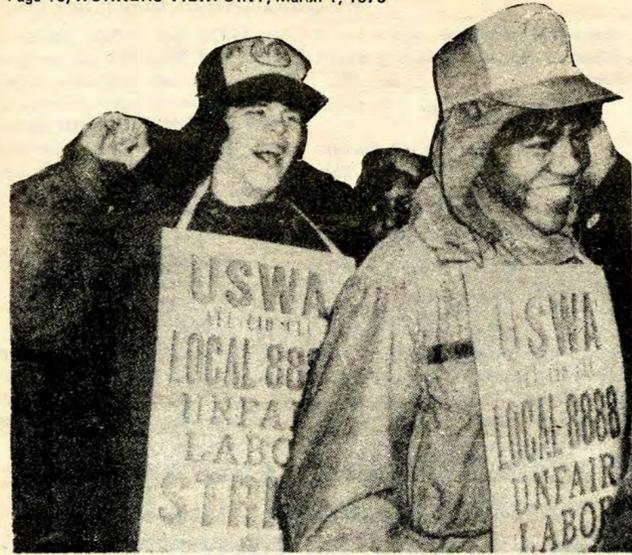


# Celebrate International Working Women's Day 1979!



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right to hold the better paid, "mainstream" jobs.

Defending these gains will be decisive in building the working women's movement.

## Deepening Economic and Political Crisis Underlies Stability of 40's & 50's

Prior to World War II, there was no tradition of women in heavy industry it was "normal" for them to be completely shut out. World War II, when women flocked into heavy industry to replace men sent to the front or to support the war effort, was an unusual time. Immediately after the war ended women were either driven from their industrial jobs or left voluntarily for the home. U.S. imperialism emerged out of the war as the top political, economic and military power in the world. This was the basis for the relative "stability" of the 50's and early 60's.

But underlying the dominant "order", the economic and political contradictions within U.S. imperialism were building. Since World War II, six economic crises have rattled the foundation of monopoly capitalism, with a seventh about to hit soon. With each

crisis, more and more women were forced, out of economic necessity, to leave the home and enter the labor force, getting jobs in garment, textile, electronics and other light industry, as well as the clerical and health fields.



## Women Working To Support Families Permanent Feature Of Monopoly Capitalism Today

In the drive to fight discrimination and get out of these low paying jobs, others began the long and difficult battle to break into the higher-paying, better-benefit jobs in heavy industry. These heroic forerunners filed suits and took whatever individual actions they could trying to crack the discrimination barriers in industries like steel, construction and auto.

## Feminist Movement of the 60's: Shock Troops for Women's Emancipation

Then in the late 60's the political stability of monopoly capitalism began to shatter as the people of Southeast Asia showed that U.S. imperialism was

a paper tiger. The anti-war movement, the rebellion of the Afro-American people and other oppressed nationalities, the student and feminist movements all awakened and inspired the masses of U.S. women. The feminist movement in particular, mainly students and petty-bourgeoisie, were shock troops of the developing women's movement electrifying the consciousness of women all over the country and pointing the way of militant struggle.

The isolated, scattered struggles of working women were raised to the broader struggle to end all women's oppression. The most advanced gains for women that were seized in the mass upsurges of the 60's and 70's were the jobs won for working women in steel, auto, chemical and other heavy industries. And as the spontaneous women's upsurge died down and the feminist movement degenerated into bourgeois feminism and gay rights, these gains survived, pushing the struggle of working women to move to a higher level.

## Trade Union Organization Strengthens Women's Movement While Petty-Bourgeois Feminists Sharpen Limitations of It

What distinguished the stable and determined strength of the working women's movement from the looseness, vacillation and instability of the petty-bourgeois feminist movement is organization. By breaking into the mainstream of the trade union movement, the highly discipline, socialized centers of large-scale production, working women gained an important weapon—strong organization. And the petty-bourgeois women's movement, with its individualistic outlook, with many getting into handicraft way of life (individualized mode of production), couldn't help but scatter.

## Take Part in Social Production, Only Path to Emancipation

Getting into better paying, more organized mainstream jobs have loosened the bonds of domestic drudgery on working women and pointed the way for those in clerical and light industry jobs. Liberated from some of the chains of domestic work which narrows consciousness, working women's scope has been broadened by the experience of modern, large-scale industry. Lenin summed up:

**The emancipation of women will only be possible when women can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time. And only now has that become possible through modern large-scale industry which does not merely permit of the employment of female labor over a wide range, but positively demands it, while it also tends towards ending private domestic labor by changing it more and more into a public industry. (The Woman Question)**

Today, with the U.S. economy in a state of permanent crisis, the bourgeoisie is forced to take back the gains of the 60's and 70's. They have to attack the standard of living and jobs of all workers, especially women and oppressed nationalities. But over the past few years, working women have had a chance to build up a militant tradition and presence in heavy industry—they're determined to keep their jobs and willing to fight tooth and nail for them.

In steel, the Weber case threatens to demolish industry training programs which have given thousands of women a chance to become machine operators, laborers and apprentices. In addition to their day-to-day fight for company-paid childcare, maternity leave, better wash-house conditions, against the company policy of setting up women to be fired while still on probation (battles which have benefitted men workers, too), women steelworkers are taking up the Weber case. They know that what's at stake is their right to work in steel at all.

In the auto plants, the struggles against layoffs have always been important for working women, and especially now with the bosses stepped-up attacks. Last hired, women autoworkers are at the bottom of the seniority lists along with oppressed nationalities. So when times are hard, they're the first fired, and with the overall capitalist crisis, the trend will be towards more women being laid off for good.

Women in the chemical industry have had some success breaking in, but staying healthy and alive is another story. Saying that certain chemicals used in some departments caused deformed

fetuses in pregnant women, American Cyanamid forced five women chemical workers to be sterilized or lose their jobs. But at another Cyanamid plant, women workers showed the way to beat these attacks. They organized and united with men workers who also face the same health and safety dangers. Together the workers forced the company to back off on their 'sterilize-or-out' threat.

The fight of women to maintain and move beyond the inroads they've already made in heavy industry is the fight for women's equality in the concrete! That's why all women uniting to beat back these attacks should be in the forefront of women's fight for equal rights. Also, women's gains in breaking into the better paying jobs has given inspiration to their sisters in the more marginal and clerical industries to spur organizing and raise their standards. Especially in recent years, there have been more pockets of organizing among office workers. Clerical workers demanding decent wages, benefits and against harassment by their bosses are organizing into groups and unions like the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU). Domestic too are seeing slaving in the home doesn't mean they have to be chained to poverty level wages with no benefits. So the fight to defend these most advanced gains for women from the upsurge of the 60's and 70's is a most important fight for equal rights for women now. It facilitates raising the standards for all women in the marginal and light industries as well as clerical workers and women on welfare. And can be a tremendous step towards unifying and raising the level of the women's movement as a whole.

As the bourgeoisie comes down with their attacks women workers will fight to defend their hard-earned jobs and the place they've won in the U.S. labor movement. The fight against the increased attacks will raise the struggle and consciousness of working women to a higher level. And through the course of the fight, women and men workers will forge stronger unity and respect for each other as brothers and sisters of the same class family—the multinational U.S. proletariat! The experience will help women workers to see the need to smash the double yoke of capitalist and domestic slavery that oppresses them, providing good conditions to win these vanguard women fighters to communism.

## Petty Bourgeois Feminist Leadership Sputters

Today's permanent economic crisis affects all classes, including the petty bourgeoisie. Working women are taking the brunt of the attacks and are fighting back in growing numbers. With the rise of the spontaneous struggles of women in the trade unions and on welfare breaking out more and more, the petty bourgeois feminists' leadership has sputtered

and lost momentum. Their main issues, the ERA, reproductive rights, and lesbian rights, are no longer the focal points. Feeling the crisis in their own declining standard of living, the petty bourgeois feminists must respond. So lately they have been talking about working women in trade unions, about getting working and welfare women into the national budget, and of getting behind the growing mass sentiments for increasing the welfare grant. The New York City chapter of NOW (National Organization of Women), the largest in the organization, recently went down to the docks with picket signs to support the women who went there to apply for openings for jobs as longshore-women. The title of the International Women's Day event this year is "Celebrating Working Women".

The main contribution the petty bourgeois feminists have made is that they have fought against women's oppression in a more organized way, putting the struggle against women's oppression as a mass movement in the forefront. Now, working and poor women are more conscious of their fight as women and of the common bond among working and poor women, and women of national minorities.

## Poor and Working Women's Demands Go Way Beyond The ERA

The rising demand for equal rights for women is clearly seen in the mass

motion for the ERA. Since the Houston Conference, and the UN's International Year of Women, thousands of women have been swept into the momentum, demanding women's equal rights. The essence of the grassroots motion is genuine demands against women's oppression. These are genuine sentiments that all working men and women must unite with.

While the ERA has rallied thousands of mostly petty bourgeois women with trade union superstructure support on a national level, the essence of the demands of working and poor women goes way beyond the ERA. The concrete demands for better paying stable jobs, for education, equal pay for equal work, for daycare and against forced sterilization will have more far reaching effects to better women than the ERA, which is still a general empty statement, a piece of paper. When joining in the ERA motion, we must raise our concrete positive program for women. When we talk to women we must do propaganda around the fact that the ERA will promise us nothing, that capitalism will never consistently uphold women's rights.

With the granting of an extension to June 30, 1982, the ERA issue has cooled off quickly, even for the petty bourgeois feminists. That's three more years of only fighting in the Congress and lobbying. NOW has set up an ERA

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## Resurgence of the Welfare Rights Movement Beginning

A powerful welfare rights movement developed in the '60s, influenced by the momentum from the Afro-American national movement. Under the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), welfare recipients fought for and won some of their basic needs—rent, utilities, clothing and food. Fearful of the movement this organization represented, the bourgeoisie bought off many of the grassroots leaders to disintegrate it. The NWRO eventually broke down into regional units, dissipating its strength as a national organization. But single mothers, men, and families on welfare have continued the struggle around welfare rights. For the first time in several years, welfare rights organizations are joining together in New York for a state-wide demonstration at the capital in Albany on March 14. They are demanding an increase in the welfare grant, an end to utility shut-offs, and no more harassments.

## Welfare Recipients Face Rising Cuts

There hasn't been an increase in the welfare grant in New York City since 1974, while the welfare grant of \$258 for a family of four covering everything except rent has been drastically eroded by inflation. In 1979, welfare recipients get only half of what is needed to cover food, rent, clothes, utilities, and other necessities. There are over 860,000 children on welfare in New York State alone. These children are going hungry and cold.

The tragedy of the 18 month old baby who froze to death in New York City last month is not an isolated incident. Many children and the elderly are freezing to death because landlords will not provide heat. But the welfare grants don't stretch far enough to cover utility bills, so utility companies just shut off the heat.

Daily harassment by the welfare department is another burning issue for recipients. First they make it almost impossible for you to get on welfare. The application form is a complicated 11 pages long. If you do get on welfare, you are called down every few months to recheck your eligibility. If you don't show up, welfare will just cut you off. Often, even if you do go in for your appointment, they will cut you off anyway. This is what happened to Ana, a middle-aged Puerto Rican mother disabled by a chronic lung disease, "I went in for my appointment. I did everything I was supposed to do. But they cut me and my son off anyway. Even though they admit it is their mistake, I have to fight like hell to get them to start sending us our checks again."

This kind of harassment is being laid down on a policy level. In New York City, Mayor Koch hired Blanche Bernstein, a racist economist, specifically

to reduce the welfare budget after she conducted a state-wide study on how to cut down the welfare rolls. First she tried denying even eligible applicants. At one point last year, more than 50% of all applicants denied were later found to be eligible. When this was exposed, more and more people found themselves being kicked off "by mistake" like Ana. Bernstein is trying to reduce the budget by denying and kicking people off of welfare. The welfare budget has increased over the last few years, but the welfare rolls have actually gone down. Clearly, the increased money is going to support a more complicated and expensive bureaucracy, rather than raising the standard of benefits for welfare recipients.

## Harassment Escalated to Physical Brutality

Harassment has escalated to out-  
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# WOMEN

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ratification committee devoted solely to lobbying and letter writing to their local politicians.

To fight for the ERA alone strait-jackets and narrows the struggle to only lobbying and petitioning Congress, pinning our hopes on a constitutional amendment. This has sidetracked many women from taking up the real pressing demands. Our concrete demands will build a fighting basis of unity for the women's movement. Most importantly, these demands rally and organize the working women's struggle and raise them to the forefront of the women's movement.

Sometimes they will fight very militantly and attack the bourgeoisie. But not tied to production, they lack tight organization and a protracted outlook. However, among this strata, ideas are very fluid, changing rapidly in a short time. So they are open to many ideas, especially in times of difficulty when they too feel the effects of the economic crisis more and more. So working class women must have their own independent line and organization in order to provide leadership in the women's movement, including the petty bourgeois feminist forces, in order to strengthen the fight against capitalism. By providing staunch leadership, some of the feminist forces can be won over though they themselves cannot sustain a movement.

## Bourgeoisie Tries to Sidetrack Resistance

So why did Carter, representative of the U.S. bourgeoisie, support the ERA all along? Because he desperately needs the ERA. It is about the only issue he has left to shore up his rapidly crumbling image, and for the bourgeoisie the price is cheap. As one welfare mother pointed out, "Sure he will push the ERA, cause it don't cost him one cent!" He got the loudest applause at his midterm State of the Union address for supporting this amendment. While cheerleading for the ERA, he hasn't supported the desperate need for an increase in the welfare grant. In fact, he has cut \$20 billion in food stamps, WIC—child nutrition, and the milk program, taking the food right out of our hungry children's mouths. And under Carter's administration has come the Bakke decision which is a rallying point for attacking gains and special programs fought for by women and minorities.

## Bureaucrats and Misleaders Slip And Slide

The trade union bureaucrats, after giving in to the defeat of the Labor Law Reform Bill without mobilizing the rank and file for it, made the ratification of the ERA their number one national issue. They've become another cheerleader for the ERA, while in most trade unions women have to force the bureaucrats to take up the real fight for women's concrete demands against the cutbacks in heavy industry, for daycare, for maternity benefits, etc.

But since the main issues of the petty bourgeois feminists are being

pushed into the background by the growing working class women's movement, the bourgeoisie and their misleaders are wracking their brains for new issues to sidetrack the rising resistance. Objectively the firing of Bella Abzug by the White House only helped to promote her misleadership in the women's movement. Bella Abzug has to keep up her image by coming out against Carter's budget. Her effectiveness as a misleader would be destroyed if she didn't appear as a friend of women's rights. In this time of permanent economic crisis, the capitalists are forced to cut back. At the same time, they know that the masses will resist, so it is important for them to keep this resistance stuck along the reformist road and away from militant struggles and revolutionary ideas. So they try to present the question of leadership as one between Carter and Abzug, or Carter and Costanza. This is an attempt to keep the masses within a bourgeois box of bourgeois choices. They are trying to build up mass motion and draw women into fighting on the issue of Abzug's firing.

One sucker who swallowed the bait is the revisionist Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). These so-called communists say,

But the real story goes deeper than simply the chauvinist attitudes of the administration. A deep rift is developing within the ruling class, and significantly within the Democratic Party, over economic matters. The rift between the Kennedy liberals and Carter's faction has grown in recent months since their open falling out over the question of a national health plan... This falling-out has exposed once more Carter's offensive against the rights and living standards of the people and especially against women and minorities. (*Call*, January 29, 1979)

Blinded by their own illusions in bourgeois democracy, they think that Kennedy, the liberal, would be indignant at Carter's cuts in the budget. Carter's image has gotten so exposed that bourgeoisie like Kennedy, to look good, have been forced to come out against Carter's budget. Without "liberals" like Kennedy who pose as the people's friend, the capitalists' state would stand totally naked. The CP(ML) once again covers up the dual tactics of the bourgeoisie, which serve to keep the masses' faith in their so-called democracy.

They even go so far as to conclude, "It also shows the futility of the liberal schemes during these times of crisis." Outside of being a little "vague," like the revisionists, this implies that the bourgeoisie will no longer use liberal schemes for pacification. This is the most dangerous and incorrect view. As we said in the last issue on Ford Foundation's appointment of Franklin Thomas, the bourgeoisie is forced to push reforms to a higher level. This means that "They cannot spend the hundreds of millions to co-opt the movement and create a strata of poverty pimps as they did ten years ago. They are forced to seek ways to split up and divide the working class and the oppres-

sed nationalities through sham schemes like the Boston forced busing plan." (*WVO*, Feb. 15, 1979)

The latest step in the creation of a "safety valve" for the anger of the masses of women is in the formation of the Progressive Alliance, made up of people like Doug Fraser, Vernon Jordan, and Bella herself. "Safety valves" and reforms are still the main form of rule by the bourgeoisie to keep the lid on the masses' anger and resistance.

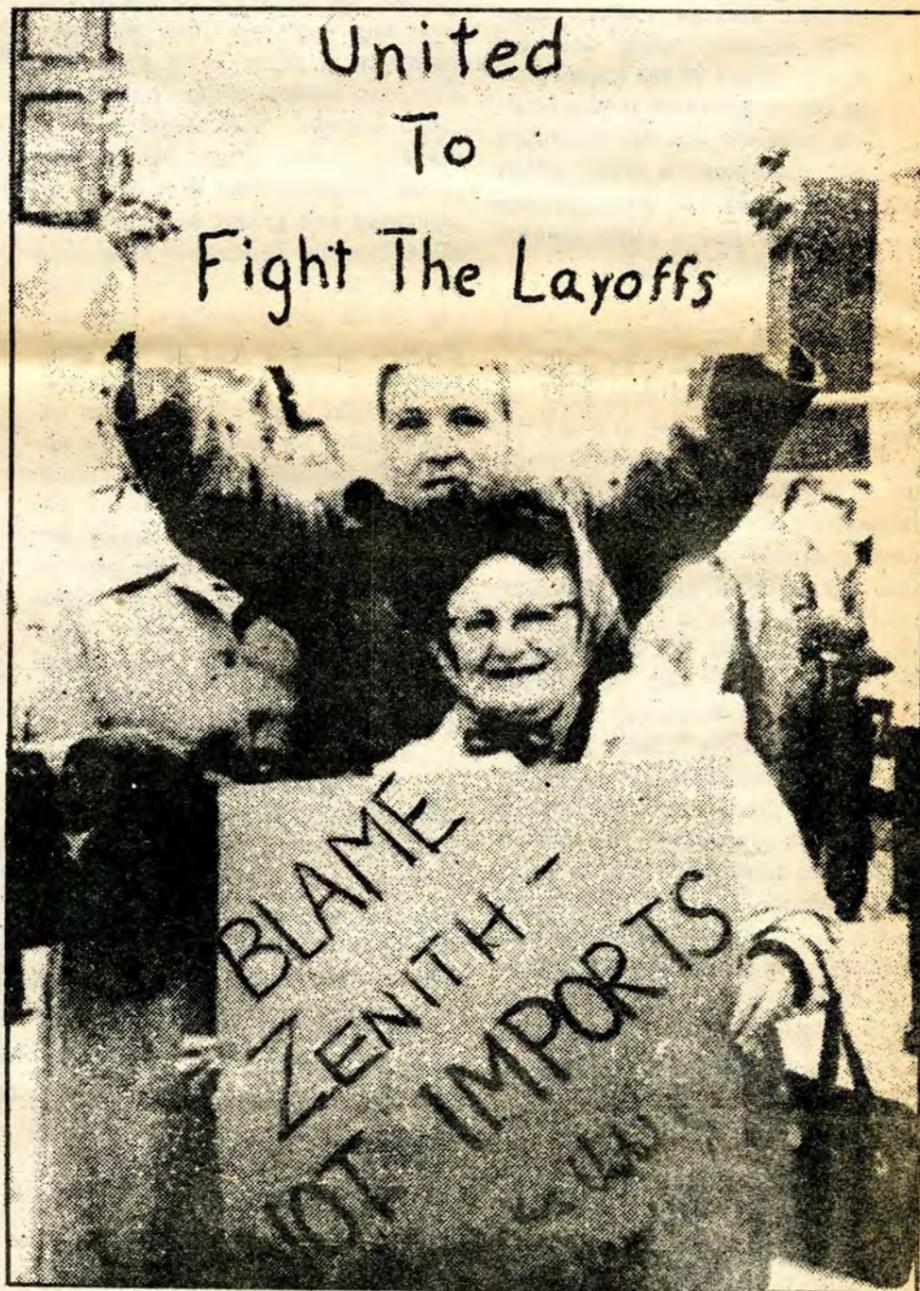
## Capitalism Digs Its Own Grave

The present economic crisis and the rise of working women's struggles has brought the issues of working women to the forefront of the women's movement. Petty bourgeois feminists have had to address them like NOW's latest International Women's Day—"Celebrating Working Women." Meanwhile the bourgeoisie is scrambling about seeking new ways to keep these struggles bottled up. The "woman in the home" has become an economic impossibility, even for many of the petty bourgeoisie. The old bourgeois line on the role and values of the family have been cast asunder. The old roles are no more.

This year's International Working Women's Day has particular significance in light of the party's campaign to "Study, Propagandize, and Organize!" Now is the time to dig deep into the women's movement, sum up the lessons, size up the political situation, and sharpen the lines.

This year's International Working Women's Day has particular significance in light of the party's campaign to "Study, Propagandize, and Organize!" Now is the time for all comrades to dig deep into the women's movement, sum up the lessons, size up the political situation, and sharpen the lines.

The great disorder nationally and internationally means that people's minds are wide open to socialism. Active women are seeking a way out. But class consciousness cannot develop on its own. Only communist propaganda and organization can give the systematic understanding and solution. Raising the political consciousness of the women's movement and fighting for concrete demands will raise the political level and the standard of living of women and push forward the struggle of the entire working class. ■



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