

# YSA

# Discussion Bulletin

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## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ATLANTA'S EXPERIENCE WITH ERA WORK, By Sarah Ryan and Julia Scott, Atlanta local	3
TWO PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAFT POLITICAL RESOLUTION, By John Sidebottom and Larry Thomas, Milwaukee local	6
FOR UNIVERSAL UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY AND A NEW GI BILL! By John Sidebottom, Milwaukee local	7
NOTES AND COMMENTS, By Dave Brandt, Rochester, N.Y., At-large	11
MORE ON OPPONENT WORK, By Douglas Pensack, Detroit local	13
NEW OPENINGS FOR BUILDING THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT, By Nancy Brown, Brooklyn, New York local	15

## ATLANTA'S EXPERIENCE WITH ERA WORK

By Sarah Ryan and Julia Scott, Atlanta local

Since the summer of 1973, the campaign for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment has been one of the major priorities of the Atlanta YSA and Socialist Workers party. The ERA has also become the central focus of the women's movement in Georgia. The ERA movement in Georgia has been the most consistently active ERA campaign in the country; Georgians for the ERA has sponsored two mass demonstrations of 1,000 and 1,500 and is recognized as the central ERA group in the state. We feel the ERA demonstration in Florida last year of 3,000 was inspired by the success of the Georgia demonstrations. Socialist are recognized as being in the central leadership of the movement for women's rights and twenty-two women have joined the YSA since the work began. The lessons of this work can be applied throughout the country by comrades and ERA activists.

The Equal Rights Amendment is facing a serious challenge from the right wing and is in danger of being defeated nationally. It is one of the most fundamental pieces of democratic rights legislation ever introduced. Its opponents are the same, or walk hand in hand, with the racist antibusing forces, the opponents of legal abortion, and even right wing terrorists like the Klan. The ERA's defeat would not only be a serious setback for the women's liberation movement, but for all struggles for democratic rights. Women are still not legal persons under the U. S. Constitution, and until the ERA is ratified many of the gains women have made under the Equal Pay Act, the Civil Rights Act, and other pieces of legislation may be viewed as temporary. In addition, there are still hundreds of laws that discriminate on the basis of sex that must be challenged individually without the ERA. The passage of the ERA would give women the legal authority of the Constitution to back them up when they challenge discrimination.

Revolutionary socialists are the most determined fighters for democratic rights, and we recognize that any major democratic right that the American working class has won has not been won without a struggle-- from the Bill of Rights to the Civil Rights Act. The ERA itself came out of the struggle of the suffragists and was given serious consideration in the 1970s only because the women's movement was out in the streets. Thirty states ratified the ERA during the first two years after its approval by Congress, and many made the mistake of believing that the ERA would be easily ratified without a mass action campaign. Since 1973, only four states have ratified the ERA and the prospects look dimmer as each year passes. Tennessee and Nebraska have rescinded their ratification, and although this is not legal according to the Supreme Court, it sets a very dangerous trend. The New York and New Jersey defeats of state ERAs have been the most serious setback yet and are being used by the right wing to attempt further rescissions and to prevent ratification by the four more states needed.

These defeats must serve as a call to action of all ERA supporters for a national mass action campaign for ratification. The right wing effort to stop the ERA is a nationally coordinated one; pro-ERA forces can't fight effectively without a broad national effort. It is clear that a majority of the population nationally supports the ERA. Virtually every labor union, every civil rights organization, every feminist organization, even the majority of women's church councils support the ERA. The major weaknesses of the ERA movement are: 1) to date, mass actions for the ERA have been held only sporadically with the exception of Georgia, where our intervention was key, and 2) a nationally coordinated campaign has never been launched.

Women in each state have had to fight isolated struggles without national support, except in the cases of the lobbying efforts carried out by NOW, the League of Women Voters, and others. All of the organizations that support the ERA have not been united in a national coalition. These weaknesses need to be corrected or the ERA may be defeated. It must be ratified by 1979, which does not leave much time to build the kind of campaign that is needed.

The National Organization for Women has been viewed by many as the primary group that works for the ERA; however, NOW's campaign for the ERA has been timid and has only included mass action in a few isolated cases. NOW has also been a bit sectarian with the ERA ratification fights and has not drawn broad coalitions together with unions, Black organizations, and other women's groups that could really unite to fight for the ERA. NOW leaders still rely primarily on electing friendly legislators; for instance, in Florida no pro-ERA activities are being planned. Instead, NOW believes the way to win the ERA is to get rid of four unfriendly legislators in the 1976 elections. The majority of those organizations politically in the trap of capitalist politics will also be trying this approach.

It will be up to our movement to draw together a national mass action campaign for the ERA and to make it the central focus of the movement for women's rights.

The history of Georgians for the ERA is important to understand because it is a very good example of how, starting with a small core of women, we were able to build a very broad ERA movement in Georgia. Comrades must not be conservative in their estimates of the potential for action in their areas. The most important thing we have to do is to look for openings with which to organize actions. We have to be very flexible and innovative in thinking out how we can get ERA work going. We can start support groups in any number of ways including teach-ins, forums, panels, debates; these can be a start to building the ERA movement around the country. We should not be intimidated by the ultralefts or reformists who do not want to participate in mass actions for the ERA. Women's

liberation activists, whether they may be members of NOW, other women's organizations, or independent, will be interested in working for the ERA.

Georgians for the ERA started with a very small core group. The only activity for ratification of the ERA in Georgia, before the intervention of our movement, was a lobbying effort. The ERA had yet to be brought out of legislative committee onto the floor of the assembly for debate. A loose, reformist, inactive coalition, made up strictly of the more conservative women's organizations, was behind the lobbying effort. ERA activists had no channel through which to work. Women in the SWP and YSA, along with other women's liberation activists, decided to call a meeting to discuss the ERA and its ratification. Forty people attended, and out of this meeting Georgians for the ERA was formed as a women's organization. Its first activity was to sponsor a public forum which drew 100 people. GERA then decided to sponsor a statewide conference and rally which was attended by 200. The decision was made to call a march in January, at the opening of the legislative session, and efforts were made to form a coalition in support of the march. There are several factors to be considered in discussing the character of Georgians for the ERA. GERA is a women's organization with a strong feminist character. GERA is a mass action organization whose only purpose is to work for ratification of the ERA. GERA builds support for the ERA through a series of public actions. For the past three years it has sponsored a rally and conference and a march in January. In between these events members go on speaking engagements and try to keep the ERA in the public eye as much as possible.

GERA also puts out a call each year for the formation of a coalition whose sole point of agreement is that there should be a march for the ERA and that the groups in the coalition will build it. Coalition work is central to our campaign. Organizations such as the AFL-CIO, NOW, Girl Scouts, SCLC, and the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (as well as the SWP and YSA) meet and discuss twice monthly plans for the march. The coalition helps to broaden out the march and to draw all kinds of people to it. Having a broad sponsorship also helps lend legitimacy to the march.

In the past, we have had to go through a number of political battles in GERA. The first year that GERA was in operation, a campaign to try to exclude some groups was carried on. A number of reformist groups withdrew support for the march supposedly because there were lesbians and socialists involved. These groups then did their best to sabotage the march and formed an alternative reformist coalition with a lobbying perspective. When this campaign began, comrades had to immediately begin to explain to women in GERA why it was necessary to allow any woman who supports the ERA to be involved in GERA. This was also true for the march coalition. Any group, regard-

less of political ideology, should have the right to be a member of the coalition, as long as they support the march.

This was an important struggle because the character of GERA, as well as the whole mass action perspective for the ERA in Georgia, was being questioned.

Most of the groups involved in the march coalition pulled out to join forces with the lobbying reformists. GERA could have gone in the same direction also, but through many discussions we initiated on non-exclusion and mass action, GERA remained strong and held a march which drew 1,000 people.

The success of the first march was very important in giving GERA the authority to organize major actions. This year and last year, with the exception of the League of Women Voters and a few others, all of the groups which dropped out of the coalition are working with GERA. This is a significant victory which shows the legitimacy GERA has gained by taking the initiative to organize actions.

In our second campaign (1974-75), the main opponent we had to deal with was the Maoist October League. The main tactic the OL used was race-baiting. Although one of GERA's priorities was the involvement of Black women, the OL constantly accused GERA of having a white middle class perspective, and that there was no real effort to draw Black women into the ERA movement. OL had no intention of building the ERA movement, they simply wanted to add another front group to their paper periphery. Through their front groups they packed coalition meetings and tried to control the speakers list at the march. Through the SWP and YSA intervention, independent women, including the Black women leaders, recognized that the OL was trying to divide the ERA movement. The OL isolated themselves and have not shown their faces in the ERA movement this year.

This year, GERA is in a better position than ever. We are viewed as one of the main groups in the women's movement. We believe that this year's actions will be bigger than ever before. We opened up our ERA campaign this year with a "Women in the Arts" benefit which drew over 600 people. GERA raised over \$1,000 and was able to have a full time staffperson. With this money we were able to build a very successful rally and conference November 7 and 8. The rally was attended by over 300 and included a significant number of Black participants as well as a number of union leaders. The speakers list was very impressive and included well known Black women, a city councilwoman, a leader of the gay movement, and a leader of AFSCME. The mayor had agreed to speak but sent a proclamation of ERA Day instead. The need for a public demonstration, as well as the need for the women's movement to keep struggling for the ERA was strongly emphasized. We were able to involve such prominent speakers because of the authority GERA has gained over the past three years.

This year we have several areas we are putting special emphasis on. They are the active involvement of more Black women and union women, and building the ERA movement in the southeast. GERA feels that regional work is central to this year's campaign.

We have a large, functioning GERA chapter that has been built from a campus base in Athens, Ga. and other women around the state are working to start chapters. GERA's regional committee is working to bring contingents of women from other southeastern states to the march as a step toward uniting the women's movement nationally.

Georgia is a key state in the campaign to ratify the ERA since most of the states which have not ratified are in the south, and we believe that when Georgia ratifies, this will pave the way for other states.

### Campus Work

An area of work which is central to our women's liberation work is the campus. We have been in the leadership of a women's liberation group on the Georgia State University campus. Here again, this work began when a few comrades and independents started an organization called GSU Women for the ERA. Its only purpose was to build ERA support on the campus in conjunction with GERA. Through this campus group, we have been able to have continuous ERA work and have recruited a number of women. This past January, after the ERA activities had come to a temporary halt, we decided that it would be important to try to keep the group together, so we proposed the idea of a "Women's Week," along the lines of a Black History week. We called a special meeting which thirty women attended. Through a great deal of struggle, the group was given \$3,000 by the Student Government. A dozen women worked consistently to put the program together which included workshops and a keynote speaker, Evelyn Reed. It was the most successful women's event to occur at Georgia State. Large numbers of students attended the events. Despite much effort by the administra-

tion to conservatize the activities, it was clearly a feminist event. This significantly strengthened the women's movement at Georgia State.

GSU Women for the ERA then became the GSU Women's Coalition, a general women's liberation group. This fall, one of its main focuses has been the ERA. The Coalition sponsored a debate between the John Birch Society/Stop ERA and Georgians for the ERA. This was, once again, one of the largest events to occur on the campus. 250 attended and the audience was overwhelmingly pro-ERA. The week before the 1976 march, the coalition will hold a speak out on the ERA to help build participation in the march.

Now that the YSA has a sizeable fraction at the all-Black Atlanta University complex, an ERA group is being formed. It was launched from a speak-out on Black Women and the ERA featuring a woman with the National Conference of Black Lawyers and a Black GERA activist. Over thirty attended this meeting and most signed up to build a GERA chapter there. Other campus meetings at AU are planned.

A small group of high school students and teachers are working to build support on their campuses. GERA is planning a citywide high school workshop to aid this effort. These are easily organized and significant activities which YSA locals can use their campus bases to initiate.

Building the ERA campaign is an important task for our movement nationally. Comrades already have a rich experience in building mass movements. Our work in the National Student Coalition Against Racism is another important example of how, with relatively small forces and the correct program, we can influence developments in the mass movement, and help build influential organizations. The YSA must take this aggressive approach to the ERA movement through the Camejo-Reid campaign and through our women's liberation work in every local.

November 18, 1975

## TWO PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAFT POLITICAL RESOLUTION

By John Sidebottom and Larry Thomas, Milwaukee local

The present two demands relating to veterans are found in the section of the NEC draft political resolution entitled "Full Rights for GIs and Vets!". We request comrades to vote on these two amendments separately for purposes of clarification.

The first demand states: "The YSA demands unconditional amnesty for all Vietnam war resisters now in exile or in prison."

We propose the following amendment: "The YSA supports the demand for Universal Unconditional Amnesty for all military and draft resisters. We demand that all less-than-Honorable discharges be upgraded to Honorable and support the demand for a Single-Type Discharge."

The second demand states: "We demand full educational, vocational, and health benefits for all veterans. The YSA supports the struggles of veterans on campus for higher financial grants, better medical treatment, and special vocational counseling."

We propose the following amendment: "The YSA supports the demand for a new GI Bill at least equal in educational benefits to the WW II GI Bill. We support the demand for quality medical care for all veterans and we support the demand that veterans should be able to go to any hospital they choose at government expense."

November 18, 1975

## FOR UNIVERSAL UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY AND A NEW GI BILL!

By John Sidebottom, Milwaukee local

The purpose of my contribution is to strengthen the section of the draft political resolution entitled "Full Rights for GIs and Vets!" and to initiate a discussion leading to a fuller understanding of issues facing veterans. The YSA has long understood the importance of the GI movement and I feel that we now need to re-examine our position on veterans to support the demands that the growing numbers of veterans organizations around the country are raising.

The first demand in the draft political resolution dealing specifically with veterans states: "The YSA demands unconditional amnesty for all Vietnam war resisters now in exile or in prison." I propose this demand be amended to: "The YSA supports the demand for Universal Unconditional Amnesty for all military and draft resisters. We demand that all less-than-Honorable discharges be upgraded to Honorable and support the demand for a Single-Type Discharge."

The second demand in the draft political resolution dealing specifically with veterans states: "We demand full educational, vocational, and health benefits for all veterans. The YSA supports the struggles of veterans on campus for higher financial grants, better medical treatment, and special vocational counseling." I propose this demand be amended to: "The YSA supports the demand for a new GI Bill at least equal in educational benefits to the WW II GI Bill. We support the demand for quality medical care for all veterans and we support the demand that veterans should be able to go to any hospital they choose at government expense."

The section entitled "Full Rights for GIs and Vets!" represents an opening of the discussion on how the YSA can relate to veterans. Only by a full discussion of the problems facing veterans can we reflect this understanding in our demands. This contribution will attempt to clarify and strengthen our demands, so, we can use them in the most effective way possible. By taking an aggressive approach we will have an excellent opportunity to deepen and extend our work with veterans.

The 6.5 million veterans that served in the military during the Vietnam era represent an important group the YSA can begin to work with. The YSA from the beginning of the Vietnam war covered and helped develop the growth of the antiwar sentiment that spread rapidly throughout the military. We recognized the importance of reaching GIs with our socialist ideas. This process shouldn't lessen when a GI becomes a veteran, but should continue.

Now, we are beginning to take the steps necessary to examine the problems of veterans and decide the best possible way we can relate to them. To maximize our effectiveness in this area of work our demands must be as clear as possible. It's extremely important in this initial discussion to be as specific as possible and take an aggressive approach. I think it is absolutely essential to amend our pre-

sent demands relating to veterans to accurately reflect the demands and issues that they are raising themselves.

In a future contribution I intend to deal with other issues facing veterans. Due to the necessity of amending our present demands, this contribution will concentrate entirely on my proposed changes. I hope that other comrades will make contributions to this important area and after the convention we will have a fuller understanding of veterans, the problems they face, and the issues they are raising.

In the section "Full Rights for GIs and Vets!" the following demand is raised around amnesty: "The YSA demands unconditional amnesty for all Vietnam war resisters now in exile or in prison." This formulation is politically incorrect and reflects the YSA's lack of understanding of issues being raised by veterans. This demand means amnesty without any type of punitive, alternative service ("unconditional amnesty") extended to only specified groups ("all Vietnam war resisters now in exile or in prison"). This limits the YSA's support of amnesty to only two groups-- resisters and those incarcerated. This demand counterposes a limited amnesty for specified groups to what most veterans and veterans organizations are fighting for-- Universal Unconditional Amnesty. Our present demand doesn't include the over 700,000 veterans with less-than-Honorable discharges. This group makes up the overwhelming majority of people in need of amnesty and this number is rapidly increasing. The Army alone is handing out an average of 80,000 less-than-Honorable discharges per year. In addition, 50 percent of these discharges go to Blacks and other national minorities.

By narrowing our demand to unconditional amnesty for specified groups the YSA is unconsciously following the pattern of all so-called "amnesty" legislation that has been introduced in the House and Senate. Virtually all such legislation has been very limited in scope and all have ignored the major problem of veterans with less-than-Honorable discharges.

The question of amnesty and the problem of veterans with less-than-Honorable discharges must be reflected in any demand the YSA raises around amnesty. If not, we are not dealing with the entire question of amnesty. The present demand is incorrect and incomplete because of this.

### Brief history of amnesty

After WW I there was no amnesty. Many war protesters, including Eugene Debs, remained in jail for the duration of Wilson's term. When Harding came to office he freed Debs and others. Later, Coolidge released most of the remaining protesters.

After WW II Truman established a three-person board to review over 15,000 cases of draft resistance and violations of military law. Only 10 percent received amnesty.

There was no amnesty after the Korean war.

The most recent attempt to deal with the question of amnesty was Ford's Clemency Board. This plan was doomed from the start because it dealt with a minute number of veterans in need of amnesty, and it insisted on some form of punitive, alternative service for those who wished to "take advantage" of it. Ford's program was an "earned re-entry" plan which covered some 125,000 draft resisters, exiles, and military resisters. It did not consider veterans with less-than-Honorable discharges, over 200,000 civilians arrested for protesting against the war, or the more than 200,000 people who never registered for the draft (these people can still be prosecuted at the whim of the Selective Service). Of the 124,515 who were eligible for the program, only 25,851 agreed to participate in it (20.8 percent). This showed that the majority of veterans and veterans organizations felt the plan did not meet their needs.

Three groups are in need of Universal, Unconditional Amnesty: the 100,000 draft resisters, of which 40,000 are in exile and 60,000 are living underground; 50,000 military resisters, and veterans with less-than-honorable discharges (over 700,000).

The demand for Universal, Unconditional Amnesty has been growing. Since the early 1970s, the question has coalesced into the above demand. Veterans organizations and their supporters who once demanded some form of unconditional amnesty for specific groups came to the realization that the demand was inadequate -- it did not deal with the entire question of amnesty. In the active veterans groups, the demand for unconditional amnesty was too restrictive and did not form a cohesive basis for united actions around the demand. The demand for Universal, Unconditional Amnesty removes all the restrictions, eliminates the divisive problem of who should receive amnesty, and reflects the realization of veterans and veterans groups that only by fighting for a complete amnesty could the question of veterans with less-than-honorable discharges be dealt with.

In addition to the support of the majority of veterans and veterans groups, the following organizations support the demand for Universal, Unconditional Amnesty: International Longshoreman's Union, American Federation of Teachers, National Council of Churches, American Civil Liberties Union, PUSH, and the United Farmworkers.

#### Less-than-Honorable discharges

I've mentioned several times the importance of understanding the problem of veterans with less-than-Honorable discharges. Some background information is necessary to clarify what the term means.

Less-than-Honorable discharges are comprised of four categories: General, Undesirable, Bad Conduct, and Dishonorable. The first two types are given by administrative action -- i. e., "awarded" without a trial. Usually, they

are given by a commanding officer who acts as prosecutor, judge, and jury. Of the over 700,000 less-than-Honorable discharges given out by the military 90 percent are given by a single individual. The last two types are punitive discharges that must be given by a court martial. Only 10 percent of all less-than-Honorable discharges are deemed serious enough to warrant a trial.

Yet, a less-than-Honorable discharge whether given by a single individual or by a court martial carries the same penalties for life-- loss of veterans benefits, disqualification from civil service, discrimination when applying for any job, etc. This gives comrades an idea of the type of control the military can still exert long after a person has left the military.

The arbitrary way such discharges are given out indicates one thing -- it's the method the military uses to rid itself of any type of resistance. As we know resistance to the war was widespread within the military. One important way of dealing with this resistance was to hand out less-than-Honorable discharges in massive quantities. Military officials rarely acknowledged that resistance was the prime reason. Instead they gave such reasons as-- "apathy," "non-conformity", "refusing to obey an order", "insubordination", etc. This was a definite attempt to conceal from the public the extent of the internal resistance to the war.

The enormity of the problem of veterans with less-than-Honorable discharges is obvious and the problem is growing. During the ten years of official U. S. involvement in Vietnam over 6.5 million people have been in the military. Of these, 8 percent or one out of every thirteen veterans have received less-than-Honorable discharges!

It is technically possible for a less-than-Honorable discharge to be upgraded to Honorable by appealing to a Discharge Review Board. In reality the chances of getting a discharge upgraded are overwhelmingly against the veteran. It takes anywhere from six months to two years to complete the upgrading process. Consequently, less than 5 percent of the veterans that begin the process ever finish it. As this time period indicates it is an expensive process which most veterans can't afford. The bureaucratic process is so complicated that, if every veteran with a less-than-Honorable discharge was heard by the present Discharge Review Board, it would take not less than 350 years just for the cases to be heard! For all intents and purposes it is a time consuming, expensive, and all but useless task.

For the last twenty years there has existed only one Discharge Review Board in the entire country. Conceding to pressure from some veterans organizations and their supporters, the government has finally admitted there is a problem with one Discharge Review Board handling the situation. To alleviate the problem they propose to create six new Discharge Review Boards. This attempt to solve a major problem

facing veterans has generated some heated discussions among many veteran organizations across the country. Some groups feel this represents at least a step forward and should be supported. Others feel that one Discharge Review Board should be created in every state. The important thing revealed by this discussion is that all the groups support Universal Unconditional Amnesty and view the present debate as a question over immediate tactics. The YSA should carefully follow the course of this debate.

It's obvious that the creation of six new Discharge Review Boards will not begin to deal with the problem. Roughly, this would mean that each new Discharge Review Board would be able to handle about 800 cases per year at a maximum level. So, instead of taking not less than 350 years just to hear the cases, it would now take "only" 100 years!

An outgrowth of the problem of veterans with less-than-Honorable discharges is how to prevent the military from continuing to hand out such discharges to GIs now in the military. The majority of veterans and veterans organizations think that all people that spend time in the military should receive the same type of discharge. This would remove the "right" of the military to falsely stigmatize a veteran when he/she leaves the military. The demand raised around this issue is support for the institution of a Single-Type Discharge.

The only solution for veterans with less-than-Honorable discharges is Universal Unconditional Amnesty. To insure that the problem doesn't continue a Single-Type Discharge is needed.

I think comrades can see that in our present demand relating to amnesty the issue of veterans with less-than-Honorable discharge is not dealt with at all. Also, I think comrades can see that our formulation on amnesty is politically incorrect.

So, I would propose that the present demand be amended to: "The YSA supports the demand for Universal Unconditional Amnesty for all military and draft resisters. We demand that all less-than-Honorable discharges be upgraded to Honorable and support the demand for a Single-Type Discharge."

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The other demand in the draft political resolution states: "We demand full educational, vocational, and health benefits for all veterans. The YSA supports the struggles of veterans on campus for higher financial grants, better medical treatment, and special vocational counseling." I propose this demand be amended to "The YSA supports the demand for a new GI Bill at least equal in educational benefits to the WW II GI Bill. We support the demand for quality medical care for all veterans and we support the demand that veterans should be able to go to any hospital they choose at government expense."

I think everyone would agree that the basic thrust of the present demand is correct, but I think the YSA can express the same ideas in a clearer manner. We should make every attempt to express our demands in such a way that

veterans can relate to.

I have several problems with the way the present demand is worded. The GI Bill is alluded to, but never mentioned. I think this a mistake because without it veterans may not immediately identify with it. The demand can be concretized by the use of the term--GI Bill.

In the present demand the second sentence adds nothing to the meaning of the thrust of the demand. It seems to reiterate what the first sentence says. It seems logical that, if we demand full educational benefits for all veterans, then we would support struggles on or off campus of veterans demanding better benefits. This same reasoning holds true for health benefits, etc.

I don't understand the necessity for demanding full educational and vocational benefits for all veterans. Both educational and vocational benefits are covered in the GI Bill and are found in the same section of the GI Bill. Veterans don't make the distinction between the two. They go to school under the GI Bill, whether they go to college or to a vocational school. In struggles around educational benefits vocational benefits would not be separated from educational benefits.

I think demanding full educational, vocational, and health benefits for all veterans opens the demand up to a variety of different interpretations. Does our demand for full educational benefits just indicate that a veteran should receive everything that he/she is entitled to under the present GI Bill? What does full health benefits mean? The phrase "full benefits" has no specific meaning to anyone. Especially, to a veteran that has heard this term used to describe his/her benefits from everyone year after year. Most people in an abstract way are for full benefits for veterans, but veterans are demanding concrete things. The YSA in working with veterans must be as concrete as possible, especially in the demands we raise.

It's a small point, but the phrase "higher financial grants" is an archaic term not used by veterans.

Basically, any demand dealing with veterans benefits should deal with the GI Bill. This is what veterans will notice the first time they see the present demand -- the absence of one of the most important things in a veterans life -- the GI Bill. A veteran will be interested in what do we think of the GI Bill and how it can be improved concretely. This should be found in our demand.

I would like to go into why I feel my amendment would be an improvement over the present demand. First I would like to go into the GI Bill, concentrating on educational benefits.

At the present time, according to the Veterans Administration (V. A.), there are over 2.25 million veterans going to school (30 percent of the Vietnam-era veterans). The V. A. projects by Feb. 1976 there will be an increase to over 3 million. Also, the overwhelming majority of these veterans will be going to state universities or vocational schools.

These facts give comrades an idea of the opportunities



the YSA will have to work with veterans after the convention. To be able to take the fullest advantage of this opportunity the YSA must put forth demands that deal concretely with the problems veterans face.

GI Bill benefits are one of the most frequent topics raised by veterans. Veterans are unanimous in agreeing that the present GI Bill is insufficient to meet their needs. It isn't only insufficient, but Congress is trying to deny GI Bill benefits to people who joined the military after Jan. 1, 1976. The legislation has already passed the House by a large majority. The majority of veterans and veterans organizations are opposed to this. Opposition up to now has been sporadic, but the YSA should be aware of what's happening.

The present GI Bill passed last year over Ford's veto doesn't even begin to meet the needs of veterans going to school. This bill had two basic provisions. One, it increased the use of benefits from thirty-six to forty-five months, but restricted this extension to undergraduates only. Two, it increased the amount of money a veteran received for going to school. For example, a single veteran now receives \$270 per month out of which he/she must pay all costs of going to school and his/her living expenses.

More and more veterans have been comparing the current GI Bill to the WW II GI Bill. The provisions of the WW II GI Bill dealing with education were more comprehensive than the GI Bill passed last year. The WW II GI Bill was passed as a direct result of the mass pressure exerted by returning veterans. They demanded decent benefits and they fought for them. This historical lesson is slowly being absorbed by some veterans organizations.

The WW II GI Bill contained three major provisions. One, it paid the total cost of books, fees, tuition, etc. to any school a veteran wanted to attend. The payment was limited to \$500 per year. Yet, in 1948 the average cost of going to a public university was \$244. The average cost of going to a private university like Harvard or Yale was \$418. So, a veteran could go to any school they wanted to at government expense. Two, a veteran was given \$75 per month as a living allowance. This money was used solely for living expenses

because the cost of going to school was paid for. Three, a veteran was eligible for forty-eight months of benefits.

The issue facing veterans is how to increase the GI Bill benefits to meet their needs. The WWII GI Bill is being used for comparison because it embodies the principles veterans want to see in a new GI Bill -- total cost of going to school paid for, a separate living allowance, and at least a forty-eight month period with no restrictions on usage. Some other ideas being raised are: an escalator clause within the GI Bill, no time limits on usage (presently there is a 10 year limit), make the provisions of the GI Bill retroactive to cover all veterans of the Vietnam-era, and allow all veterans to use the GI Bill, regardless of type of discharge.

I think comrades can see that veterans are looking for concrete solutions to the problems they face. I think my amendment would strengthen the thrust of the present demand.

### Health Care

The Veterans Administration receives at least \$8 billion per year to maintain their hospital system. They run the largest hospital system in the country, besides, the Dept. of Defense. The V. A. has well over 100 major hospitals in its system. Yet, they claim that their staff is being cut which is their justification for the poor quality medical care veterans receive. In a V. A. hospital the staff to patient ratio is one-fourth of that of a regular hospital. This is obviously insufficient to meet the needs of veterans.

In talking to veterans, comrades can raise some of the following ideas -- demand that the V. A. open its books to show why year after year they can't provide quality medical care to veterans, increase the staff by 25 percent, and end all forms of behavioral control such as psychosurgery.

Again, I don't think veterans will be very receptive to our demanding "full medical benefits for all veterans." They are looking for concrete answers, not general phrases.

In conclusion, I urge comrades to carefully consider my amendments and determine whether they would strengthen the present demands and aid in our work with veterans.

November 18, 1975

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

By Dave Brandt, Rochester, N. Y., At-large

### 1) Notes on the Socialist Workers party discussion

A) Gay liberation. The present orientation rejects use of slogans like "Gay is just as good as straight" (or just "Gay is good"), on the grounds that each person should decide for themselves what is best for them. Most people do not sit down and decide on being part of an oppressed group. But look at it the other way. Modern medicine and chemistry make it possible for people to change their sex or skin color (at probably no greater cost than psychological work to change one's sexuality.) However, I don't hear anyone suggesting we not have a stand on whether women and Blacks are equal to men and whites, but that one should decide what is best for them. So why for Gays?

Our main concern is not choosing one's color or sex, but the oppression one faces because of what they are -- and to fight it. We don't defend the oppressed just for their right to be themselves, but because there is no logical reason for the discrimination. For the practical reasons involved, they are equal; and we must emphatically say that.

B) Call for a Black party. David Keil argues, that in light of certain facts, we should change our slogan to something like "For a Black labor party" (in his proposed amendment he uses 'Black working class party'. ) One example he gives is the LSA/LSO's past call for a Quebec party for the oppressed Quebecois. As with the rationale for just saying "Black party", the Quebecois have only a small, weak bourgeoisie (dependent on imperialism) and a vast working class. Certainly any Quebec party would be working-class! Enter the Quebecois Party -- capitalist and reactionary -- the LSA/LSO can't support it. The same could happen with a Black party here.

Take our call "For a labor party." At this stage that slogan is usually as far as we need go. But when we work for one, it must be based on the unions (not just bureaucrats) and otherwise capable of becoming revolutionary. We give a fine proposed program for a Black party, but just assume (or wish) the social base that will make it able to take that program. But this is for our program, what of the slogan? One might argue that the simple labor party slogan argues for a simple Black party slogan. It should be discussed. Last, don't forget, there is an essential difference between a capitalist national party and a bureaucratic labor party.

C) Read and Discuss Joe Harris' article on forming "labor party educational leagues" (SWPDB #8.)

2) Expansion. The YSA has begun to emphasize recruitment in the ripe region, as opposed to centers. We should be clear where we want to try to expand to. Of course, we want to work high population areas, but singly, that is simplistic.

Social considerations make some areas more fertile. This means some experimenting, but we'll use present knowledge and what we gain on the way to avoid blind trial and error. Try to answer questions: Why do cities like San Francisco have more Left groups than larger cities like L. A. ? Why do some smaller cities have more YSAers? Why are big cities like Dallas and Memphis sparse of Left groups? Are some cities more open to certain currents of the left?

We should consider where our opponents other than just the Communist party are (with varying weight, of course.) Because of its left rhetoric and fascist potential we should consider where NCLC is. We can't be in all places, but we can consider this.

Size and CP presence suggest Memphis and Buffalo (with other opponents too).

I'd like to suggest possible methods of expansion. To whatever extent it is not done, locals could go to cities and colleges in, say, a twenty to fifty mile area on occasional hawk/leaflet/post materials sprees. Less frequently, further targets could be attempted. Comrades going on trips could make a point of posting some materials (maybe leaflet or hawk) in areas we aren't organized. Leaving a sample Militant in the library periodicals may be good too.

We could get experienced comrades in jobs, college or friends' homes for an "artificial" local where we hope they could make quick contacts and recruits (enough that they needn't move permanently). One comrade might stay for leadership when the others leave.

3) Student orientation. The report on building the YSA in YSADB #1 includes a total of one paragraph on how working comrades can help build the YSA: help on campus when needed. It goes without saying that one fraction helps another, but when this is all we can say at the onset of a worker radicalization (young workers in the lead), it's gone too far. The political resolution shows we understand the problems of working youth, but that wasn't in question. The YSA is now a better recruiting form than the SWP, we must take up the task.

4) Opponents. Except the CP and Guardian, our press has virtually ignored the existence of opponents. Recent articles on the fight against racism has countered the positions of opponents -- good. But the political resolution, as tradition would have it, only mentions YWLL, RU, OL and two of the three main social democratic groups. In the past we have given a sentence or two to the ostensibly Trotskyist groups, but, now when we make it public, nary a peep. Our press needn't be left squabble sheets, like some groups, but should be willing to take on opponents on important issues (as always, with varying weight per group).

I suggest informationals (mimeoed "truthkits" giving the

real record of the subject) on opponents. They would be quite helpful, but they would be limited enough that it should be mimeoed.

The Spartacists have experienced rapid growth and are making their press important competitors to ours. (I suspect the radicalization is at a stage where we can expect more support for their "purist" -- read sterile -- politics.) This and their relative ideological proximity should make us weigh them at more than their numbers alone would have it. Of course, one good way to counter them is old Militant articles.

5) Fighting fascism. Indexing the 1945 Militant volume has given me evidence that picketing, not taking the podium, is the well established policy toward reactionary speakers. However, the sectarians' tactics should remind us that, at the right point, workers must break up fascist meetings. While there is no present fascist threat, I think the delineation between picketing speakers now and smashing meetings in the future could use clarification and discussion.

6) Spanish press. I know I'm an outsider here, but a couple articles in Spanish in the IP for 75¢... there's got to be a better way! I know, no alternative is perfect, particularly considering finances, but neither is the present way. Let's talk and see what we come up with.

7) Antracist demands. At first I was uneasy about the troops demand, but more so with the defense guard slogan. The educational bulletin on the troops slogan clarified my opposition to the defense guard slogan now, but added questions to my mind. Reprinted Militant articles from the '50s and '60s contain secondary demands that have been dropped. Most important are the "right and duty" of Blacks to arm, organize and defend themselves; and for the federal government to arm and deputize Blacks to defend their communities. It seemed odd that these were dropped, considering the advance of mass consciousness. I'm intrigued by the deputation demand. While it may now be too advanced for more than secondary use, it could provide an important bridge to the defense guards slogan at a proper time. Keep it in mind.

Questions were raised in my head by a Militant article (July 4, 1975, p.7) on Black veterans in Detroit organizing to defend abused children. The article was vague, with no follow-up, but it sounded like a move in the direction of

defense guards. I expected a comment of approval or criticism, there was nothing concrete. It would be good to hear discussion on the movement of consciousness in this sphere. It raised the question of the uneven advance around the country and problems this might cause with united fronts like NSCAR.

8) Abortion. Around 1971 there was a debate over using "Free abortion" or "Repeal all abortion laws" as a slogan for the united front. The united front slogan, repeal of abortion laws, needn't be alone in our own propaganda. However, I note that in the 1972 Socialist Workers campaign platform free abortion is a secondary slogan, in the New York 1974 platform it is the single slogan, but the "Bill of Rights..." doesn't contain it at all. There, abortion isn't under free medical care or a section on women's rights, but "Right to a job!" Just as it makes sense to have a portion of our comrades carry signs with our own slogans at united front demos, we use our own slogans in our publications, if only secondary. We must not drop the free abortion demand.

9) Political Resolution. While we can expect the convention will accept the resolution (with good reason), it remains Leninist practice to provide such a central document to the members at the earliest point. Both this and last year it hasn't come out until into November -- about half-way through the discussion period. Its publication in the YS can be an important move, but YS has been appearing mid-month and it was originally scheduled for November -- why?

Also, we have invited all youth to send in comments and attend the convention. Unfortunately, I fear many taking up the latter offer will be disappointed, if not forwarned, at not being able to contribute while delegates file on stage. I think at future dates this should be made clear, diplomatically, in such offers.

10) "A Modest Proposal". In this article (YSADB #3) by Portland comrades we are warned of rubber-stamping the reports of the leadership. I would like to add that, as all humans, which our leaders are, they need to work on, talk out, ideas. If we have any faith in our leadership, the widest discussion can only be seen increasing the chance of fullest consideration on their part. To say they may not think of all possibilities is simply to acknowledge their mortality.

November 18, 1975

## MORE ON OPPONENT WORK

By Douglas Pensack, Detroit local

Earlier in the discussion I raised the question of doing opponent work with the Maoists and the question of the Chinese revolution. I'd like to now clarify the points I made and give a general historical perspective on the question of our opponents. There are three major ideological currents on the left internationally: Stalinism, Trotskyism, and Social Democracy. I'd like to focus on the organizations that I feel will be the greater challenge to the American Trotskyists -- the Stalinists of all types.

Because of the collapse of the international capitalist economy and its slide toward deep depression there has been an outpouring of material comparing the mid-1970s with the 1930s. This includes the current "1930s nostalgia" in the bourgeois media. Whereas we are in a similar economic situation -- a classical over-production slump -- there are many crucial differences between then and now.

I would like to direct comrades' attention to the Socialist Workers party political resolution of 1975, particularly to the section concerning the changing composition of the working class. The increased education and sophistication of American workers now compared to their counterparts in the 1930s is a crucial factor in the development of the coming American socialist revolution.

An objective change is vitally important as well; the increase in relative strength of the American Trotskyist movement within the left. In the 1930s the Communist party had tens of thousands of members and sympathizers, as well as control of some major trade unions. The Socialist party (the Social Democrats) was declining in strength generally but still was a force on the left -- particularly as it attracted layers of radicalized students in the late 1930s. There were other sects and groupings but they were nationally insignificant. Our forces were quite small and generally isolated -- particularly as we were in the shadow of the Stalinists, who took every opportunity to isolate and smash us. These factors, as well as some others, were why the American Trotskyists were not able to build a mass revolutionary party before the Second World War.

Following World War II there was a massive anticommunist witch-hunt that decimated the entire left -- particularly the Communist party. The CP disbanded as an organization for some years and has never really recovered from this blow. The radicalization of the 1960s caught the CP unprepared and they were not really able to gain much from it. They were slow to lose their customs of clandestinity. Even in 1975 the CP only occasionally surfaces in its own name; it prefers to operate through its front groups and youth group, the Young Workers Liberation League (YWLL).

Trotskyists suffered in the witch-hunt, too. Some branches of the SWP even went underground temporarily, lost many

members and recruited almost no one. However, with the thaw in McCarthyism, and the advent of the Cuban Revolution, civil rights struggle in the South, and then the anti-Vietnam War movement, the small Trotskyist forces were able to become once again immersed in mass movements and start to recruit again. Most significant was the birth of the YSA in 1960. Unlike the Stalinists, we were able to take full advantage of the developing youth radicalization. While the CP's youth groups wobbled and collapsed one after the other (not to any small degree because of the lack of political independence these groups had), while the YSA steadily grew.

So, in 1975 the YSA and SWP are the most visible forces on the left. We are deeply immersed in the new mass struggle against racism. Our election campaigns (both Socialist Workers campaigns and YSA student government campaigns) and the PRDF suit have vaulted us to the forefront as the best defenders of democratic rights and proponents of socialism. No other socialist youth organization in the U. S. has the level of activism, level of political understanding of its members, or regularity of its public face as does the YSA.

So, the Trotskyists in the U. S. are in much better relative position than we once were. But, this does not mean that we have won hegemony on the left or are recognized as the socialist organizations, with the allegiance of workers, students and oppressed nationalities. We have not and are not. We are still small. Before the YSA can become the mass revolutionary socialist youth organization it must still defeat its opponents in the struggle for the allegiance of America's youth.

In my previous document I wrote of the necessity of understanding the dynamic of the Chinese Revolution, its attractiveness for radicalizing youth, and the challenge our Maoist opponents pose for us. However, I agree with the perspective the YSA has had and has now that the pro-Moscow Stalinists of the CP and YWLL are our most serious opponents. The CP and YWLL, along with the YSA and SWP, are the largest organizations on the American left. The CP has a relatively large periphery of former members and sympathizers. It can be said that the Stalinists are a milieu as much as an organization. Importantly, it receives support from the most powerful Communist party in the world -- the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

In contrast, the various groups in the U. S. that are Maoist are much newer than the CP, are much less sophisticated organizationally, and have nowhere near the financial resources of the CPUSA. Just as importantly, the pro-Chinese Stalinists are very divided -- there is no one group

with the "franchise" of support from Peking. Consequently, we have the spectacle of numerous Maoist sects battling to see who can come up with the purest strain of "Marxist-Leninist Mao-tse-Tung Thought."

Despite these short-comings, though, I believe that the Maoists can prove to be a roadblock to the growth of the YSA. The Maoist groups often have a larger Black and Asian-American membership than the YSA does. Their "third-worldism" has an appeal for radicalizing Black nationalist currents--witness Baraka's "conversion" to "Marxism." In the short run the Maoists are more visible than the CP and YWLL, especially on campus.

For this reason I think that the YSA should (1) be clearer in general on the question of the Chinese Revolution; and (2) be more conscious of doing opponent work, whenever possible, with the Maoist groups, particularly among their newer members. YSAers shouldn't take too sectarian an attitude toward these individuals, many of whom are serious (yet misguided) radicals and nationalists and not necessarily hardened Stalinists. I doubt if we will do much recruiting from these groups but taking an aggressive stance toward

them will slow down or stop their growth and effectiveness on campus.

Comrades should not interpret this to mean that YSAers should spend countless hours late into the night digging up obscure minutes of the Comintern in order to "smash" our Stalinists opponents. This would distort our functioning and turn us into what we are not-- a debating society interested only in polemics with our opponents. In other words, we would become like the Spartacus League.

Instead, we can do the best opponent work by our actions, by our visible building of the antiracist and cut-back struggles. We can educate both our opponents and independents (there are a lot more of the latter than the former!) by our activity. Not only do we have the best program but our program, when put into practice, leads to successful struggles. The key to effective opponent work is understanding our program, putting it into practice, explaining it as patiently as possible, and by not being sectarian toward those who temporarily disagree with it.

November 19, 1975

## NEW OPENINGS FOR BUILDING THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

By Nancy Brown, Brooklyn, New York local

During the past year there has been a rise in both feminist sentiment and women's liberation activity.

The growing radicalization of women has been spurred by the current economic crisis. Women have reacted angrily to cutbacks in day care and social services, rising prices, cutbacks in educational funding, and the elimination of affirmative action programs. There have been struggles to both ratify and defend the Equal Rights Amendment; to support Dr. Kenneth Edelin and abortion rights; to defend JoAnne Little; and struggles against cutbacks in day-care funding.

The impact of the women's liberation movement is reflected in every aspect of American society -- in literature, movies, advertisements, and television. The New York Times, for example, has printed a variety of articles on topics such as the influence of the feminist movement on the Mormon Church and the Catholic Church. Recently the Times printed a series of articles on what the defeat of the state ERA in New York will mean for the women's liberation movement.

The growing interest in women's liberation has resulted in a plethora of TV specials, including "Shoulder to Shoulder," a series about the early suffrage movement in Britain.

Polls indicate that there is widespread sentiment for women's rights. A Harris poll taken in May showed that 59 percent of the population support "most of the efforts to strengthen and change women's status in society today." A September Gallup poll showed that 70 percent of the population approved of women being in politics -- including 73 percent who said that they would vote for a woman for president.

Working women have come together to form their own organizations -- the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Women Employed (WE) in Chicago, and "9-to-5," a secretary's organization in Boston, for example.

The new ferment in the feminist movement has caused many women to consider or reconsider socialism and how it relates to feminism. These discussions are taking place on a wide scale within the feminist movement. Socialist feminist groups have sprung up around the country. Last July more than 1,600 women attended the Socialist Feminist Conference at Antioch College in Ohio. Hundreds more were turned away from the conference because the facilities were too small.

### More opportunities

Almost every YSA local has been involved in some area of women's liberation work this past year -- ERA, abortion rights, JoAnne Little, Chicana groups, CLUW, or NOW.

There is no question but that in the coming year there will be increasing activity in the women's liberation movement -- especially around the ERA. The YSA should look to these new openings with enthusiasm. They are a sign of a strong and

growing feminist movement -- a movement that the YSA should be a part of.

This contribution is an effort to prioritize some of the issues and activities of the women's liberation movement, some of the opportunities for us, and some of the obstacles that we face.

### Ruling-class offensive

The current economic crisis has forced the ruling class on a drive to lower the standard of living and make working people pay for this crisis.

To do this means that the ruling class also has to carry out an attack on the expectations of working people -- especially Blacks, other oppressed nationalities, and women.

Over the past ten years women have won some gains -- through affirmative-action and women's studies programs. Women now expect the right to equal treatment. The right to a job. The right to day care. The right to an education.

This drive against the expectations of women is most clearly seen in the attacks against affirmative action. Under the guise of defending "seniority," the gains that women have made are being wiped out.

### Fight for the Equal Rights Amendment

Ratification of the ERA is a priority issue for the women's liberation movement.

The ERA was passed by Congress in 1972. To become law the amendment has to be ratified by thirty-eight states by 1979. So far, thirty-four states have ratified the amendment.

Now, however, a highly-organized campaign by opponents of the ERA is threatening ratification by the 1979 deadline. Right-wing organizations have poured millions of dollars into an intense effort to block the ERA. This reactionary drive has aided the ruling class in their attempts to chip away at the gains that women have made over the past few years.

This fall the fight for the ERA centered in New York and New Jersey. In those states referenda for state ERAs appeared on the November ballots.

These state referenda were important for two reasons. First, if passed, women in New York and New Jersey would not have to wait for the federal ERA to be ratified. The state ERAs would have gone into effect almost immediately. Second, victories in these states would have given a much-needed boost to the ERA fight around the country.

However, both the referenda were defeated -- in New York, by 400,000 votes; in New Jersey, by 60,000 votes.

These defeats are setbacks for the women's liberation movement. They have added impetus to the campaign to block ratification of the federal ERA by the 1979 deadline.

As the election results came in, anti-ERA groups in New York and New Jersey announced drives to rescind ratification of the federal ERA.

In New Jersey, Eve O'Donnell, a leader of Stop ERA, a national anti-ERA organization, called the defeat a sign that the voters of New Jersey had delivered "a mandate to the legislature of New Jersey to rescind the hasty ratification of the federal Equal Rights Amendment." According to O'Donnell, voters rejected the ERA because they "realized that the ERA was not a step forward for women, but a giant step backward to the time when women had no rights."

In New York, Serphin R. Maltese, executive director of the state Conservative party, claimed, "ERA has been repudiated by the electorate, so we will undoubtedly work to rescind."

The repercussions go far beyond just New York and New Jersey. These defeats have been a signal to anti-ERA groups across the country to step up their propaganda against the ERA and peddle their lies that the "majority is opposed to the ERA."

Immediately after the results were in, Phyllis Schafly, the head of national Stop ERA, pronounced her "thrill" at the election results: "I would say that the people have spoken. They have repudiated this fraudulent proposal prompted by a little bunch of military (sic) radicals. We will now push for the rescission of the federal ERA in all states that have ratified it."

The charges that the majority have "repudiated" the ERA are false. A poll conducted by the New York Daily News before the November election showed that 82 percent of the people in the New York metropolitan area supported the ERA. A Gallup poll last spring indicated that on a national scale, supporters of the ERA outnumbered its opponents two-to-one. And a Harris poll conducted in May showed that a 59-28 percent majority of Americans favor "most of the efforts to strengthen and change women's status in society today." (In 1971 only 42-41 percent plurality supported the women's rights movement.)

It's clear that the majority of people have not "repudiated" the Equal Rights Amendment.

#### Strategy of the ERA coalitions

Then why was the ERA defeated in New York and New Jersey?

The ERA lost because the majority who support the ERA were not mobilized into action.

The major ERA coalitions did not carry out an action campaign of marches, rallies, teach-ins, and demonstrations to turn out the majority who support the ERA.

In New York City, where 82 percent of the people supported the ERA, there was a much lower turnout than in more conservative upstate New York.

At the heart of the New York defeat was the failure of the New York Coalition for the Equal Rights Amendment to mobilize thousands of ERA supporters in action. The coalition listed an impressive eighty organizations as sponsors,

The amendment received the endorsement of such notables as Mayor Abraham Beame, Gov. Hugh Carey, Congresswoman Bella Abzug, and a long list of trade unions, women's organizations, and prominent individuals. But these endorsements remained on paper only.

The Democratic and Republican parties have always discouraged independent political action and urge women instead to campaign for those candidates who are "friendly" to their cause. This was the perspective of the ERA coalition, which limited its activities to meetings on the ERA, some street campaigning, and distribution of handbills.

Mass action was rejected. An example of the coalition's refusal to carry out activities that would draw in large numbers of women is what happened at the September meeting of the New York Coalition of Labor Union Women, CLUW held a special program on the ERA, which featured Karen Burstein, a state senator from Nassau County. When asked if the coalition planned any rallies, teach-ins, or picket lines to help win support for the ERA, Burstein said, "No, that would only hurt the movement."

Unfortunately, CLUW and NOW went along with this losing strategy.

Secondly, the major ERA coalitions failed to answer the virulent lies and distortions spread by anti-ERA groups.

A typical leaflet distributed by Women for Honest Equality in Our Nation was headlined, "Did you know that a vote for the ERA is a vote against the family?"

A massive "Vote No" campaign was mounted by reactionary organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Conservative party, and Daughters of the American Revolution. Operation Wake-Up, an umbrella anti-ERA organization, claimed more than 100,000 active campaigners in New York.

The Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers party participated in the New York Coalition for the ERA and raised the concept of independent political action. We distributed handbills, participated in the street campaigning, and organized meetings on college campuses to build support for the ERA. Dianne Feeley, a member of the Socialist Workers party, debated opponents of the ERA four times in the weeks before the election.

However, in the absence of a mass action campaign and the refusal of the New York Coalition for the ERA to initiate such a campaign, it was impossible to draw thousands of women into action around the ERA.

At this point, the state ERA in New York is dead. It will be two years before a state Equal Rights Amendment can be reintroduced into the legislature. The amendment will then have to be passed by two successive legislatures and a referendum. In New Jersey the amendment cannot be reintroduced for three more years.

ERA supporters in New York are angry and want to counter the right-wing offensive.

What is needed is an action campaign to defend the ERA and ensure its ratification. We want to do everything that we can to turn around this defeat and spur renewed

efforts and activities on a national scale in support of the ERA.

This means that we have to explain why the ERA was defeated, what was wrong with the strategy adopted by the major ERA coalitions in New York and New Jersey, and what the correct strategy is for winning equal rights for women.

Comrades in Atlanta, Ga., have reported increased interest in working for ratification of the ERA since the New York and New Jersey defeats. Georgians for the ERA (GERA) sponsored a conference on the Equal Rights Amendment in November.

On November 6, 225 people attended a debate with representatives of GERA and the John Birch Society at Georgia State University. More than 300 attended an ERA rally on November 7, and 60 women attended workshops to discuss the best way to build the ERA movement in Georgia.

GERA has called a demonstration for the statehouse on January 10. This will be the third demonstration sponsored by GERA. The previous two have been large, broad, and militant. Each year the margin of defeat in the state legislature has been narrowed by the pressure of the ERA movement.

The YSA team that visited Arizona found that the major topic of discussion on campuses was the ERA. The YSA locals in Phoenix and Tucson have been involved in the fight to ratify the ERA there.

The Phoenix YSA sponsored a forum on the ERA at Arizona State University, which was attended by more than sixty people. Comrades are working with the local ERA coalition, and the YSA organizer was appointed campus ERA coordinator by the coalition. The coalition is currently discussing a march to the state capital in January.

In states where the ERA has already been ratified or state amendments adopted, the women's movement cannot afford to just sit idly by. The fight to win ratification of the ERA is a national fight. Just as the women's liberation movement refused to fight for abortion rights on a limited state-by-state basis, we do not think that the ERA will be won by organizing the fight solely on a state-by-state basis.

The right-wing attacks against the ERA mean that no state is "safe." Two states have already voted to rescind their ratification. (The legality of this is being debated in the courts.) Anti-ERA groups are already active in Colorado, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Maine, Idaho, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Texas, and West Virginia. The goal of these groups is to have ratification of the ERA rescinded.

California is a state where the ERA has been ratified. Still, an October 29 Alice Doesn't demonstration in Los Angeles centered around the ERA. More than 4,000 women marched in the demonstration, chanting, "Sisters unite, stand up and fight--ERA is a woman's right." Following the march, 5,000 women rallied at UCLA to hear speakers who

urged support for the ERA.

The L. A. Alice Doesn't Coalition has decided to launch a campaign in support of the ERA. On November 15 the coalition picketed a Stop ERA conference. Anti-ERA forces are planning a statewide campaign to rescind ratification in California.

The next big activity of the coalition is a pro-ERA teach-in on January 24. An organizational meeting following the teach-in will discuss coordinating statewide pro-ERA activities.

Women are interested and want to do something to ensure ratification of the ERA. We have to be aggressive in organizing ERA support work. We want to urge the formation of as broadly based coalitions as possible with a mass action perspective. Such coalitions can carry out badly needed educational work as well as actions. It may be possible, for instance, to orient the upcoming International Women's Day activities on March 8 around the ERA, using a theme like "200 years is enough -- ERA now!" Comrades can begin discussions with local women's groups now, before plans for March 8 activities are underway.

The fight around the ERA offers us an opportunity to work with women who are interested in changing this society. Many of them will be interested in socialist ideas. We want to talk to these women about socialism and win them to a revolutionary perspective.

#### Working within the Democratic party

There are two problems that will face the pro-ERA movement. First, is the reluctance of some women and organizations to participate in ongoing actions around the ERA because, in their words, "the legislature is not open." This is the strategy of the reformists. They need to have the legislature open because their perspective on how to win the ERA is by lobbying, and not to build a mass movement to demand ratification of the ERA.

That is not our approach. We want to help build an ongoing movement to demand ratification of the ERA -- that carries out a campaign of educationals, debates, forums, and the coalition building work that is necessary to win this fight.

The lobbying and legislative maneuvers of the reformists have not won the ERA. In fact, they have led to the defeat of the state ERA in New York. There, the ERA coalition depended on Democratic and Republican politicians to push the ERA through the legislature, and then thought that winning a referendum would be easy.

The YSA must take the lead in urging local coalitions to organize actions other than lobbying and "vote liberal" campaigns. If the local ERA coalition won't do this, then the YSA must take the lead in getting actions called by campus or other women's liberation groups.

In Indiana, when women's liberation activists could not convince "Hoosiers for the ERA" to organize a rally in support of the ERA, they initiated the Campus Committee for the ERA (CCERA) at Indiana University. CCERA called and got



significant support for an ERA rally at the state capitol last March. The group is planning further ERA support activities.

The second problem is the pressure of the 1976 elections on many women's liberation groups. The pressure of the elections will force more and more women to pull back from independent political action and into working for "friendly" candidates from the two capitalist parties.

Many women will think that the way to win the ERA is to elect candidates who support the ERA in 1976, and put off any activities for the ERA until 1977.

The ruling class effectively uses the "liberal" image of the Democratic party to draw these women off the streets and back into the Democratic party. In 1972, thousands of activists in the abortion rights movement fell right into the trap of thinking that legalized abortion could be won by working for George McGovern. Then, at the Democratic party convention, when some women wanted to include abortion rights in the Democratic party platform, that move was smashed by the McGovern machine. An abortion rights plank, they argued, would "hurt McGovern's chances."

This year, the Democratic party election-oriented women have already gotten a headstart on their "trust the politicians" and "out of the streets" campaign. In October, a group of prominent Democratic party women -- including Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, and others -- announced the formation of an alliance aimed at making sure that the party's platform and its nominees support a long list of "women's issues," which has been dubbed the "women's agenda." The group also plans to work on having a woman considered for the vice-presidential nomination. This "woman's agenda," which is being supported by some Republican party women as well, was prepared by representatives of ninety women's organizations. The major focus of these groups from now until next November will probably be promoting this agenda and campaigning for Democratic party candidates, and not for the independent mass action that is needed.

The election pressure will increase as the 1976 election draws nearer. While these women are working for Milton Schapp or Fred Harris, the right wing will continue their campaign against the ERA.

Unless we mobilize against these attacks, irreparable damage can be done to the ERA fight. We have to argue against the perspective of relying on the Democratic and Republican parties, and educate women on the necessity of building an independent movement to win ratification of the ERA.

### Abortion rights

The struggle for abortion rights is far from over. Since the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in 1973, there have been continued attacks on the right of women to abortion. The Catholic Church and right wing have poured millions of dollars into a campaign to illegalize abortion. They continue to mobilize through demonstrations,

attempts to introduce constitutional amendments, and attacks on abortion clinics.

In New York, following the defeat of the state ERA, reactionary forces chose the liberal abortion law as their target. On November 20 the Roman Catholic Bishops of the United States announced a drive to step up their anti-abortion campaign by creating nonsectarian "prolife" groups in every Congressional district. The main purpose of these groups is to persuade members of Congress to vote for a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion.

An estimated 400,000 to 900,000 women in the United States were unable to obtain abortions last year, according to a study done by the Alan Guttmacher Institute of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Over the past two years the number of abortions performed in hospitals has declined. Of the 892,000 abortions performed last year, more than half were performed in private clinics.

Many hospitals with right-wing administrators refuse to perform abortions. This means that women who live in these communities who cannot afford to go to more expensive clinics are denied the right to abortion.

Most of these women are poor, Black, Puerto Rican, and Chicana, and rural women.

The conviction of Dr. Kenneth Edelin last February on manslaughter charges for performing an abortion spurred these right-wing attacks. Edelin's conviction prompted many hospitals to clamp down on the availability of abortion and scared some doctors into refusing to perform abortions, fearing that they could be similarly charged. In response to these attacks a nationwide campaign was organized in defense of Dr. Edelin and abortion rights. Edelin is now taking his case to the Supreme Court. A powerful defense campaign is needed to ensure that his conviction is overturned.

We should be on the lookout for any attacks on abortion and move immediately to defend the right of women to choose abortion.

### Day care

Funding for day-care centers has been one of the first things slashed in the mounting wave of cutbacks in social service. For thousands of working women, the cutbacks in day-care funding mean that they can no longer hold down jobs because they cannot afford the exorbitant costs of child care. These cutbacks hit hardest in the Black and Puerto Rican communities.

In New York City there have been cutbacks totaling 25 percent of available funds for day care. At this point there are only 53,000 children being served by city financed day care in New York City. At least another 150,000 children are eligible but cannot enroll because there are no funds available.

On October 20, 1,500 people picketed outside City Hall to protest these cutbacks.

On November 12, the city announced the future closing of twenty-eight more centers by January 1. Within three hours, day-care workers and parents were meeting to plan a united response to fight back against the cuts. A demonstration was called for November 24, which will coincide with other actions protesting the cuts in social services and layoffs in New York City.

Because day-care centers are considered among the most "dispensable" items by the ruling class, we can expect more and more funding to be cut in the future. We should participate in the struggles that will develop against these cuts, and also continue to educate on the importance of child care through our press, election campaigns, and by talking to women we work with.

### Women's liberation on campuses

The campuses and high schools remain the places where there is the greatest interest in feminism. This is where the YSA should concentrate on helping to build the women's liberation movement.

Campus women's liberation groups and coalitions have been formed to win support for the ERA, abortion rights, to free JoAnne Little, to obtain and defend women's studies programs, and to discuss feminism and socialism.

Campus meetings for well-known feminist leaders have been large. Recently, Gloria Steinem spoke to 3,000 people at Indiana University in Bloomington. Evelyn Reed has spoken to thousands of women on her tour -- 300 people at Washington University in Missouri; 200, at Indiana University; 150, at Central Michigan University; and 200, at Wayne State University.

Women on the college and high school campuses are being hit by the cutbacks in educational funding. Women's studies -- along with Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican studies programs -- are the first to be axed.

We should encourage women's liberation groups to become actively involved in the cutbacks struggles on the campuses.

In addition to participating in the campus women's liberation groups, and helping to fight around these issues, the YSA can also find many opportunities to aggressively carry out socialist education about feminism on the campuses.

Many campus women are interested in socialist ideas. We can hold meetings on the campuses on socialism and feminism, on strategy for the ERA, and have SWP candidates speak on the campuses and in the high schools.

Women's liberation groups may want to sponsor meetings or receptions for Willie Mae Reid and other campaign spokespeople, or organize panel discussions on women's liberation issues that include the Democratic, Republican, and socialist candidates.

### Black Women and Chicanas

All of the demands of the women's liberation have

particular relevance to women of the oppressed nationalities. Black, Chicana, and Puerto Rican women suffer the most from restrictive abortion laws, cutbacks in day-care funding, and from unequal pay and job opportunities.

Because of the current economic crisis more and more Black women have come into action, participating in day-care and anticutbacks struggles, the defense of JoAnne Little, Edelin, abortion rights, and the ERA.

Thousands of Black women mobilized in defense of JoAnne Little because they saw her as a symbol of what Black women face on a daily basis in the United States. Little's trial brought to public attention a number of important issues: the racist system of "justice," the right of a woman to defend herself against sexual attack, treatment of women prisoners, and the use of the death penalty.

Thousands of Black women were also brought into action around the defense of Dr. Kenneth Edelin. These women saw Edelin's conviction as a blow aimed at denying Black and poor women the right to safe legal abortions.

Black women are also playing a leading role in the National Student Coalition Against Racism, the various struggles against racist attacks, and the broader fights against the government attacks on the standard of living. In Houston more than 150 Chicanas attended a statewide conference in November sponsored by Mujeres Unidas, a feminist organization.

Chicana organizations in Los Angeles, such as Comision Femenil, endorsed the October 29 Alice Doesn't demonstration there, and brought women to the march.

Chicana activists, including members of the Raza Unida parties, attended the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City, and delivered a statement that condemned the conference for not addressing the needs of Black, Chicana, and other oppressed nationality women.

As the economic conditions worsen, more Black, Chicana, and Puerto Rican women will be brought into action around issues specifically relating to women as well as other struggles.

### NOW

Although the main focus of the YSA's participation in the women's liberation movement is on the campus, there are other women's liberation organizations that we want to participate in and work with in coalitions. There are city-wide groups, Black and Chicana organizations, and high school formations.

The organizations of the greatest size and weight, however, are the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW).

NOW held its national convention in Philadelphia in October. More than 3,000 women attended the convention.

The most significant aspect of the convention was the change in composition of NOW since its last convention. There were more Black, high school, and college women

than at any previous convention. There are an increasing number of NOW chapters on college campuses.

It was evident from the workshops and discussions that we had with NOW members that chapters have been involved in a wide range of activities -- the ERA; defense of Dr. Edelin and abortion rights; the JoAnne Little case; and the fight for lesbian rights.

The convention opened with a militant march of 1,200 women for the ERA to Independence Hall.

The receptivity to socialist ideas was reflected in the amount of literature sold and the interest in the activities that we sponsored.

Pathfinder Press sold \$830 of literature, including 127 copies of Women's Evolution. The response to Evelyn Reed's presence at the convention was fantastic. Women were familiar with her books, a large number had heard her speak, and wanted to talk to her about socialist ideas.

We sold 400 copies of the Militant, 75 Young Socialists, and 25 Militant subscriptions. The Socialist Workers campaign distributed copies of the women's rights brochure, and Willie Mae Reid addressed the convention. Fifty people -- including fifteen or twenty women from the convention -- attended a forum on "Feminism and Socialism," that was sponsored by the Philadelphia branch of the Socialist Workers party.

NOW has 70,000 members in 750 chapters. This includes a large number of women who are active in struggle around various issues and a large number who are interested in socialist ideas.

By joining NOW, working in coalitions with NOW, and having SWP candidates address NOW meetings, we want to work and talk to women in NOW.

Since NOW has decided to endorse political candidates, this may be a focus for many NOW chapters next year. We want to have Socialist Workers party candidates -- both female and male -- attend NOW meetings and seek their endorsement.

The SWP candidates can explain why NOW should not support the Democrats and Republicans and the necessity of becoming involved in action coalitions around the ERA and other issues.

### CLUW

The impact of feminist ideas on working women, including women in the unions, led to the formation of CLUW in March 1974. The YSA has participated in and has helped build CLUW since its formation.

We saw the formation of CLUW as a step toward an organization that could fight for women's rights on the job, in society as a whole, and within the unions.

In collaboration with the Socialist Workers party members of CLUW, members of the YSA who belong to CLUW are fighting for CLUW to take an uncompromising stand at its upcoming convention against the discriminatory layoffs now taking place. We are also urging CLUW to launch an

action campaign in the unions to build support for the ERA.

If CLUW is to become an organization that puts the needs of working women first, it must take a clear, definitive stand against the discrimination of women workers in all its forms. It must also get involved in activities that can win rank and file union women to the organization.

### Socialist Workers campaign

As the elections get closer, many women activists are going to be throwing their energies into working for presidential and vice-presidential candidates who they think support the demands of the women's liberation movement.

We have to explain to these women that the only candidates who fight for the rights of women are the Socialist Workers party candidates -- Peter Camejo and Willie Mae Reid -- and why independent political action must continue around the ERA, abortion rights, and the fight against discriminatory layoffs.

The YSA is supporting the only feminist candidate for vice-president and the only ticket that fights for the rights of women.

Through broadening support for the Socialist Workers campaign, we can reach out and talk to large numbers of women who are totally fed up and disillusioned with the stand of the Democrats and Republicans on the question of women's rights.

We should encourage women's liberation groups to sponsor meetings or receptions for the socialist candidates and other campaign spokespeople. These groups may also want to sponsor panels or debates with candidates or spokespeople from all the parties.

Some women's groups will be particularly interested in Willie Mae Reid's campaign for vice-president, and we should encourage them to set up meetings for her.

The Socialist Workers campaign is one way that we will be able to participate in the fight for the ERA on a national level. Our candidates should speak on the ERA, and we should widely distribute the materials the national campaign office has produced -- the women's rights brochure (which focuses on the ERA), the ERA buttons, posters, and T-shirts.

The campaign will interject our opinions into the discussions going on in the feminist movement -- how to win the ERA, how to defend abortion rights, and the discussions on socialism and feminism.

### Recruitment to the YSA

More and more women are becoming interested in socialism. And as the economic situation worsens, we can expect to see more women realizing that socialism is the only answer to the problems that exist in this society.

We have to find these women, talk to them, and win them to the YSA and the SWP.

Many women who consider themselves feminists and socialists are joining the socialist feminist groups that are springing up around the country. The leadership of

some of these groups are hostile to Trotskyism. At the same time, however, these groups are attracting many women who are genuinely interested in socialism and how it relates to feminism, and who are open to our ideas.

It may be possible in some areas for us to participate in these groups' discussions on socialism and feminism, encourage them to participate in action campaigns around the ERA and other issues, and explain the necessity of an organization like the YSA -- that includes both women and men -- to make the socialist revolution, and recruit them to the YSA.

In most cases, however, the way that we are going to explain socialism and feminism and recruit women is by participating in women's liberation organizations, through our election campaigns, sales of the Militant, Young Socialist, and Pathfinder literature.

The response to Evelyn Reed's Women's Evolution gives just a small indication of the widespread interest in socialism. Reed's book has been hailed by many as the major contribution to women's literature this year. On her

fall tour, hundreds of women gave Reed standing ovations. Pathfinder Press will soon be ordering the fourth printing of Women's Evolution, bringing the number of paperback copies in print to 20,000.

We should also pay attention to the recruitment of women in regional areas. The Socialist Workers campaign is going to reach thousands of people in areas where we have no YSA locals-- especially through the efforts of the YSA teams.

These teams are the major way that we will publicize the campaign and recruit new members of the YSA in areas where there are no locals.

In these areas we are running into many women's liberation organizations that are carrying out activities. It's important that wherever possible the teams include women to facilitate talking and working with these groups, and recruiting women to the Young Socialist Alliance.

November 21, 1975