

Strategy for a Mass Women's Liberation Movement



Young Socialist Discussion Bulletin
Volume 15, No. 4

25 cents

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October 28, 1971

Published by:

Young Socialist Alliance
P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, N. Y. 10003

Price 25¢

This draft resolution on the Women's Liberation movement was written for the Young Socialist National Convention to be held in the Civic Center Music Hall in Houston, Texas, December 28 - January 1. This resolution was drafted by the National Executive Committee of the Young Socialist Alliance.

Similar resolutions and discussion articles deal with the movement for Chicano liberation, the struggles of African-Americans for self-determination, the high school and antiwar movements, and the general political perspectives for revolutionary socialist youth in the U.S. These initial draft resolutions, along with any others submitted to the convention, will be discussed and the general political perspectives outlined in them will be voted on.

The resolutions are being circulated prior to the convention to assure the fullest possible discussion on political perspectives and activities before the convention meets.

Young socialists from around the country are invited to participate in the written discussion and urged to attend the convention. Contributions to the discussion and inquiries can be sent to the Young Socialist Alliance, P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station, New York, N. Y. 10003.

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- Marty April 2014

The feminist movement of today is unleashing the pent up creative energies, anger, and strivings that women have been forced to repress for centuries. An increasing number of women are no longer willing to take the blame for their own oppression, but are putting the blame where it belongs-- on the social institutions of class society.

Women today are awakening to see the gap between the growing potential to control their own lives and bodies and what the actual conditions are. A blatant contradiction still exists between the increased amount of education for females on all levels and the fact the women are still discriminated against on the job. Women constitute 43 percent of the U. S. work force but are paid about 40 percent less than men. Women not only get paid less than men for the same jobs, but most are restricted to low-paying "women's" jobs. Women must do all that is necessary to maintain the household, yet if a woman works outside the home, she has to do two jobs, and is discriminated against on the job besides.

This society has the technological potential and wealth to send expeditions to the moon, and billions of dollars are spent on a despised war in Southeast Asia, yet women still do not have safe contraceptives and legal abortions. This contradiction has spurred women to challenge the reactionary abortion and contraception laws which dictate that since the traditional role of women has been restricted to being wives and mothers, women must actually be forced into compulsory pregnancy and motherhood.

Although the women's liberation movement is not yet a movement involving masses of women, it has already had a considerable impact on mass consciousness. The movement for repeal of the laws which restrict women's right to abortion has received widespread sympathy and support. Literally thousands of women are filing suits for equal pay, equal job opportunities, equal education, maternity leaves, as well as challenging unemployment discrimination. In the fiscal year of 1971 alone, 7000 suits were filed for equal job opportunity and equal pay, almost double the amount filed last year.

Another indication of the impact of the feminist movement is the way that it has spread to countries in every part of the world. The Philippines had its first women's liberation demonstration last June. On September 6 of this year, 500 nurses marched in Malasia demanding equal pay. And for the first time since women won the vote in New Zealand in 1893, Woman Suffrage Day was commemorated this year.

The women's liberation movement is having an impact not only on masses of women and men in this country and internationally, but on the American bourgeoisie and its institutions as well. The response of the ruling class already shows their recognition of this movement and their fear of its growing strength. A national child-care bill recently passed by Con-

gress reflects the growing pressure for child-care facilities and has helped spark a discussion on the need for society to take responsibility for the welfare of children. For the first time in history, the appointment of a woman as a Supreme Court Justice was seriously discussed in government circles and raised as a real possibility. The Democratic Party is planning a special conference to discuss the role of women in the upcoming Democratic convention and in the 1972 election campaign.

A Business Week survey reports that in job patterns around the nation, women are employed in a wider variety of jobs, in a higher level of responsibility, and at a higher level of pay than ever before. And The New York Times reports that for the first time in a decade, the pay differential between men and women is beginning to narrow instead of widening as it has done every other year.

While some gains have been made in recent years, they have been forced from the ruling class only under great pressure. The recent defeats of two equal rights antidiscrimination bills in Congress are indications of resistance to the struggle of women for equality and of the need to build a powerful mass feminist movement that can counter the governments's attacks on the rights of women.

The wage freeze and Nixon's program of wage controls are a clear indication of what the bourgeoisie needs to do in order to maintain the stability of the capitalist system. In attacking the wages of the working class, Nixon also upholds the subordinate pay level of women and the oppressed nationalities. He not only holds down the wages of the working people at a substandard level, but he maintains the inequality in pay between men and women, thus helping to freeze the second-rate status of women. In essence, Nixon has put an official seal on the oppression of women.

But the wage freeze and controls, and the maintainance of the laws that oppress women, will backfire. Women are one of the most poorly paid sectors of the working class, and they are already fighting back and demanding more. Women are learning through experience that it is the independent organization and mobilization of masses of women that will bring about changes. Today we are beginning to see in concrete terms the potential the feminist movement has to grow into a powerful mass revolutionary force.

FEMINIST ORGANIZATION

As feminist consciousness begins to spread to masses of women, the women's liberation movement will continue to grow, take many organizational forms, and be concerned with many different issues. Already segments of women who suffer their own particular form of oppression have begun to organize--

students, Blacks, Chicanas, unionists, etc.

Campus and high school women are playing and will continue to play a key role in the feminist movement. By fighting for such things as campus abortion and birth control services, women's studies departments, and university financing of child-care facilities, student activists are struggling to win greater control over university facilities. Campus organizations are playing a vanguard role in helping to build the women's liberation movement off-campus.

Feminist organizations exist on nearly every campus and have been central to building the national abortion action campaign. By providing an example of struggle, by forming coalitions with off-campus women, and by using campus facilities to help the feminist movement as a whole, campuses can be turned into organizing centers to reach out to broader layers of oppressed women.

High school women encounter a great deal of discrimination because they are oppressed not only as women, but because of their age. High school women are usually expelled from school when they get pregnant, but are denied access to birth control and abortion information and services because they are "under age." In the high schools, women are channeled into courses that are designed to train them for an inferior role in society. High school women also have to face higher college admission standards than do men.

Women's organizations have begun to appear in many high schools. In a few areas there are citywide high school women's coalitions which are demanding birth control, abortion, and venereal disease information and services.

Black women, Chicanas, and women of other oppressed nationalities make up the most oppressed sector of the population. They are oppressed as women, as an oppressed nationality, and as members of the working class. In response to the special form of oppression they suffer, Black women and Chicanas have begun to form their own feminist organizations in some areas, and have played a vanguard role in the formation of working women's organizations such as Federally Employed Women.

The participation of Black women and Chicanas in the abortion struggle is also helping to cut across the myth that women's liberation has nothing to do with them. Black, Chicana, and Asian groups have begun to affiliate with the campaign and in a few cities Black women have started to form organizations such as Black Women United for Abortion Law Repeal.

Women have also begun to organize on the job, both inside and outside the established unions, to fight for job equality. The number of strikes by women workers is increasing as more and more women unionists are looking to the women's liberation movement as an example of struggle.

In recent months, a number of unions have taken positions

supporting specific women's demands. The United Electrical Workers at its convention in September passed a program on "The Rights and Protection of Women Workers." It includes resolutions for paid maternity leaves, and the right of women to 24-hour child-care centers. They also passed a resolution "to work more closely with women's organizations committed to goals of equality for women."

Many unions, including national unions such as the United Automobile Workers and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, already have official positions for the repeal of all antiabortion laws. Some union leaders now support the WONAAC abortion campaign, and the potential for further union support is very great.

The first small stirrings within organized labor in response to the growth of the feminist movement is very significant, and a real indication of the potential power of the women's liberation movement.

STRATEGY FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION

The YSA's strategy for the feminist movement is based on the understanding that a social revolution which eliminates capitalism is necessary in order to free women from oppression. The subjugation of women is a product of class society and is maintained primarily through the mechanism of the patriarchal family system. In the advanced capitalist industrial societies today, the role forced upon women as domestic slaves, and the lack of cooperative child-care, cleaning and cooking facilities which would give women a choice about what they want to do with their lives, is the primary cause of the subordination of women.

Capitalism must maintain the patriarchal family as a basic economic unit because it is the fundamental mechanism through which individuals--and not society as a whole--are made responsible for caring for basic human needs such as clothing, shelter, food, education, and medical care, and it is a vehicle through which class differences are perpetuated. By maintaining the role of women in the home, the patriarchal family system also provides the rationalization for the superexploitation of women on the job by forcing masses of female workers into a role as marginal and temporary members of the labor force.

The family also plays an important role for the capitalist system by inculcating the norms and ideology of the private property system. Women and children are trained to be obedient and submissive to the "head of the household," the husband. This instills authoritarian values and reinforces the inferior role that women are forced to play.

Because capitalism cannot meet the needs of women for full liberation, a program which mobilizes masses of women in struggle around concrete issues which relate to their needs leads in an anticapitalist and revolutionary direction. Struggles for such things as the right to abortion, childcare, equal

pay, equal job opportunity, and equal education are of necessity directed against the government and the institutions which oppress women. It is through such struggles that masses of women begin to understand the source of their oppression and the need for a socialist revolution.

The independence of the feminist movement is the key to its continuing growth. Rather than relying on the Democratic and Republican parties which are controlled by the capitalist class, women must see that their power lies in the mass mobilization of women as an independent force.

THE ABORTION STRUGGLE

Abortion is the main issue around which large numbers of women have begun to struggle as women at this time. Even before the emergence of the feminist movement, abortion law reform and abortion law repeal groups existed in several parts of the country. But it has only been since the entrance of the feminist movement into the fight to repeal the restrictive abortion laws that the abortion law repeal movement has involved large numbers of women in struggle with the focus on a woman's right to choose.

The denial of legal abortions is one of the most fundamental and most apparent aspects of female oppression and the issue of abortion is of great concern to every woman. The fact that women are subject to pregnancy is one of the primary reasons used to discriminate against women, to keep women "in their place" in the home, and to discriminate against women on the job.

All the recent opinion polls show that the majority of women favor the right to abortion. In Washington state a referendum showed that 55 percent of the people favored legalizing abortion, although with the consent of the husband or parents. In Massachusetts a poll showed that 62 percent favored abortion on demand, and 45 percent of those who were Catholic favored the same. The courts and legislatures have been deluged with class action suits and challenges to the existing abortion laws. In just the last year suits were filed in 35 state courts, and more state legislatures considered abortion legislation, and more total repeal bills were filed than in any previous year.

One indicator of the depth of sentiment for the repeal of all laws which restrict women's right to abortion is the numerous and varied organizations which have repeal positions and even call for a woman's right to decide. Organizations from the American Home Economics Association to the White House Conference on Children and Youth advocate the repeal of all antiabortion laws and the right of women to choose whether or not to have an abortion. The first national Chicana conference last May adopted a resolution for free abortion on demand.

The abortion struggle is an international struggle. In no

country have women won the unconditional right to control their own bodies. Women in Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, England, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have become involved in the campaign for the repeal of all antiabortion laws. International solidarity and actions can thus become a powerful force in the attempt to strike down the reactionary abortion laws and allow women to control their own bodies.

In the U.S. every state has laws which either deny or limit women's right to abortion. And in every state right-wing forces have launched an offensive to uphold the reactionary laws and take back the small gains that women have won. Nixon has revoked the right of military women to abortions on demand under the pretext of believing in the "sanctity of human life." Muskie has also attacked women's right to abortion. The Catholic Church uses the pulpit to label abortion as "murder" and to urge people not to vote for pro-abortion candidates. The Church has spearheaded the formation of "Right to Life" and "Friends of the Fetus" groups, carrying out a well-organized campaign in New York to try to roll back the reforms that have been won and to prevent similar gains elsewhere. In New York more than 30 bills were introduced this past year in an attempt to weaken the liberalized abortion law.

With the strong sentiment of women in favor of abortion law repeal, and the fact that government and right-wing forces are already beginning to organize to withhold this right, it is imperative that the feminist movement play a major role in the fight to repeal restrictive abortion laws. The Women's National Abortion Conference attended by over 1000 women last July demonstrated the potential that a nationwide abortion campaign has to mobilize broad layers of women in action, and the support the campaign has received since then confirms this potential.

The campaign for repeal of all antiabortion laws, no forced sterilization, and the repeal of all restrictive contraception laws represents an opportunity for the women's liberation movement to take a major step forward in becoming a mass movement. By picking out the specific issue of abortion law repeal, and by organizing around it, the feminist movement, which is still small, can make an impact on American society.

This campaign can show that the feminist movement is serious, that it is fighting for basic changes that women need and want, and that it can force concessions from the ruling class. By putting the government of the spot, launching a fight that can realistically win victories, the abortion campaign can give an impetus to the feminist movement as a whole and begin to cut across the myth that women cannot organize as an effective political power.

Because no one organization can represent or mobilize all those women who want to participate in struggle such as that for abortion law repeal, united front-type coalitions,

composed of many different organizations and individuals, are essential if struggles involving masses of women are to be waged. By being specific about their demands and methods, action coalitions can unite women from varied backgrounds and political beliefs and can reach out to organizations and individuals which have not been involved in the women's liberation movement up to this time.

Coalitions with explicit goals can make unambiguous demands on the government and unite broad layers of women in struggle against government policies. When a coalition organizes an action around a specific, concrete demand, it is clear to the public and to masses of women what the demonstrations and the whole campaign are all about. Organized around a specific demand that has come to the forefront in American politics, these coalitions are a vehicle for uniting the greatest number of women in the most powerful struggle.

The formation of the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC), which seeks to unite Black women, Chicanas, working women, students, and others around an issue which is relevant to all women, is an important example of how women suffering from different forms and degrees of oppression can unite and fight for the rights of all women in a meaningful and effective way.

OPPONENTS OF A MASS ACTION ABORTION CAMPAIGN

There are a number of groups and tendencies which are opposed to building an abortion law repeal campaign in such a way that it can become truly massive. These tendencies could be roughly categorized as 1) the conscious reformists, 2) Women for the Inclusion of Sexual Expression (WISE) and other counter-institutionists and "living-room feminists," and 3) International Socialists (IS) and other sectarians.

REFORMISTS

The conscious reformists proceed from the assumption that it is possible to achieve women's liberation under capitalism. They have the perspective of working through the existing capitalist parties--the Democrats and Republicans--to achieve their goals. They see small-scale lobbying, and organizing support for capitalist party candidates, as the only effective action, and counterpose these activities to the consistent building of mass, independent mobilizations of women. At best they see occasional mass mobilizations as a means of pressure on the Democratic and Republican parties, rather than building a movement independent of them. The reformists are the most significant bloc to building independent actions involving masses of women, especially during election periods.

The conscious reformists in the women's movement are represented by Democratic party politicians such as Bella Abzug and Shirley Chisholm, a section of the leadership of

the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the leadership of the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC).

The conscious reformist approach of many NOW leaders was seen at the last NOW convention when a section of the NOW leadership opposed giving endorsement to the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition. They view the national abortion campaign as a competitor to their orientation of directing the women's liberation movement toward working for the campaigns of capitalist politicians. They are not interested in building mass actions around an explicit demand like abortion law repeal, which many liberal candidates will not support.

Most of the members of NOW, however, and many women in the NWPC are not conscious reformists. While they may have illusions about the bourgeois parties, they do not see a contradiction between working for capitalist liberals and organizing mass women's liberation actions. These women can be strong supporters of the abortion campaign, and through this experience some of them can be won away from the capitalist parties. Already many NOW chapters, a chapter of the NWPC and many individual women--including leaders--from these organizations have endorsed WONAAC.

WISE

Women for the Inclusion of Sexual Expression (WISE) was formed as a caucus after the June 12 planning meeting for the Women's National Abortion Conference, drawing together those women who wanted to add the demand for "freedom of sexual expression" to the other proposed demands of the abortion action campaign. In actuality, many of these women were opposed to a mass action campaign for abortion law repeal, and they attempted to use their proposal for adding another demand to the campaign to cover over their basic opposition to a mass abortion action.

Many of the WISE women have a utopian perspective. They think it is possible to achieve women's liberation without challenging the capitalist system, without making demands on the government, and without attempting to take over the wealth and institutions of this society. Some feel that abortion counseling, health services, and other institutions set up by the women's movement can, in and of themselves, meet the needs of women, and that it is incorrect to demand that the social institutions that already exist be transformed to meet women's needs.

Others feel that small-group consciousness-raising, and achieving a "liberated" life style is the only road to women's liberation, as opposed to mass actions by women. They think that changing the consciousness of individual women--rather than changing society--is the key. They do not see that it is through struggle against their oppression, and not primarily through discussions, that women's consciousness is changed.

Of course there are many women who are involved in abortion counseling or clinics who are in consciousness-raising groups, or who are interested in freer life styles, but who are also for building a mass movement of women to fight for the needs of women. A crucial distinction must be made between these women and those who counterpose counter-institutions or life styles to building a mass movement of struggle.

Since the conference, supporters of WISE have continued to organize in several parts of the country and go by various names, such as Feminist Organization for Communication and Service (FOCAS) in New York City. Their opposition to a mass action abortion campaign is reflected in the fact that they have refused to be active in the national antiabortion law repeal campaign, and have organized no alternative to it although they say that a campaign focused on abortion law repeal is a necessity.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

International Socialists (IS) has a sectarian approach that leads it to stand aside from a potential mass movement, attempting to differentiate itself from it rather than building and linking up with it.

In the women's movement their orientation has fluctuated from time to time. They oppose building a mass action campaign based on abortion law repeal. They oppose uniting the women's liberation movement to fight for a single issue such as abortion law repeal, and they feel that the demand for repeal does not relate to working women or poor women. Instead, they raise "free abortion on demand" as the necessary slogan to raise at this time.

IS characterises the legalization of abortion as a "symbolic victory" because they feel it would not make any significant difference in the ability of poor women to obtain safe, low-cost abortions. This position does not recognize the fact that the main reason abortions today are prohibitively expensive is because they are illegal. Legalizing abortions would mean making them available to millions of women. The YSA is for free abortions just as it is for free medical care for all, but the central problem for women today is to make abortions available and legal. This must be the first fight the women's liberation movement takes on.

IS tends to have the view that the more "radical" the demand is, the more radical the action will be, and that raising many demands at once is more radical than focusing on one. The YSA uses a different criteria for deciding what demands it will fight for at any particular time. Our criteria is that in addition to being politically correct and principled, the demand must meet the needs of, and relate to the present consciousness of masses of women. Our aim is to bring to bear the power of women through mass mobilizations. Actions around specific, clear-cut demands can best do this.

Rather than relating to the struggles that are going on and organizing around the demands that correspond to the con-

sciousness of masses of women, IS attempts to substitute its own consciousness for the consciousness of the masses.

What IS does not agree with is the need for a transitional approach to building the movement. That is, the need for conscious socialists and conscious feminists to participate in struggle with masses of women who are beginning to fight for their basic needs, and to help direct this movement squarely against the ruling class. Their orientation represents a rejection of building a movement that can mobilize the masses.

RED-BAITING

Each of these three antimass-action tendencies have used red-baiting attacks against the YSA. This tactic is an attempt to conceal their political differences concerning the perspective for building the feminist movement by diverting the discussion away from the political issues at stake and by prejudicing women against carrying out an open discussion with the supporters of a mass action perspective.

Instead of fully debating the issue and the disagreements involved, they invoke anti-socialist prejudices, accusing the YSA of trying to "infiltrate," "dominate," or "take over" the feminist movement. The best example of this was the September 4 - 6 NOW convention, where an attempt was made by a section of the NOW leadership to censure the YSA and the SWP for supposedly trying to "divide and exploit the feminist movement for their own goals and purposes."

Whenever red-baiting occurs, it should be taken head on and explained for exactly what it is--an attempt to use the anti-socialist prejudices inculcated into people in this society by the ruling class to discredit a revolutionary organization and prevent people from seriously considering the program that it fights for.

We can expect that red-baiting like that which took place at the NOW convention and the Women's National Abortion Conference will continue as long as the opponents of mass action in the feminist movement attempt to avoid the basic political questions raised by the YSA. Because the question at stake in these debates is how best to build the movement, it is imperative that there be clear, calm, democratic discussion on all questions. Only this way will the largest possible number of women be informed about the real issues and be able to participate in making the strategy of the movement.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE YOUNG WORKERS LIBERATION LEAGUE

One of the groups which has not participated in its own name in any significant way in feminist organizations is the Communist Party and the Young Workers Liberation League (YWLL) which is in political agreement with and supports the

CP. The general approach of the CP towards the women's liberation movement has thus far been one of general hostility. The CP feels that the struggle for women's liberation is not as important as other struggles, that the struggle of women as women has no real legitimacy as an independent movement, that its effect is to divide the working class.

This general perspective flows from two things. First is their support to the Soviet Union's policy of peaceful co-existence with world capitalism and hence their need to deflect in a reformist direction all mass struggles challenging capitalist stability. As the 1972 elections approach, the CP will join with the Democrats and Republicans in an attempt to orient the women's liberation movement in the direction of giving support to the capitalist liberals.

Second is their defense of the reactionary domestic policies of the Soviet bureaucracy. The women's liberation movement in the U. S. and around the world represents a challenge to the subordinate place of women in the Soviet Union. The CP also rejects the traditional Marxist analysis of the family, refusing to see it as an economic institution that subjugates women. Instead, they romanticize the degree to which unalienated human relationships are possible within the existing patriarchal family system in this country and the U. S. S. R. , and even hail the family as a "revolutionary force. "

The CP has given little support to the WONAAC abortion campaign, and gives little coverage to the abortion struggle in its press. Although in theory they support the right to abortion, in practice they do not like the abortion struggle because they understand that this right hits squarely at the foundations of the family institution and the subjugation of women. Despite their coolness to the abortion struggle, as the national abortion campaign progresses and attracts broader support, we can expect that the CP will be forced to relate to it and participate in it.

THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND THE '72 ELECTIONS

As the '72 elections approach, women in the women's liberation movement around the country have begun to discuss the question of how the women's movement can relate to the elections. Around the country there has been great interest in the formation of the National Women's Political Caucus.

In its Statement of Purpose, the NWPC states that the election of women candidates to office--federal, state, and local--is one of their principal goals. They claim to be "a nonpartisan organization, mobilizing women of all political persuasions for active participation and power in political parties and government. . . determined to elect a just proportion of women delegates to political party conventions, and to have an equitable number of women candidates on the slates of political parties at all levels. "

In many areas initial meetings of the NWPC have been quite large. Many of these women are not conscious reformists but are attracted to the NWPC because they see it as a vehicle for putting the demands of women before the public and fighting for candidates who will represent the interests of women.

While the leaders of the NWPC have stated that they are open to supporting candidates of all political parties, in actuality they have oriented almost exclusively towards the election of candidates through the Democratic and Republican parties. Their leaders and spokespeople are Democratic Party politicians such as Bella Abzug and Shirley Chisholm. Members of their Policy Council and the initial convenors of the NWPC include many state Democratic Party officials.

Some of the tendencies in the NWPC which are most active in orienting towards the Republican and Democratic parties are also opposed to the national campaign to repeal all antiabortion laws and the perspective of mass action. They counterpose gaining elected offices to the independent women's liberation struggles. This approach is reflective of the reformists in every mass movement, especially in the antiwar and Black liberation struggles, who attempt to take the independent movements off the streets and into the election booths to vote for the Democratic Party liberals.

Women cannot fight for their liberation by joining or relying in any way on the Democratic and Republican parties which have fostered and maintained the oppression of women. The capitalist parties have interests that are diametrically opposed to the needs of women. In all the years that the Democratic and Republican parties have ruled this country, they have worked to perpetuate this sexist and racist social system. Because these two parties are controlled by the capitalist class, they support the system which puts private profits ahead of the interests of the majority of people in this country.

Those who control the Democratic and Republican parties are the millionaire businessmen, landlords, and bankers who benefit from the oppression of women. They benefit from the low wages that women are forced to accept, and the free labor that women perform in the home. These same parties will not support a program that can free women because it would cost them too much and its implications are too far-reaching. They cannot give women equal wages, equal opportunities, free 24-hour childcare centers, etc. and still maintain this capitalist system bases on inequality and exploitation.

Not only can women not rely on the Republicans and Democrats to win liberation, but to even win reforms takes the power of an independent mass movement. This was illustrated in the case of the suffrage movement, and also by the current movement for the right to abortion which has had a great impact on legislatures across the country.

What is needed for women to win victories and gain liber-

ation is political action independent of the Republican and Democratic parties. For the feminist movement today the most effective kind of political action is mass action-oriented struggles against women's oppression. Struggles like the campaign to repeal antiabortion laws have the power to unite women into a significant force which is able to win concessions from the ruling class, expose the government for its refusal to meet the needs of women, and continue to build the power of women united in struggle. All participation by feminists in the elections--if it is to serve the interests of women--must be oriented toward reinforcing independence from capitalist parties and toward building a mass action women's liberation movement.

When feminists participate in the elections, they are faced with all issues, not only those pertaining to women. This is because when running for political office--unlike when demonstrating around a particular demand on the government--a political party makes a bid to take over the state apparatus. It must present a program dealing with all political questions.

Thus, any candidate and any party must take sides in the class divisions and national divisions in capitalist society as well as dealing with women's oppression.

The oppression of women is produced by class society and perpetuated by the current form of class society, capitalism. The abolition of capitalism is a precondition for the total liberation of women. Therefore, the only political parties that can possibly serve the interests of women are not those which support the capitalist system, but those which represent a break from, and opposition to, capitalist politics. Only those parties and candidates which stand on the side of the working class and on the side of the oppressed nationalities, as well as on the side of women's liberation can represent the needs of women.

It is not in the interests of feminists to support the capitalist Democratic or Republican parties in the elections and then demonstrate the next day against the government run by these very same parties which refuse to support even the fundamental right of women to control their own bodies.

Examples of independent political action undertaken by a sector of the oppressed are the La Raza Unida Parties which have formed in Texas, California, and Colorado. These parties run candidates against the Democrats and Republicans. Through La Raza Unida Parties the Chicano people are organizing to take control of Chicano communities and struggle for their self-determination. Similarly, the formation of a Black political party could mean a tremendous step forward for the Black liberation struggle, including the Black women's liberation movement.

Working women can be in the vanguard of challenging the conservatized trade union leadership, a leadership that betrays the interests of its own membership through its support for the

Democratic and Republican parties and the status quo. A part of this transformation of the unions must be for labor to break from the Democratic and Republican parties and to fight for its own interests through its own political party. Women will insist that the program of such a party reflect the special needs of women. A labor party based on the trade unions and breaking with the parties of the capitalist class would be a powerful ally of women in the struggle for liberation.

Key to the struggle for the liberation of women and all oppressed people will be the building of a mass revolutionary socialist party. The 1972 Socialist Workers Party (SWP) election campaign will attempt to win as many people as possible to the perspective of building such a party. The SWP election campaign gives total support to all the mass movements which are challenging the status quo, and fights for the perspective of mobilizing masses of working people, oppressed nationalities, and women to fight for their needs and to challenge the capitalist government responsible for maintaining class, sexual, and national oppression.

The leadership of the NWPC counterposes work in the elections to support for the mass women's liberation movement. The SWP election campaign, rather than counterposing itself to the mass movements, gives them its wholehearted support. Supporters of the SWP campaign are actively involved in building mass actions, movements, and parties which are independent of the ruling class.

THE TASKS OF THE YSA

One of our main tasks in the period ahead will be to help build the nationwide coordinated campaign for the repeal of all restrictive abortion laws. Central to the campaign will be to help build a viable national coalition and local coalitions that can carry out the activities of the campaign in all areas of the country. An essential part of the campaign will be the establishing of abortion groups or women's liberation groups on the campuses and in the high schools which can focus on the abortion issue. These groups will be the backbone of the coalitions by providing the bulk of activists, and some of the material resources necessary to the development of the campaign.

In helping to build the national abortion campaign, coalitions should reach out to involve broad new layers of women who have not previously been active in the feminist movement, especially trade union women and working women, and Black, Chicana, Puerto Rican, and Asian-American women.

As sentiment against the war in Southeast Asia continues to deepen, we want to help mobilize women against the war, including the organization of united women's contingents in mass actions against the war.

The 1972 Socialist Workers Party election campaign has

the potential for winning large numbers of women to the ideas of feminism and revolutionary socialism. Already, there has been a very enthusiastic response to the idea of a woman running for president on a socialist platform. We can expect that many women who have never been involved in politics before will be anxious to participate actively in building the Jenness-Pulley campaign. The establishing of Young Socialists for Jenness and Pulley and obtaining Women for Jenness and Pulley endorsements will be the primary ways that feminists are exposed to our entire feminist and socialist program and are won to the revolutionary socialist movement.

Getting new subscribers and selling individual copies of The Militant and the International Socialist Review is important for presenting an on-going analysis of issues in the feminist movement and for discussing our strategy for socialist revolution. Here feminists can see discussed all the issues which are in the forefront of politics here and around the world. Also, presenting our revolutionary Marxist ideas through our literature on women's liberation will continue to be an important task.

Our participation in building the antiwar, student, Black, and Chicano liberation movements has given us a great deal of experience which we can use to help build the feminist movement, but at the same time there is a great deal that can be learned from this new and growing movement. YSAers should read the literature that comes out of the feminist movement, and educational activities on specific issues in the women's liberation movement should be organized on a regular basis.

As more and more feminists are won to a revolutionary socialist perspective and begin to join the YSA it will be important to educate these new members and integrate them into the whole functioning of the YSA. Women will join on the basis of our entire program and our perspectives for making a revolution in the United States. Within the YSA they can develop into revolutionists with a rounded understanding of all aspects of our basic political and organizational concepts and contribute to the revolutionary movement necessary for making a socialist revolution which will overthrow the decaying capitalist system.

Young Socialist Alliance
P. O. Box 471, Cooper Station
New York, New York 10003

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CONVENTION ARRANGEMENTS WRITE OR CALL YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE, P.O. BOX 471, COOPER STATION, NY, NY 10003 (212) 989-7570/HOUSTON YSA, 6409 LYONS AVE., HOUSTON, TEXAS 77020 (713) 674-0612/OR FOR LOCAL INFORMATION