**. These feminists in no way defend the real interests of women of the people. This tiny group has never been able to organize a struggle against the Canadian bourgeois state for the withdrawal of the anti-abortion law.

The Committee is based on Feminism

Feminists put themselves into various categories: radical feminists (Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millet, Tête de Pioche—a Quebec group), bourgeois feminists (Judy Lamarsh), and “Marxist-feminists” (Selma James and Maria Rosa Della Costa) like those with whom we worked.

As far as we are concerned, one fundamental point unites them all and goes beyond the categories they like to place themselves in: **feminism is a fundamentally bourgeois reaction to the oppression of women.**

What is the Communist View on Organizing Women ?

All feminists see the source of women's oppression in the biological difference between the two sexes, in the fact that women have babies. Whether they say that women are oppressed because they have babies or because they have lost control of their reproductive function (like the Committee says), all they really tell us is that women are oppressed... because they are women!

For the committee's feminists, this analysis develops in the following way: housework oppresses women; women do housework because they have children; women have always done housework; therefore, women have always been oppressed!

This “razor-sharp” logic can't stand up to a materialist analysis

of history, to the study of the development of the means of production and how they determine the relations between people. It's true that in all societies women have taken on the household tasks and had children. But we mustn't follow the feminists' logic and conclude that because 20th century housewives are oppressed, then in every society household tasks have always equalled oppression.

In primitive societies with a subsistence economy (everything produced is immediately consumed), history has shown that household tasks done by women (preparing food, making clothes and commonly used objects, taking care of children) were just as important as tasks done by men (herding, hunting, fishing, etc.).

With the development of the means of production (tools and work techniques), man began to go beyond the subsistence economy. Tools and techniques existed that could produce more goods than were necessary for survival. Thus the accumulation of goods became possible. Some individuals had a surplus, others didn't.

This unevenness in the ownership of goods permitted the private appropriation of the means of production. To do extra work brought on by the development of production, new work forces were necessary: prisoners taken in war became slaves. This was the beginning of the exploitation of man by man. The tasks done by men had become a new way to make profit. Livestock belonged to men, as did commodities and slaves exchanges for livestock. As a result, women's tasks lost most of their social importance: they had no exchange value, they weren't a source of wealth. Women went from being equal to being oppressed, having no property and being excluded from social production.

As Engel explains:

“The first class opposition that appears in history **coincides** with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male.”

The origin of the oppression of women is therefore private ownership of the means of production. The road to their liberation is the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, the struggle for socialism. Because the feminists do not show women the origin of their oppression, they only perpetuate it.

Housewives Are Not a Class

Feminists deny that women's oppression is tied to the division of society into classes. As a result, they also refuse to admit that the working class plays the leading role in the final struggle against the bourgeoisie, that it is the only class that is determined to wage the struggle for socialism to the end.

Feminists will go to any length to convince us that women, without class distinction, are the leading force in socialist revolution. To achieve this end, they say that all women are housewives, and that housework is the motor force on which capitalism is based.

No, housework is not the motor force on which the capitalist system is based. Housework is of course essential for the existence of capitalism, but it exists outside of social production. The production of goods by men and women workers, their exploitation, is the greatest source of profits for the capitalists, the base of the growth of capital.

No, housewives do not form a class. It is absolutely wrong to see a community of interests between Margaret Trudeau and the wife of a Thetford Mines miner or an Alcan worker. Margaret Trudeau clearly has a lot more to lose in a socialist revolution as a member of the bourgeoisie, than she has to gain as a woman. Bourgeois women play a counter-revolutionary role.

Men and Women of the Working Class: Main Force in the Revolution

The working class owns nothing but its labour force, it is tied to modern industrial production, and possesses, in its scientific theory and its party, great possibilities for its own education and organization. This is why it is only class that can fill the leading role in the struggle for socialism.

In presenting housewives as the main force in the socialist revolution, feminists ignore the fact that women, not housewives, played the determining role in winning the specific rights of women.

In their March 8, 1976, speech the feminists explained that for them, International Women's Day is an occasion to "bring the

struggles of our mothers and grandmothers out of the shadows. These women were confined to their kitchens by the state and the church, and given the task of producing future workers, indispensable for the capitalists' profits, and of assuring their maintenance 24 hours a day. (...) These were struggles for daily bread and for survival. Evidently we won't find mention in workers' histories of housewives' "pouding-chomeurs" of 1929... But maybe we should." ("pouding-chomeurs" — "pudding of the unemployed", tasty Quebecois recipe originating in the Depression requiring only sugar and flour)

Feminists see proof of housewives' combativity in their acceptance of the idea of "we have to make do with the little we have."

Finding the depression meals of 1929 tasty is not the same as seeing them as class struggle. There's a big difference between the appreciation of good cooking and the feminists' fantasies and idealism about class struggle.

Working class housewives fight against their own oppression and the exploitation of the entire working class when they wage the struggle against the high cost of living, when they demonstrate against obligatory payment of water tax, when they support their husbands or friends on strike, or when they demand daycare. Only by uniting with the proletariat and forging this unity in struggle, class against class, in the struggle for socialism, will working class housewives be able to end their oppression. The liberation of women requires socialism. Because it attacks the material base of the oppression of women, that is, the private ownership of the means of production, socialism is the only road to women's emancipation.

The Class Base of Feminism: the Petty Bourgeoisie

All these anti-scientific, anti-communist conceptions spread by the feminists have a class base: the petty bourgeoisie. The fact that this movement is principally made up of petty bourgeois elements also explains the importance that feminists give to the abortion struggle.

The capitalist crisis forces many members of the petty bourgeoisie to share the living conditions of the masses. They are angered to see their situation deteriorating while the big bourgeoisie

and the monopolies protect their profits. They are hesitant to firmly take up class struggle, but they are still forced to fight the attacks to the bourgeoisie. Unless they base themselves on Marxism-Leninism and accept, in practice, the leading role of the working class, these petty bourgeois militants will be the most ardent propagators of anti-Marxist trends in the workers' movement.

Feminism also exposes all the petty bourgeoisie's incorrect ideas about children. The petty bourgeoisie sees children as an obstacle in maintaining its privileges and supposed liberty promised by bourgeois democracy. The petty-bourgeoisie's answer is to choose the easy route: the fight for abortion.

Instead of fighting for socialism and fighting here and now for the democratic rights that would assure women the right to have children, feminists put the struggle for abortion first.

This individualist attitude of the petty bourgeoisie is totally different from the working class's attitude towards children. As Lenin said: "The class-conscious worker is far from holding this point of view. He will not allow his consciousness to be dulled by such cries no matter how sincere and heartfelt they may be. Yes, we workers and the mass of small proprietors lead a life that is filled with unbearable oppression and suffering. Things are harder for our generation than they were for our fathers. But in one respect we are luckier than our fathers. **We have begun to learn and are rapidly learning to fight**—and to fight not as individuals, as the best of our fathers fought, not for the slogans of bourgeois speechifiers that are alien to us in spirit, but for our slogans, the slogans of our class. We are fighting better than our fathers did. Our children will fight better than we do, and **they will be victorious.**" (*On the Emancipation of Women*, Lenin)

The Feminist Political Line

The Great Struggle for Abortion

Feminists limit women's struggles to the struggle for free abortion on demand and to all that concerns women's bodies (illness, rape, sexuality, etc.). In their eyes, the abortion question, more than any other, attacks the "heart" of women's oppression. For the feminists in the Committee this overestimation of the struggle for abortion in relation to women's oppression attains unequalled proportions. In their speech on March 8th, we learn that "When we struggle to control our reproductive functions, our struggles join the struggles of the women of the third world against American imperialism and its massive sterilization campaigns, that of deported immigrants..."

Once again, the feminists isolate women's struggles from those



In 1973, the feminists organized several demonstrations for the acquittal of Dr. Morgentaler. They led the fight for abortion into a dead-end by limiting it to a legal battle and isolating it from the working class's fight for its rights.

of all the people. Once again, they refuse to admit that the unity of the men and women of the third world is an indispensable weapon in the struggle against imperialism. Once again, they deny that the working class's struggle against its sworn enemy, the Canadian imperialist bourgeoisie, is the greatest possible support it can give to the peoples of the third world.

The feminists have not waged the struggle for contraception any more than they have for abortion. They even dropped the whole question recently — the Committee is now called the Committee to Struggle for Free Abortion on Demand. Feminists present contraception as the personal choice of the woman, a choice in which the man has no part. As a result, they reject the vasectomy (male sterilization). This sexist attitude is proof again that feminists do not believe in the unity of men and women, that they divide the working class.

Feminists show contempt for the Struggles of the Masses

The feminists consider that all the struggles that housewives and working women wage (equal pay for equal work, right to decent housing, against the high cost of living) are of little importance in comparison with their all-important struggle for abortion.

In practice, the feminists' profound contempt for these struggles means that they give them no real support. A good example of this was during the Common Front struggle in Quebec, when the Committee spent all its time preparing an information blitz on the abortion issue directed at the women hospital workers. However, because the women were already involved in a struggle, the feminists decided not to carry out their plan. Heaven forbid that they should actually support these working women by explaining their just struggle to women coming to the referral center!

This shows us that when women stand up to fight, the feminists take a back seat. They can hardly reconcile their armchair radicalism, based on bourgeois theories, with mass struggle.

In their work with housewives, the feminists prove not only their contempt for the masses, but their total ignorance of these women's real needs.

With housewives they only talk about housework. At a neighbourhood meeting held by the feminists on March 8, 1976, that was all they talked about: "getting out of the kitchen", "housework", and "housewives in community groups". Not a single

workshop discussed the working conditions and struggles of working women, even though they make up at least 35% of the female population of the Plateau Mont-Royal neighbourhood (where the meetings took place).

They restrict the housewives to their kitchens, as if politics, social life and class struggle are the exclusive domain of men. What an opportunist game they play!

What the feminists refuse to understand is the reason why housewives do not take up political struggle. It is not because they are unaware of the **effects** of capitalist exploitation on women, but rather of the **causes** of their oppression. Isolated in their kitchens by the capitalists, housewives are not tempered in the heat of class struggle.

How can we raise the political awareness of housewives and encourage their involvement in the struggle for socialism? By helping them to struggle for their rights, principally the right to work. By getting them to support the struggles of their class sisters and brothers. And by leading a resolute struggle against bourgeois ideas about the role of women.

By restricting housewives to their kitchens, the feminists divide the working class. Just what the bourgeoisie ordered. To further the isolation of housewives by refusing to struggle for the right to work, is to deny the leading role of the working class and thereby sabotage the revolutionary struggle.

Autonomy: a Dead End

In order to struggle "starting from housework" and organize women's resistance the Committee and the three other groups that supported it advocate organizing women in autonomous groups. This feminist autonomy is based on the regrouping of women on the basis of biological differences, without class distinctions.

What the feminists put forward when they advocate this kind of group is the division of the working class. This is the practical result of their bourgeois world view. Comfortably installed with their petty bourgeois and individualist point of view, they only see the world in terms of women and ignore class divisions in society. Feminists reject class struggle and only want to fight against men.

At the May 1st, 1976, demonstration, their slogan was "May 1st is also housewives' day". Instead of demanding the right to work for women hit by the crisis, instead of promoting the unity of working class men and women, the feminists strengthened the isolation of the few housewives that they could mobilize by dividing them from their

class.

Instead of educating these isolated women and showing them the true path to their emancipation, they just created confusion by shouting slogans like "Our struggle is a feminist struggle, our struggle is a class struggle".

Even as They Declare War on Men, Feminists Capitulate to Male Chauvinism

Feminists never start from the desire for unity with men. This is how they expressed it in their March 8 speech, last year: "Even if the contradictions are not fundamental, and we have to attack their causes, not men, we must still be conscious of them and not fool ourselves into unity at any price, **unity that would in any case be artificial**".

Feminists reject the common interests of working class men and women. They dare state, clear as day, that the class unity of the proletariat is impossible and artificial.

It is true that there are obstacles to unity between men and women. These obstacles are all the ideas conveyed by the bourgeoisie about male superiority, women's inability to wage struggles, that women's oppression is natural, etc. The bourgeoisie uses these ideas to divide the working class.

Faced with these contradictions, we must adopt a class perspective and recognize that the interests of the men and women of the people are the same.

Male chauvinism and women's submission are contradictions among the people: they are a result of the principal antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

We must fight against the manifestations of chauvinism with discussion, criticism, persuasion, and education, and we must show how it benefits the bourgeoisie. And women will prove to men that their prejudices are unfounded by taking an active role in the people's struggles.

Instead of fighting against chauvinism, feminists reinforce it. For March 8, 1976, they had a special separate workshop for men, claiming that the housewives and women workers would be swamped by an army of male intellectuals who would have a neutralizing affect on women's participation.

Feminists capitulate in the struggle against chauvinism, refuse to undertake the educational work that is necessary, and by isolating

proletarian women from their class, leave them wide open to attacks by the bourgeoisie.

As Lenin said: "Our communist work among the masses of women, and our political work in general, involves considerable educational work among the men. We must root out the old slave-owner's point of view, both in the Party and among the masses." (**On the Emancipation of Women**, p.15)

Feminists Try to Separate Proletarian Women From Their Weapon in the Struggle for Socialism

Feminists oppose the struggle led by Canadian Marxist-Leninists for the construction of a vanguard party of the proletariat. They reject the necessity that the best elements of the working class, the most experienced and the most devoted to the cause of the proletariat, take up the leadership of the masses in the struggle for socialism. They disagree that the party should be the vanguard detachment of the proletariat.

Feminists spread the idea that women can, simply by banding together, spontaneously find the just means for abolishing the relations of oppression and exploitation. This non-scientific point of view, which is based on spontaneism, has been decisively disproved by history.

Past revolutions teach us that only the working class, in alliance with the peasantry, led by its Marxist-Leninist party and armed with Marxism-Leninism, can abolish private ownership of the means of production. The struggle for socialism led by the Party of Labour of Albania, the Bolshevik Party and the Communist Party of China also shows us that only the people in arms, that is, revolutionary violence, can bring about victory over the bourgeoisie.

Feminists try to block the educational work that will equip proletarian women to play an active role in the struggle to build the party of the working class. They separate proletarian women from their weapon in the struggle for socialism: the Marxist-Leninist vanguard party.

The revolution and the party need many women cadres. And these cadres must be trained in struggle and in social practice. And the great masses of the women will learn in struggle too. Women will recognize the just leadership of communists and eventually of the Marxist-Leninist party and the necessity of socialism through class struggle alongside the entire proletariat. When they demand their



1200 people, including the League and several mass organizations, demonstrated March 8, 1977. They renewed with the Communist tradition of commemorating the struggles of workers and of women of the people against capitalist exploitation and for democratic rights. The League's contingent numbered 500 people.

democratic rights and through our educational work all this will become clear.

Autonomy leads the women's struggle into a dead-end. The women of the proletariat and the other sectors of the toiling masses have nothing to gain from an alliance with bourgeois women and with feminists. In fact, this alliance can only destroy their great revolutionary potential and set back the revolution.

The Origin of the Oppression of Women : Private ownership of the Means of Production

Feminists have often said that communists don't want women to organize and wage struggles. **Inside the party there is discrimination in favour of women:** through their intense agitation and propaganda on the women question, authentic communist parties show that they understand the situation of women. They know the depth of women's oppression and they want to eliminate it. The internal organization of the party is further proof of this.

The communist party sets up a women's commission and committees to oversee work done with women. These commissions make sure that communist work is done with the masses of women and that women's needs are taken into account inside the party. For women to struggle alongside their class brothers, their particular needs must be taken into consideration.

"In the struggle to build the party and later in the party itself all men and women members have equal rights and duties. But women receive favourable discrimination for leadership positions, that's to say that if a man and woman are equally qualified for a position, it goes to the woman." (**The Forge**, March 8, 1977)

Communists recognize that women are subjected to a specific oppression. They also realize the sections of the party in charge of working with women are not sufficient to lead women to take their rightful place in the class struggle and the struggle for socialism. Because of this many communist parties have set up women's mass organizations so that women can organize to take an active part in the struggle for socialism. In this struggle women demand their specific rights. This kind of organization mainly organizes the masses of women outside the party, but under the party's ideological and political leadership. It fights to raise the level of women's consciousness so they are fully conscious of their interest to struggle for socialism, and it struggles to build up their revolutionary enthusiasm.

These women's organizations have been active in many victorious revolutions. The Union of Vietnamese Women, for instance, played an important role in their people's struggle against the American invader; women made up 40% of the people's army. The Union of Albanian Women played an important role in the struggle against the Italian invader, in the seizure of power by the proletariat and in the building of socialism in Albania.

The liberation of women is an integral part of the struggle for socialism, and communists make every effort to encourage women's full participation in this struggle.

Our Expulsion: an Anti-communist and Anti-democratic Act

Through our work in the Committee we came to the conclusion that feminism led women's struggles into a dead end and rejected the fundamental interests of the proletariat.

Therefore we began a debate on the origin of women's oppression

and the correct road to follow for their liberation according to Marxist-Leninist principles. Under the leadership of the CCL(ML) we undertook a self-criticism of feminism and the study of communist principles on the woman question.

Faced with the possibility that their opportunist line might be confronted by the science of the proletariat, by history, the feminists used bourgeois methods against us. To attack our communist ideas while all the time avoiding debate, the feminists used the pretext of our relations with the League. On November 28, 1976, the Kitchen Theatre, Remue-Menage Press and the Women's Community Health Centre came to give the Committee a helping hand. They handed us an ultimatum: "Give up the League's leadership or get out of the Committee".

The Committee never had any criteria for membership. Then, all of a sudden, we learned that all members of the Committee had to recognize of the principle of autonomy for feminist groups. The so-called egalitarian methods of feminist groups are in reality flagrant examples of anti-democracy!

When they expelled us, the feminists acted exactly the same way as the union bureaucrats or the PQ reformists react to the Marxist-Leninist and workers' movements' criticisms of their class collaborationist line. Once again, they exposed their anti-communism.

For Free Abortion and

Contraception on Demand!

Link the Struggle for our Rights

to the Struggle for Socialism

For the working class, children are the family's wealth. They are the future of the working class. The proletariat is moving towards its liberation and sees its children as those who will continue the struggle. But in capitalist society the working class is denied the right to have children.

Communists fight for free contraception and abortion on demand to allow women to keep working, and to plan their pregnancies. Contraception is more than just a technical measure; it is also a political question. It gives men and women the possibility to control nature. And it is intimately tied to the emancipation of women. Contraception should be put in first place. Abortion should be seen as a last resort to rectify the failure or the inefficiency of the contraceptive methods.

The capitalist system is based on the exploitation of the working class, on the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. Therefore, it's no surprise that the best conditions for having children don't exist. The bourgeoisie has every interest in assuring that working class women don't have access to contraception and abortion. This would be a step forward in their emancipation, and would lead them to join ranks with their class brothers, to expand the ranks of the working class and to fight against the bourgeoisie. This is precisely why the bourgeoisie wants to keep working class women locked in their kitchens, outside of political life. This is one of its tactics to keep the working class divided.

The Crisis

In the present period of economic crisis, the working class is the most attacked; wages are frozen, unemployment is growing, repression is getting stronger. The bourgeoisie attacks not only working conditions, but also living conditions; buying power decreases, housing becomes more scarce; in general, our rights are increasingly attacked.

Working class women see their oppression accentuated. The bourgeoisie no longer recognizes their right to work. Last hired, first fired, women make up over half the unemployed. In Canada, while the average wage for a man is \$11,000, that of a woman is \$5,000.

The Canadian bourgeoisie has only one idea in mind: to make us pay for their crisis, by attacking the democratic rights that we struggled so hard to win. They attack the rights that allow women to participate in political life: they cut the number of daycare centres, they change the unemployment insurance laws, reducing the premiums allowed to pregnant woman, they repress the right to abortion...



At the PQ's 6th Congress, SOS Daycare organized a demonstration to denounce the PQ, which denies the right to daycare. All the PQ's great promises of democratic rights for women served but one purpose: to get it elected. A year in power has been amply sufficient to expose the hypocrisy of this bourgeois party.

The State Represses the Right to Abortion and Contraception

The bourgeoisie uses the state, with its laws, its police and its army to maintain its domination over the working class. The laws concerning abortion and contraception serve our sworn enemy by maintaining the oppression of women.

In Canada, it is against the law to advertize the pill and the IUD. It's not surprising that working class women often mis-use contraceptive methods or use methods that are not safe.

Article 251 of the criminal code on abortion clearly exposes the reactionary character of the Canadian bourgeoisie. According to this law, "any person who has the intention of procuring an abortion for a person of the female sex, whether she is pregnant or not, and tries in any way to carry through this intention, is guilty of a criminal offense and liable to life imprisonment." (our translation)

"Any person of the female sex who with intention of obtaining her own abortion, uses or allows any means whatsoever to be used to carry out this intention, is guilty of a criminal offense and liable two years imprisonment." (our translation) These kinds of laws maintain the privileges of the bourgeoisie and the oppression of working class women. They expose the hypocrisy of the ruling class: bourgeois women have no trouble getting contraceptives or abortion in good medical conditions, precisely what is denied the women of the people.

Therapeutic Committees

In 1969, the abortion law was amended. Women may now have abortions if the pregnancy puts "the life and the health of the mother" in danger. Women wanting abortions have to plead their case in front of a therapeutic committee.

What is a therapeutic committee? It's three doctors who decide for the woman if she should have an abortion. The criteria of these committees are arbitrary, varying from hospital to hospital. In addition, the bureaucratic methods of these committees often prevent women from having the simplest kind of abortion (aspiration), or force them to wait until the 16th week before having it.

Out of the 27 main hospitals in Quebec, only 13 have therapeutic committees; the majority of these are in the Montreal area.

In addition, the 5657 abortions done in Quebec in 1975, were done in the following hospitals:

Montreal General Hospital	3335
Ready Memorial	806
Jewish General	627
Notre-Dame	144
Maisonneuve-Rosemont	44

When we consider that there are between 10,000 and 25,000 abortions in Quebec yearly, we can see that these hospitals don't fulfill the needs of women. These examples also show that more anglophone hospitals perform abortions than francophone hospitals. In fact, 96% of the abortions are done in anglophone hospitals. The same situation exists all across the country. It is easier to get an abortion in the English Canadian provinces than in Quebec. According to Statistics Canada, out of the 43,245 therapeutic abortions completed in 1973, only 3141 were done in Quebec, while 22,603 were done in Ontario.

The Agencies

Faced with these reactionary policies, women have no choice: they have to "buy their abortion at a private referral agency".

Many of these agencies' ads (The Betty Farhood Centre and the Interprovincial Centre are the best-known) promise abortions that are "safe, legal, confidential, and that medication, anaesthesia and transport are included in the price". But the ads hide the profitable nature of these outfits.

At the Betty Farhood Centre, for example, the price of the abortion depends on the number of weeks of the pregnancy. The more advanced the pregnancy, the higher the price. But what the agency doesn't say is that it takes a very large percentage of the price. For example, if an abortion costs \$250.00, it will keep \$150.00.

The abortion is done in a heavy atmosphere of guilt. In addition, women are counselled to have general anaesthesia, which is not only useless, but even dangerous to health. And all of this is coming out into the open with the tacit agreement of the state.

Those who can't pay for the luxuries of these agencies are forced to turn to the charlatans, the quacks. (In 1975 a grocer was sentenced to 18 months in prison for having done 800 abortions over 20 years). Others wear themselves out doing housework or overtime, when they don't try directly to abort themselves with methods as

horrible as knitting needles or Drano...

This is the real face of capitalism!

The Allies of the State

The bourgeoisie has many allies in maintaining the oppression of women by denying the right to abortion.

Reactionary movements, such as Pro-Life, cry from the rooftops that "the birth of the child is more important than the health of the mother". That "love, the vital factor ensuring the development of our families and our society, is being replaced by a cold, destructive, medical act. It's earth-shattering". These organisations distribute their anti-abortion literature, not only all across Canada, but around the world. A recent example was the pamphlet **Life or Death**, a collection of insulting photos designed to play on sentiment and perpetuate the bourgeois notion of women.

The Catholic Church is another ally of the Canadian bourgeoisie. By supporting capitalist social relations, it strengthens the oppression of women. The Church teaches: "the female nature is to give and to protect life. She can only totally fulfill herself by becoming a mother and so is fundamentally opposed to abortion." At the same time that the Church preached that we must oppose abortion in order to respect life, Cardinal Spellman was blessing the American bombers as they took off for Vietnam!

Appeals to nationalist sentiment are another tactic consistently used by the Church. Pointing to the very significant drop in the Quebec birthrate, the Church raises the spectre of demography: it even goes to the extent of prophesying that legalized abortion will endanger the survival of the Quebecois nation! The real danger to the survival of the Quebecois nation is not abortion. The Canadian bourgeoisie, in its refusal to grant self-determination to Quebec, furthers the oppression of the Quebecois people: that's what endangers the survival of the Quebec nation.

Working Class Women Have Nothing to Gain from the Parti Quebecois

Some people may have thought that there would be some fundamental change in the abortion situation when the P.Q. dropped the charges against Dr. Morgentaler. In reality, it's unlikely that anything will change. And that should not be all that

surprising when we realize that a reformist bourgeois party does not exist to defend the interests of the workers, but those of the bourgeoisie.

The only thing the PQ can do is increase the number of therapeutic abortion committees in the hospitals. But the real cause of the abortion situation lies not with the lack of committees, but with the capitalist system itself.

The PQ deliberately clouds the issue by insisting on the fact that the abortion law is federal. Once again it uses nationalism to hide the truth, to try to delude women into thinking that it really does support the right to free abortion on demand and the emancipation of women. But its opposition to women's emancipation is clear in the party program, which proposes wages for housewives. This so-called progressive reform is simply a bourgeois tactic that reinforces the old myth that a woman's place is in the home and not in social production.

We should not expect anything from this bourgeois reformist party, which would have us believe that by simple reforms we can transform the living conditions of the proletariat. Working class women do not have to learn any lessons from bourgeois parties when it comes to carrying out their own emancipation.

How Should We See the Struggle for Abortion?

It is extremely important to wage struggles for the democratic rights of women even though it is only under socialism that all the conditions will exist to allow the genuine liberation of women. By fighting for democratic rights, like abortion, we learn that it is not the absence of these rights that is the cause of our oppression. The cause is the capitalist system, the private ownership of the means of production.

As Lenin put it: "Marxists know that democracy does **not** abolish class oppression. It only makes the class struggle more direct, wider, more open and pronounced, and that is what we need." He continues: "All "democracy" consists in the proclamation and realisation of "rights" which under capitalism are realisable only to a very small degree and only relatively. But without the proclamation of these rights, without a struggle to introduce them now, immediately, without training the masses in the spirit of this struggle, socialism is **impossible**." (A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism, Vol. 23)

We must use these struggles in order to raise the level of poli-

tical consciousness of women about their own oppression and its relationship to capitalist exploitation; to help them to understand the necessity of the struggle for socialism.

We must clearly understand the limitations inherent in the struggle for reforms, such as abortion on demand. Certain of our living conditions can be improved by struggling for reforms, like the withdrawal of a law, but this does not attack the basis of the system. The bourgeoisie always keeps its right to take away our acquired rights: in times of crisis this is precisely what it does so that we pay for their crisis.

This is why it is so important to link the fight for democratic rights with the struggle for socialism. The fights for democratic rights must be waged and led in such a manner that they further the struggle for the complete elimination of capitalism.



In China, women have played a great role in the socialist revolution. Today, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, they participate fully in the building of a strong socialist country.

Fight for the Right to Work!

The main demand of women at the present time is the right to work and so we must link both the struggle for contraception and free abortion on demand to this demand. The right to work is so important because from it flow the important demands: equal pay for equal work, paid maternity leaves and the right to daycare.

Why is the right to work the main demand of women? Because by working they achieve economic independence and self-confidence. By breaking with the isolation imposed on them in their homes, they can better understand the nature of the capitalist system that oppresses them, and participate actively in class against class struggle.

As members of the revolutionary class, working class women have an objective interest in the revolution and as women they have an interest in ending their oppression. All those who insist that a woman's place is in the home, and that women's work is unimportant, just want to tie women to their homes. In doing this, they deprive the working class of half of its forces and sabotage the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

When they join the ranks of their class brothers and sisters in social production, women will aim their revolt against the bourgeoisie, and no longer against the individual manifestations of their oppression in the family.

Communists must carry out agitation on the question of abortion and contraceptive wherever they are present, and show how these rights are linked to the emancipation of all women.

We demand that contraceptives be largely and freely available to all women at no cost, and that information programs be carried out enabling all women to be thoroughly informed on the question. Medical research must be developed to improve contraceptive methods. We demand the withdrawal of the bourgeois law making abortion a criminal act. Abortions must be performed in the best medical conditions and be available on demand to all Canadian women.

Only by mobilizing the Canadian masses, both men and women, can we wage the struggle for free contraception and abortion on demand; only socialism will fully guarantee these rights.

Conclusion

Feminism can bring no real solution to women's oppression. Behind the impressive progressive declarations hide reformism, sexism and anti-communism.

In its three years of existence, the Committee to Struggle never led the struggle for abortion, and this is no accident. In no way do feminists defend the real interests of the women of the people, even in immediate struggles. Communists are the best defenders of the interests of women and of the working class.

Faced with the rapid growth of the Marxist-Leninist and the workers' movements, the feminists made their choice. By throwing us out, by hiding the real cause of women's oppression from women, by cutting women off from the struggle for socialism, they chose the side of the bourgeoisie.

Socialism: the Only Solution

The League's fight against opportunism hit our illusions head on. While we thought we were defending the interests of women and of the proletariat, all we were doing was spreading bourgeois feminist ideas.

For us, choosing the side of the proletariat meant: breaking with the opportunist feminist line, studying Marxist-Leninist theory, and resolutely taking up the struggle for the construction of an authentic Marxist-Leninist party in Canada. Being in agreement with the political line of the Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist) and with its firmness in the struggle against opportunism, we decided to join it to wage this struggle.

The emancipation of women requires the struggle against opportunism. We must ceaselessly fight against feminist ideology which turns women away from the revolutionary struggle to smash the bourgeoisie, and which sabotages the struggle of the working

class, led by its party for socialism, and for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The emancipation of women requires socialism!

For free contraception and abortion on demand!

Link the struggle for our rights to the struggle for socialism!

Rally to the League!

Forge our party!

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The Forge is the central organ of the Canadian Communist League (Marxist-Leninist). It is published once every two weeks in French and English editions.

Through **The Forge** the Canadian working people learn about Marxism-Leninism — the science of proletarian revolution — and its concrete application to Canada. It carries contributions from correspondents on the struggles of workers and other sections of the people, communist analyses of the international and Canadian situation, columns on the woman question and the world Marxist-Leninist movement and more. . .

The Forge is the scaffolding that the League is using in the battle to build the authentic Marxist-Leninist party of the multinational Canadian working class; the party that will lead the struggle for socialism. Growing numbers of workers of both nations, and all nationalities are organizing in **Forge** reader's groups, are taking up the class against class struggle and are rallying to the League.

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