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Chicago, Thanksgiving, 1968: Women from across the nation come together declaring that the liberation of women, the defeat of male supremacy and male chauvinism, must henceforth be a top priority in organizing for social change.

Atlanta, Thanksgiving, 1969: a national women's conference convenes, called this time by women of the Revolutionary Youth Movement-II faction of Students for a Democratic Society. The purpose: to define their relationship to the developing women's liberation movement, and to establish the basis on which women should relate to organizing in RYM.

A year. And in that year, debate, demands, formation of new women's groups across the country. At the one year mark, RYM elects an eight-woman, two-man steering committee in a contest that included defeat of four male candidates—on the basis of their male chauvinism.

In the RYM election, the influence of the women's convention and caucus were clear. They had in several positive ways set the tone for the weekend, and for the outlook of RYM. Beneath the rhetoric and the ritual, the RYM conference seemed seriously to be attacking some real problems crucial to the success of a revolutionary movement in this country, and the fight for an end to male domination and oppression was key.

It was the women who in fact projected major principles for the organization: unless all allies on the Left get together, imperialism will never be defeated. Unless all women join together, male supremacy will never be defeated. And unless male supremacy is defeated, men and women will never be able to gather maximum strength together in the fight against common enemies.

There is no doubt that a sense of unity among the women who attended was the goal of the RYM committee which planned the meetings. The efforts almost failed, however. The entire weekend was a process of delving below the surface events to weed out tendencies toward manipulation and dishonesty which almost destroyed the sense of common understanding among the women. A struggle, but we made it.

A review of the recent development of Women's Liberation reveals that disunity and infighting are not new to the movement. During the year following the Chicago 1968 meeting, women who defined themselves as politically radical tended to separate themselves from groups emphasizing repeal of abortion laws, the burden of housework, or "brainwashing" about femininity. These issues, said the radicals, do not point to the real problems of black and low-income women, the most oppressed in our society.

The importance of unity and the responsibility of more political women to work with their sisters toward political understanding was generally ignored. For those of us in Atlanta, this had particular significance. Several Atlanta RYM women were once members of the Atlanta Women's Liberation group with women from the *Bird* staff, but left because of our refusal to become a caucus of SDS. Those who left, and those who stayed in Women's Lib, failed mutually in not putting unity ahead of differences in politics, approach and style. None of us had learned how to relate on a basis of conflict through dialogue, retaining our unity as women.

For many of us who attended the Women's Conference, then, despite the verbal emphasis on unity, behavior of certain of the RYM women, both before and during the conference, seemed divisive and exclusive.

Members of several independent women's groups such as ours, and women from other organizations such as the Young Socialist Alliance, came on the understanding that the conference was not restricted to women formally affiliated with RYM. The pre-conference literature had encouraged general participation.

At the opening of the conference, however, several of the RYM women pushed exclusion of women who were members of "organized tendencies" such as the Young Socialist Alliance, for failure to fight racism and male supremacy. It was argued on the other hand by several women that excluding these women was a failure to support them in fighting these battles within their own organizations. But the vote to exclude passed, with most independent women in opposition.

In the uneasy calm after the exclusion vote, the conference forged ahead in an attempt to establish our "basis for unity" as a women's caucus. The day of intense discussion resulted in unanimous acceptance of the following:

—that all women must unite to defeat male su-

premacy;

—that black and brown women put the fight against white supremacy ahead of the fight against male supremacy;

—that the defeat of white supremacy must be the primary goal of the entire women's movement, to secure unity with black and brown women.

We strongly support these principles. We were pleased, as well, that the conference generally agreed that RYM women should move out of tight, elite, political circles to work with other women's groups, including those with less radical analysis. The purpose intended, of course, is to educate more women to a more radical approach to women's liberation—beyond critique of the Miss America image, to united support for the struggles of black and working class women.

But despite these positive resolutions, the undercurrent of manipulation and elitism remained up to the final day of the RYM conference.

During the women's meeting Thursday, there were unprincipled attacks on women members of the Bay Area Revolutionary Union (San Francisco), attempting to discredit both their theory and practice. These attacks, including use of out-of-context quotes from outdated literature, quibbling on "correct" usage of certain terms, and expressing doubt even after women had explained themselves in terms of their organizing practice, heightened growing feelings of distrust among some of us.

The tension finally broke in the general session Saturday when a question arose as to which woman, if any, was to speak on the definition of the black nation in this country. The "national question" had been considered crucial to the conference long before it convened. In an emergency women's caucus which resulted from the confusion, one ARYM woman criticized herself for the attempt to use the demand for a "representative of the woman's caucus" in order to have her political position on the national question presented.

There was some feeling that she and other RYM women had been using the women's caucus as a "political football" and thus exploiting other women. These suspicions on the part of several of the independent Atlanta women had militated against our full participation in the caucus throughout the weekend. Inasmuch as we did little to articulate our misgivings about the caucus, the role we played (or refused to play) in the caucus is very much open to criticism. As participants in the caucus, it was incumbent upon us to struggle with our sisters toward a real unity. And to deal openly with any manipulation that prevented that struggle from being an honest and principled one. This we failed to do.

In that final hour of the Saturday women's caucus, real attempts were made to cut through the manipulation and rhetoric, to deal honestly with each other as sisters in very real struggles. If the honesty which characterized most of that caucus is maintained, the concept of "unity" may yet be achieved, with all women, and in our struggle toward a new society.

—sally gabb with stephanie coffin, nan guerrero, pam gwin, becky hamilton, and barbara joye

The following proposals to fight male supremacy were formulated by the Women's Caucus and adopted by RYM-II as part of the organization's program:

1. At least 50% of all decision-making bodies in RYM-II shall be women, elected by women.
2. There is to be equal sharing of household work in collectives; failure to do so will be handled by the collective.
3. A permanent Women's Committee is to be elected by women to: review all RYM policy to guard against male supremacist thinking; set up a self-defense program for all RYM women; maintain communication among RYM women.
4. RYM will do mass organizing on the following issues:
 - child care centers for all women
 - health care centers for all women
 - welfare rights
 - racial and sexual equality on the job
 - open admissions to schools, an end to tracking and other racially and sexually discriminatory devices in the schools
5. RYM will organize a week of actions around the country building for International Women's Day on March 8, demonstrating solidarity with oppressed women and people around the world.

RYM CONFERENCE