The following presentation includes the key points of the speech given by the February First Movement and the Puerto Rican Student Union at the Forum for International Working Women’s Day held in NYC on March 5, 1976.

Brothers, sisters and revolutionary-minded people, the Puerto Rican Student Union and the February First Movement welcome you to this forum tonight to commemorate International Working Women’s Day. The PRSU and the FMM have united as fraternal revolutionary student organizations to present this joint statement on IWWD and to reaffirm the significance of IWWD and how we understand the women’s movement (as inseparable from the working class movement) in relationship to the party building dynamics and the development of the AIC for IWWD (Anti-Imperialist Coalition for IWWD) and the significance of the sharp struggle against capitalist exploitation.

IWWD originated in NYC in 1908 when women garment workers demonstrated and battled for better working conditions, shorter hours, better pay, and the right to organize a collective bargaining. This was a heroic struggle against exploitation by the capitalist system. (Party Building and the Women’s Question)

IWWD is a day of profound significance to the oppressed masses and working people the world over. Historically, working women were part of the international proletariat whose historic mission is to violently overthrow the domination of capital. The struggle of working women is therefore, a component part of the struggle for human freedom and the ultimate means by which women can achieve liberation.

All these things point to the fact that women’s liberation is a class question because it is tied to the task of overthrowing bourgeois rule. This is where we differ with bourgeois feminists who view contradictions in society arising from the differences between men and women. This idealist viewpoint denies class differences among women, lumping Rowland Kennedy, “Mandela,” Soledad, and all others as equals. The line that N.O.W. (National Organization of Women) and other bourgeois feminists push is to deal with the capitalist system through reforms.

An example of this is in the B.R.A. which would only give partial concessions to working class women (such as equal pay for equal work) but in general, it would take away hard earned rights women have for centuries. The bourgeoisie must defeat all revisionist and opportunist lines on the women question. Revisionists distort the fundamental conditions of working women’s life and don’t raise the question of Soviet social imperialism. They, in fact, puddle the Soviet revisionists’ “bureaucratic line” to “loving heart” and “gentle hands” must actively support “peace.” We must break with revisionists and opportunists of all shades, who reduce IWWD to a mere holiday and say that the women’s struggle amounts to an illusion of “equality” and that Congress will assure us this equality by passing legislation.

As revolutionary-minded students we must respond to Lenin’s call to students that we should unite with a definite political trend in the communist movement, and we must apply it to today. Coming from the work of genuine communists (in particular N.M. and his methodology of ideologues), we have been deepening our understanding of the key link being political line, and the two simultaneous tactics — unite Marxist-Leninists and win the advanced to communism. We have also been studying that we must do a serious study of all these questions, struggling with erroneous and opportunist lines in the student movement and within our organizations. PRSU and FMM have gone to a higher level and have been struggling to raise this clarity on the campuses as well as drawing clear lines of demarcation with opportunism. Our understanding of the women question is linked with the line struggles that are taking place to a higher level. The student movement is an ally of the working class movement and should be subordinate to it. Revolutionary students should seek out the guidance and political leadership of the communist movement, the genuine wing being those communist organisations that have grown out of the working class movement and the struggle from the steel to steel struggle with opportunists and sham organisations, and who, in the main, are upholding correct policies of the ideology of the proletariat—Marxist-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought.

Our participation in the AIC for IWWD deepened our understanding of the struggle against capitalist exploitation to the party building motion and provided us with valuable lessons on the seriousness of the struggle. When genuine forces entered the Coalition, the revisionists, the Trotskyists, the social feminists and even lesbians infected the Coalition with a disease, raising demands like “equal rights for lesbians” and demanding that men not speak.

(Editor’s note: WVO, flowing from their revisionist position of unity of action with the revisionists, invited these bourgeois forces into the Coalition. This conciliation with the bourgeoisie on the question could be traced to WVO’s participation in the Socialist Feminist Front, an eclectic mesh with a large concentration of anti-communist forces. WVO failed to take up a sharp struggle with their allies on the frightening call for the PRW and NML and the Revolutionary Bloc to come to their aid. Once we intensified the struggle and broke with the revisionist crew, the WVO criticized us for ultra-leftism and dogmatism, totally concealing their right opportunist errors of class collaboration.)

WVO did shallow criticism and self-criticism for their right errors, i.e., they said that they conciliated to the right due to organizational weaknesses, that their cadres weren’t trained or oriented enough on the relationship between party building and the woman question. They also raised that “we must wage a battle on the fronts” (with left and right opportunism) existing which was principal — right opportunism. In not taking it to their line on party building, they failed to disclose the ideological errors underlying their errors. Their philistine attitude towards struggle reflected in their bourgeois maneuvering and hegemonic tactics (their favorite tactic was parliamentary voting). When the line struggle hit them squarely, WVO claimed that “to raise the question is to lose the class.” And that we had to give up on the work for IWWD. PRSU and FMM have to deepen our analysis on WVO and we must bring it back to work with the student movement as a whole, the role that WVO played in this IWWD Coalition — the fact that WVO, in shying away from the struggle, actually walked out.

Higher levels of unity were forged in the struggle against opportunism as we purged ourselves...
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