

BUFFALO WORKERS' MOVEMENT

NEWSLETTER ★ MARCH 1978



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If you subscribe we will continue to send you the best newsletter in this city with a communist viewpoint and analysis. In the next few weeks you may be receiving a call from a BWM member or supporter. We are asking our friends to send us five dollars for a one year subscription to the newsletter. Make checks payable to the Buffalo Workers Movement. Please.



The Buffalo Workers' Movement are working people who see the need to organize the fight for our daily needs: food, housing, education, the right to work, and to maintain a decent livelihood. We recognize the need to organize ourselves into fighting trade unions and democratic community organizations before we can successfully fight against the repression in our lives and the exploitation of our work.

We also believe the root cause of the governmental repression, the hassles at work and crime in our neighborhoods is in the capitalist system itself. Massive layoffs at Bethlehem Steel, Western Electric moving from Buffalo overseas; gouging utility prices; Buffalo's inferior schools and death-causing pollution are all related to the system of profit-making that is inherent in capitalism.

We are committed to building a revolutionary movement among working people and their allies to overthrow the profit system, replacing it with socialism. We seek to totally abolish the exploitation of our work and the oppression that national minority people and women face daily must also always be attacked if we want to end all aspects of oppression.

But the working class lacks unity, training, organization and leaders. How do we build a revolutionary movement? How do we unite and build a working class movement beyond the day to day struggles for our livelihood? A necessary ingredient in this revolutionary plan, we believe, is the development of a vanguard party, whose leadership is recognized by a majority of working people.



Letters to BWM

The Editorial Board encourages letters and comments from our readers. Material will be kept confidential and reprinted by agreement of the author (s) and the Editorial Board. We ask that letters be typed or neatly printed, double spaced and kept to 250 words or less. KEEP THOSE LETTERS COMING.

The development of a revolutionary party, a detachment forged from the working class is therefore the most pressing task that we see ahead of us. And only conscious prolonged activity can build such an organization. Such a party must base itself on scientific socialism guided by the analysis of Marx and Lenin and the recent struggles of communists throughout the world.

We recognize that the view of the world from Buffalo and the struggles that take place here daily are limited in their local perspective. But this city, and in fact the entire country, needs a left perspective as an alternative to the narrow media clique that reports on news events in this society. We need to develop a newspaper as a tool that working people can take up and use as their own: to analyze local, national, and world struggles. We see the necessity of providing information and analysis through this newsletter which can contribute to the development of a class conscious working class movement. To this end the Newsletter of the Buffalo Workers' Movement is dedicated.

WORKING PAPERS

If you are interested in the political activities of the BWM and our perspectives on such issues as women's oppression, trade unions, national oppression, party building and the international situation plus other major issues - our working papers are now published. At the present time we are only distributing them on a person to person basis; not through the mail. If you are interested write us: BWM, P.O. Box 6, Station G, Buffalo, N.Y. 14213, or call 882-8232, 6 to 9 PM weekdays. Give us your address or phone number and we will contact you.

INTRODUCTION: SPECIAL ISSUE ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

What is causing women's oppression in America? Why is it that many women don't feel safe on city streets day or night? Why is it that even though "we have come a long way baby" working women are paid only 56% of men's salaries. Since the early 19th century, when women entered the industrial workforce for the first time, women workers have worked at some of the hardest and most labor-intensive jobs in the U.S. Many early immigrant women who entered the needlework-textile trades had their dream of America shattered on the sewing lines. In our Labor Round Up section of this newsletter, we interview a recent immigrant Chilean woman whose strength is an example for us to continue the fight against working conditions that have not changed much since the 19th century. An article on "women's work" at M. Wile expands the analysis of the textile industry and how women are divided among themselves and how some men are set down at the company's feet to act as the union representatives. M. Wile is an example of how sexual discrimination is used to maintain the sexual division of labor.

We also interview two women and a man who are leaders in a recently formed union at United Cerebral Palsy Association. Their organization provides the nuts and bolts of how to build a strong, militant union and serves as a contrast to how a white male led AFL-CIO union bureaucracy consistently holds back the struggle of women workers. By promoting male supremacy, the bourgeoisie helps keep men and women workers divided, thereby increasing profits. Oppression of women at work, then, provides a material basis for the institutional perpetuation of male supremacy.

A second material basis for the ideology of male supremacy is the profit obtained by the bourgeoisie from the unpaid labor of women in the home. It is women's domestic labor which frequently allows a man to work outside the home. The capitalist pays nothing for the work of raising children, cleaning the house, cooking, doing the laundry. Yet the maintenance of a stable family life is essential for capitalism. But in recent history, more and more women must work outside the home and do domestic work. This is known as the "double shift" - one shift at home and one on the job. Stereotypes of women at home provide a stable, emotional retreat from the intensity and exploitation of industrial work. Yet women increasingly help provide the subsistence for their families by working for wages: women make up a total of 46% of the entire U.S. workforce. Many women who are unwilling to take the physical or sexual abuse associated with dependency on the man as she remains at home will seek wage work for equal treatment or finally her own independence.

The article on wife battering details the reasons why women, predominately those who remain in the home, are subject to physical attack by their husbands. We also included an article on how the rights of American women may improve after passage of the ERA, an amendment to the constitution. Finally, we analyze one of the most offensive crimes of our 'civilized' society, rape. We trace the history of rape to the earlier slave societies, where property and the misuse of women slaves as property to be exploited has continued to the present.

We think that the historical development of women's oppression has been linked to the rise of private property and the emergence of social classes

and the state. Coupled with this oppression is the resistance that women and men have led in socialist revolutions to finally end this exploitation. In socialist countries like China, Cuba, Vietnam and in Africa, women and men have a new equality based on socialist work and family relations. These countries show that men, alongside women, can struggle against the foundation of their oppression - capitalism.

It is the socialist revolution that can guarantee women the control over their bodies and the right to define their sexuality. But this revolution must not take place without the mass participation of women. Men must recognize the pitfalls of the narrowly self-interested ideology of male supremacy and fight for the rights of women; learn from women; work with women. It is the special responsibility of men to fight against male supremacy and the material basis for it. This is why we in the EWM support a slogan for the celebration of International Women's Day:

"There can be no free men until there are free women."



(Celebrate Int'l Women's Day)
(cont. from p. 3)

Sterilization abuse (especially of minority women who face the plight of being both a minority and a woman) is another attack on women. While the Hyde Amendment has been passed to limit federal funds for abortion federal funding for sterilization has escalated.* Over 35% of Puerto Rican women are sterilized, over 20% of Black women and 19% of Native American women have been sterilized (see Guardian, Jan. 4, 1978). The Hyde Amendment is a further push towards sterilization. It has been documented that many women are sterilized under the influence of drugs or of losing welfare benefits without really being aware of what the operation entailed (see CESA pamphlet). The Hyde Amendment will affect only those who continually suffer discrimination; poor women, especially minorities, who do not have the economic means to pay the high medical costs for an abortion. The return to the coat hanger days and a rise in the death rate from unsafe abortions will be the result.

The anti-abortion forces, although concentrated in church groups, have found ready allies in the government and other forces of the right: members of the anti-gay, anti-ERA, anti-union and anti-bussing forces have found a considerable degree of unity with the avid and organized "Right to Lifers". The Houston conference of "Right to Lifers" last year showed a considerable presence of these other groups on the right, although it is clear that not all members of the right support each of these movements. There is also much support for the anti-abortion and anti-worker movement in the government. This fits with the policies of the U.S. government and its denial of quality health care and its refusal to support equal rights for nonwhites and for women. That is why all concerned and aware people must stand up and give support with voices and action to celebrate the past struggles and achievements of women. We must demand an end to the continual attack on women's rights and join in this fight to better the lives of over one half of our population.

*Comm. to End Sterilization Abuse (CESA), Box A244, Cooper Station; New York, N.Y. 10003

CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The celebration of International Women's Day reflects the issues confronting the women's movement of our times. It is a date set aside in commemoration of the struggles which were sparked in this country in the midst of the 19th century. The poverty of immigrants forced into the overcrowded cities to work in factories and sweatshops added weight to the burdens borne by the whole working class and keenly felt especially by working women.

THE DAY IN HERSTORY (HISTORY)

On March 8, 1857, women garment and textile workers staged a demonstration in the lower east side of New York City against dangerous and oppressive working conditions (fires, industrial amputations and other occupational hazards). The demonstration emphasized the demands for better pay (often amounting to less than 10¢ an hour) and the opposition to the 12-hour working day. The success of these women garment and textile workers in forming a union in March 1860, predated the first attempts to organize the clothing industry on a "craft union" basis by almost 50 years.

In 1908, on March 8, thousands of women marched again from the garment district in the lower east side of New York. Added to the original demands of years before were voting rights for women and opposition to child labor.

It was in memory of these two events that March 8 was proclaimed International Women's Day at a Conference of Women Socialists in Copenhagen in 1910. Clara Zetkin, a German socialist leader of the labor movement, recalled 53 years of struggle since 1857 and proposed a day be set aside to commemorate women in memory of that first struggle in New York City. This day became a day of unity of all working women throughout the world in the fight for peace, democracy and socialism. In the main, it is the example of women in socialist countries and those in the fight for socialism that are taking the lead for women's liberation.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN SOCIALIST STRUGGLES

Socialist struggles in many of the developing countries are rapidly advancing the emancipation of women. Revolutions that require an active, fighting commitment from all sectors of the population have propelled women into the forefront of the fight for independence and against colonialism. The role of women fighters in China, Vietnam, Africa and Palestine have shown us that women's emancipation is inseparably linked to the freedom of their entire people. In Ethiopia during the uprisings of 1974, it was the examples of thousands of women participating in demonstrations for equal pay that helped mobilize the overthrow of the Selassie monarchy in the fall of 1974. In Vietnam during the long protracted war against the U.S., women were in the lead of the urban peace movement efforts and offered examples of resistance in fighting units throughout their country.

Socialist revolution has brought about the liberation of women in two ways. One way is through the massive incorporation of women into the industrial and skilled workforce. By gaining higher levels of work skill and skills necessary for the new socialist economy, women's labor power becomes an important component in the means of production. China is more rapidly including women in political leadership as well as leadership in the workplace. At the Tenth Party Congress, over 20% of the delegates were women. Today in China, the majority of women have skilled jobs where they receive equal pay for equal work. In the less economically advanced socialist country of Cuba, a study done in 1975 reported that over 26% of Cuban women received salaried wages.

The second means of liberation of women in socialist countries has been through changes in the family, although these changes usually come slower. As sex loses its basis in the division of labor, socialist men and women begin to share equally in the domestic chores that previously were relegated to women in the home. Now in Vietnam, for example, students of both sexes receive training in traditionally "feminine" tasks. In Cuba, the New Family Code establishes the obligation of both sexes to share in domestic chores. China's Marriage Law, Article 7, states that "husbands and wives are companions living together and shall share equal status in the home". In these socialist countries it is not a question of abolishing the family, but of removing the limiting and deforming influence of millions of small domestic workplaces (the home) on women.

WHY DO WE CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY NOW?

Apart from the historic commemoration of the day and the celebration of women's contribution towards the building of new societies, there are powerful and pressing reasons why International Women's Day is an important holiday for all people in the U.S. Women are still forced to fight for their rights as a group in society, as well as for their individual rights at the workplace, in the community and for control over their own bodies. Men must recognize the task of changing their own attitudes and practices of sexism and must be strong supporters to strengthen women's rights and position in all levels of society. This is a difficult task for men because it entails forfeiting some very real benefits that men receive from women's exploitation. However, only when men and women work together on equal grounds can we really advance towards the bettering of all our lives.

There are numerous examples of movements to change the view and treatment of women in society. The celebration in Buffalo will concentrate on sterilization abuse and the Hyde amendment as potent examples of discrimination. There are other areas of women's struggles such as the ERA, affirmative action and the fights against rape and wife battering that are also important.

(cont. on page 2, right hand column)

BATTERED WIVES VIOLENCE IN THE HOME

Wife battering is one of this country's most widespread yet least reported crimes. It is estimated that close to 5 million women are beaten each year by their husbands or boyfriends. It cannot be attributed to any one group of men, as wife battering crosses all class, economic, professional and educational lines. To some, wife abuse is a socially acceptable behavior in this society, many believing it is good to knock women around, "to keep them in their place." Capitalism promotes the sexist ideology that a wife is her husband's property, appeasing men into thinking that they have some real power, and essentially giving him license to do what he wants to her.

SEXIST IDEOLOGY FOSTERS ABUSE

We have all been conditioned into sex role stereotyping which fosters the dominance of one partner over the other - that men should be strong, active, rational, authoritarian, aggressive and stable, while women should be submissive, passive and non-rational. Women are brought up to believe they are naturally dependent, and, therefore, must lean on men with their superior strength. After marriage, many women realize that their husbands are not so protective and superior, and quite contrary to their expectations, they end up providing their husbands with the security of a comfortable home and an escape from the problems of the outside world. Men find out on the job and in life that they have little power to exercise. Both men and women cannot live up to the artificially determined roles and end up blaming and resenting each other for their lack of fulfillment. These conflicts, if expressed violently, will most likely result in the woman being abused as she is usually the physically weaker partner.

CAPITAL BENEFITS

But it is in capitalism's interest to foster these roles - keeping women in the home as the pacifier of men who are exploited on the job. The family has been set up as the ideal support structure, but all too often is more a place of violence than a secure refuge.

WHERE TO TURN

Many women leave husbands who abuse them, many return, and many never leave. Most women have nowhere to go, especially if they have children. It is certainly difficult to find any place that can house a woman in this situation. Instead of family and friends giving the needed emotional support, they often encourage a woman to go back home to only suffer more abuses. The prospect for a woman supporting herself and children is rather bleak - some menial job at poor wages, inadequate and expensive child care facilities, or the degrading experiences awaiting her should she apply for public assistance.

Facing such obstacles, it's no wonder many women return home when their husband's promise to change, only to find that in a few days she is facing the same abuse as before. Another reality for these women is the threats their husbands make on them if they leave - more physical attacks on them, and even the threat to kill. Phoning the police brings no solution either. They generally don't want to get involved in a "family dispute", often taking the view that it's no concern of theirs what a man does with "his property".

COURTS NOT MUCH HELP

The system is anything but helpful to women caught in this situation. If she chooses to go to court, it is usually a very frustrating experience, taking much time and patience. Even if a woman has been badly injured, it is often difficult to get her case before a judge and then to get the judge to believe her instead of her husband is still another difficult task. Also, many times, after the woman initially goes to court, her husband threatens her or beats her even more severely than before, forcing her to drop charges. All this contributes to the fact that more than half the women who complain in courts about beatings drop their cases.

WIFE ABUSE IN BUFFALO

In 1976, Buffalo's Legal Aid handled 1,500 wife abuse cases, and in New York State, between 1972-73, family courts handled 14,167 wife abuse complaints. In 1976, Erie County Family Court issued 511 "orders of protection" to females against their male partners - 147 violations of these were brought to the Court's attention. Imagine a woman holding up a piece of paper to protect herself against another beating. It's no wonder so many don't bother going back to court.

ALTERNATIVES

There are few alternatives open to the many women in this situation, but there has been an increasing movement to set up refuges across the country. In Buffalo, there is a Wife Abuse Task Force, which operates a hot line number, 886-7359, for support and information. Women can take refuge at the Salvation Army (although they will not accept boys 12 or over) and the YWCA Residence will put up women. There are also some other promising situations in Buffalo that are developing into more comprehensive programs for woman to find the support and shelter they need.

Although it is very positive and much needed, developing shelters does not change the sexist ideology that is inherent within this capitalist system. We need to struggle to make the basic changes that will produce a society where men and women will work together for their common good and where violence against women in any form is seen as the abhorrent crime that it is.



CHILEAN WOMEN IN THE U.S.

INTRODUCTION

It's tough when you can't speak English, you can't find out what's going on, can't ask questions, can't defend yourself, whatever the boss says goes. But the most important thing is that you have a job, so you take it.

The money could be better, and in the bigger plants it is better, but at least here they don't push you so hard. The business is too small and making too much money to make it worthwhile to screw around with changing piece rates and reorganization. Julia Ramirez works in a small garment factory employing 50 people that produces cheap nylon jackets. She sews the lining into 200 jackets a day. With the money she makes, she can buy two of them. There was a whole warehouse full of jackets. Now they're all gone and the warehouse is being filled up again. Julia has no idea where they are sold, but as long as they are, there is work.

This article deals with Julia, the wife in a working class family who played an active role in supporting the Allende regime. After the coup, the Ramirez family was compelled to flee to Argentina. They were finally allowed to come to the United States for permanent resettlement in the fall of 1977. Their story is typical of thousands of Chilean families.

CHILE UNDER ALLENDE

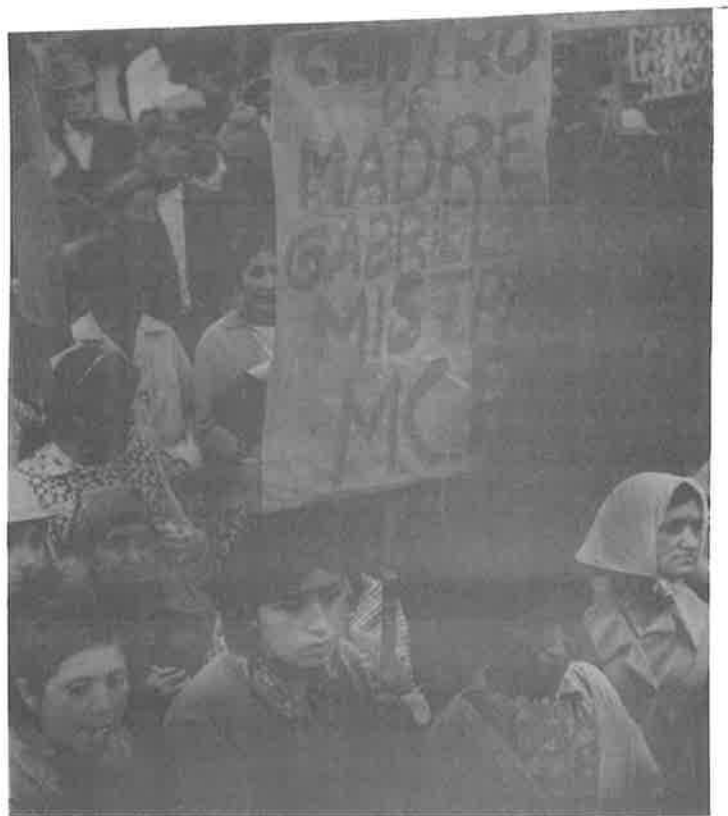
Under the Popular Unity government led by Salvador Allende (1970-1973), the working people of Chile won real concessions. Salaries increased, price controls were imposed, daily allotments of food, milk and other necessities were distributed to the poorest people and social services were greatly expanded. No longer could the factory owners, businessmen and landowners pay poverty wages and raise prices at will.

THE RIGHTWING REACTION

Not being able to continue making their "customary" profits, owners closed their factories, abandoned their estates, took their money and fled the country. Merchants closed shops and sold through the black market to avoid price controls. Truckowners refused to move goods and paralyzed the economy. International capital responded to the nationalization of natural resources and the communications industry by imposing a credit boycott, and lowering the price of key exports like copper. Big corporations like I.T.T. bankrolled opposition forces. The United States government initiated a "destabilization" campaign, financing the opposition press, subsidizing the "striking" truckowners, and stepping up aid to the military.

PROTECTING WORKING CLASS REFORMS

In this family of four, the wife, Julia, is the strongest figure. In Chile she was an active supporter of the government's policies and participated in several mass organizations. One of these was the Centro de Madres (Mother's Center) which assisted women in raising their families and running their households. Originally set up prior to the Allende regime, and with a middle class orientation, the make-up of its membership and orientation changed under the Popular Unity government. Its ranks swelled with poor and working class women; government services were brought to previously neglected sectors of the population. After the right wing coup, the Centro de Madres was one of the few mass organizations allowed to continue to function. Today, it serves as an indispensable tool in organizing resistance to the dictatorship.



CHILEAN WOMEN ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE MOTHERS CENTER

With the truckowners strike and merchants withholding their goods from the market, the people throughout Chile organized themselves to directly take over the process of distribution. In some areas, trade unions and factory committees took up the task. A popular mass organization, **Junta Abastecimiento Popular (J.A.P.)**, was established to carry on the work of food distribution, enforce price controls and mobilize the people for mass demonstrations to defend the government's policies. Confrontations were common. People would force the merchants to open their shops and sell at controlled prices. Right wing thugs would break into warehouses and destroy food meant for distribution. In her district, Julia was in charge of food distribution and guarding the warehouse. Since the men worked, the women set up armed patrols to guard the warehouse.

A politically conscious and active people, men and women, was needed to protect the working class reforms from a right wing reaction. Julia and other politically active women worked together to get women out of the home and involved in the struggle. In addition, they saw the need to push the mass movement beyond the government's program.

THE COUP

The Coup of Sept. 11, 1973, put an end to these working class reforms and aspirations. Political parties, trade unions, and mass organizations were dismantled; activists under the Allende regime were persecuted; many were shot or **died under torture**, many simply "disappeared". In a country of 10 million, 30,000 were killed by the dictatorship. Wages were cut to a fraction of previous levels, prices soared, millions found themselves unemployed and starving.

People began fleeing the country, taking refuge in embassies, crossing into Argentina with tourist visas, leaving any way they could. Nearly one million people have left Chile since the Coup, 700,000 going to Argentina.

After two years of persecution in which three of Julia's brothers were shot by the Junta, the Ramirez family was compelled to flee to Argentina. There the refugees were under the protection of the Ecumenical Council for Social Action (C.E.A.S.). Their political refugee status is officially recognized by international organizations, including the U.N.

REPRESSION IN ARGENTINA

In Argentina, the refugees must wait until they are accepted by another country for permanent resettlement. In the meantime, they cannot work, cannot send their children to school, have virtually no civil rights and are subject to periodic raids by the police. The refugees, labelled as leftists, are hated by the Argentinian property owners who refuse to rent proper housing to them. Tens of thousands are packed

into cheap hotels where there are not enough beds and the food is no better than garbage. Others must live in the worst slums without running water or sanitary facilities. Malnutrition among the children is a serious problem.

Though the refugees are not legally permitted to work, they are hired for harvesting crops and in the service industries. Employers get away with offering substandard working conditions and wages. It is not uncommon for the boss to refuse to pay for work completed. Both Julia and her husband Victor became seriously ill from overexposure to pesticides while working in the fields. In many ways, the position of the refugee is the same as the Mexican illegal alien in the United States.

The situation became so bad that the Chileans held a hunger strike in May of 1977. The demands were for better housing and food and for speeding the process of resettlement. In all, 700 people participated, including Julia and one of her daughters. Five days into the strike, a United Nations functionary signed an agreement promising to meet the strikers' demands.

The people were left to their own resources, going from embassy to embassy making application for admission. A few hundred families to Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Canada, etc. The United States agreed to admit only 170 families after careful screening by the State Department.

LIFE IN THE U.S.

In this country, life is not easy for the Ramirez family. They have received minimal assistance from the government and charitable organizations. They must even pay back the plane fare from Argentina. Fortunately, both Julia and her husband have found work; she in a garment factory, he on the custodial staff of a hospital. Where they live, they cannot see the poverty, unemployment and discrimination that Latin American people face.

CONTINUING POLITICAL WORK

Julia continues to be active in doing support work for newly arrived Chilean refugees, helping them adjust to this country. She states that, "Although I have not been treated badly here, my point of view will not change." As for her hopes and aspirations in this country, all she asks is, "For the opportunity to work and be productive".

Julia does not separate her family life from her politics. She comes from a family with a long involvement with leftist politics in Chile, and she has always been politically active. 3 of her brothers were killed for their support of the Allende regime. Julia continues this history of struggle within her own family, encouraging the collaboration and political development of her two daughters. The major focus of the family is around political work. That tradition, that point of view, is a process that continues today.

RAPE... SEPARATING MYTH FROM FACT

In a recent rape case in Madison, Wisconsin, the judge stated that "rape is a natural response" for a young man when he sees an attractive woman. This remark provoked outrage from the women's movement and sparked a campaign which got the judge kicked out. His remark reflects a common myth about rapists and rape victims. Rape may well be the most frequent violent crime in this country. The subject is no longer taboo, although there are still many misconceptions about it.

A BRUTAL CRIME OF VIOLENCE

The women's movement has challenged the sexual double standard, the idea that women provoke rape by not staying at home or by going out alone at night. These old myths that it is the woman's fault for being raped, carry over to the legal system where the victim is on trial more than the accused rapist.

Some feminists agree with the Wisconsin judge that rape is "natural". But the facts prove them both wrong. Rape is a brutal crime of violence, not an act of passion. It is not "natural" for men to be rapists, just as the secondary status to which women are forced by U.S. culture is not biologically determined. Rape is part of a culture of violence, and like all culture, it is learned. Testimony from Vietnam shows that in group rape there, unwilling GI's were forced by peers to participate until it became a matter-of-fact act of war. Similarly, the South Vietnamese Army, which did not participate in rape at the beginning of the war became notorious for it by the end.

Racist violence and rape are part of U.S. history - seizing of Native American lands and exploitation of African slaves. Rape of white women by Native American men was unknown until the 1800's, after a century or two of brutality by white settlers had taught them how to regard women as property to be taken. The TV movie Roots popularized what had long been hidden from

white Americans - that Black women's lives and bodies belonged to their masters.



CLASS PERSPECTIVE ON RAPE

In spite of the fact that many feminists hold that rape benefits all men by helping to terrorize all women and secure male domination, this is not true. Rape benefits only the men of the ruling classes, who want to perpetuate the oppression of women, the division between men and women, and their own domination. But it harms the men who must struggle against these men of property, for they require the unity, respect and equality of women in order to win their common struggle.

RACIST USE OF THE RAPE CHARGE

One of the most destructive myths is that of the Black rapist - the racist idea that Black men want and take white women. A study in one U.S. city showed that only 4% of rapes are inter-racial, yet the punishment of Black men who rape white women is far more severe than for intra-racial rape. 90% of the men executed for rape since 1930 have been Black, and over 25% of Blacks lynched in the South were accused of rape. It is rare for any man to be convicted of raping a Black woman, and until Joanne Little, the idea that a Black woman could be raped was not taken seriously.

In the actual cases of white women being raped by Black men, it is important to avoid playing in to the racism by allowing any convenient Black man to serve as the scapegoat. In the case of Kenny Johnson, all the D.A. had to convict Kenny was appeals to racism in the face of the overwhelming evidence that he did not do it. By convicting the wrong man, the State has shown its indifference to women's fears of rape, since the real rapist is still at large.

REFORM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The woman's movement has pressed for important reforms - changes in the use of evidence of past sex life when rape victims go to court and counselors to assist victims through the legal process. In addition, the women's movement has encouraged women to resist intimidation. The Inez Garcia case upheld a woman's right to defend herself from physical abuse. But reforms, self-defense classes for women and increased convictions for rapists alone are not the answer. Only with the transformation to a classless society will rape and woman's oppression end.

ARE ALL MEN RAPISTS?

LABOR ROUND-UP

FROM THE NEWSLETTER OF BUFFALO WORKERS MOVEMENT



WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

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LABOR ROUNDUP

M WILE

NEEDLE TRADES IN BUFFALO

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WHY WE NEED THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

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INTRODUCING THIS ISSUE

WOMEN AND WORK - OUR VIEW

In this issue of the Labor-Roundup we deal with some of the conditions and struggles of working women here in Buffalo. We will highlight the working conditions in M. Wile, the largest garment factory in the city, where most of the employees are women. The article on people working at the United Cerebral Palsy Association deals with the important role the women played in forming a union and winning a five-week strike.

The Equal Rights Amendment involves a major campaign to legally insure that women cannot be discriminated against. This constitutional amendment is an important step in fighting the exploitation of all women.

Why do Women Work?

Women, like men, work because of economic need -- they work because they need to support themselves and their families, not for "pin money." The majority of women workers are single, widowed, divorced, separated, or their husbands earn less than 10,000 a year. Today, we know many women whose husbands earn over \$10,000 need to work too -- because \$10,000 doesn't go far in supporting a family of four anymore!



One of every eight households is supported by a woman.



Because of the history of racism and national oppression tearing the Black family apart, Black women are left more often to raise their families themselves. One of every three Black families is headed by a woman.

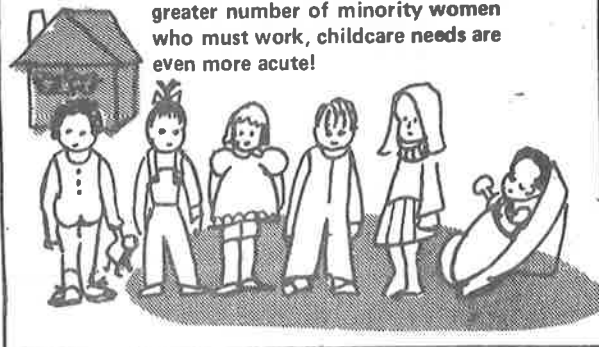
Working Mothers

Today, more women with young children are working than ever before. The number is nine times what it was in 1940.

1940

Today there are 6.1 million children under school age with working mothers, yet only 1 million licensed childcare places. Because of the greater number of minority women who must work, childcare needs are even more acute!

today



45% of all employees are women. They are doing jobs that everyone said they just couldn't do - women are steamfitters, drill press operators, surgeons, judges, cabinet ministers, even astronauts! When Bethlehem Steel was forced to hire women a few years ago, they put them on the coke ovens, the worst work in the plant. Women have been on the frontline of many important labor struggles - organizing shops like J.P. Stevens as well as numerous hospitals and offices. In the coal fields the miners' wives support committees have played a crucial role in the winning of the Brookside mine strike in Harlan County; now they are playing a similar role in the Stearns mine strike in Kentucky.

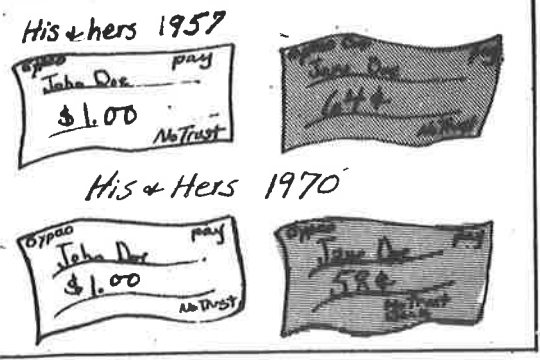
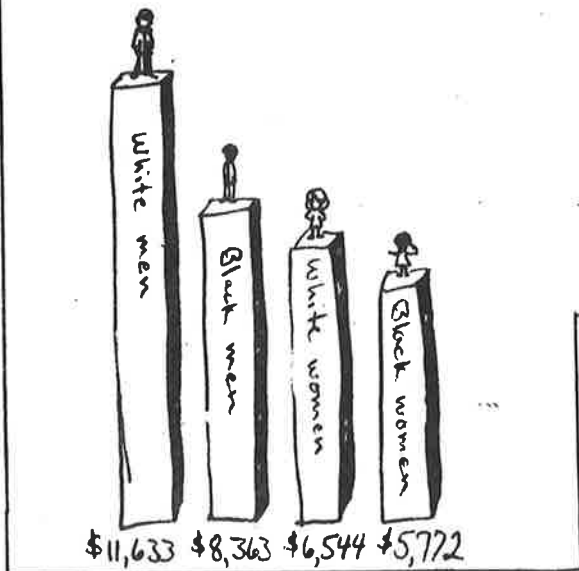
Women, like men, work because they need to support themselves and their families, not for "pin money". The majority (70%) of women workers are single, widowed, divorced, separated or their husbands earn less than \$10,000. One out of every eight households is supported by a woman. Because of the history of racism and national oppression tearing the Black family apart, Black women are more often left to raise their families themselves. One of every three Black families is headed by a woman.

Though women are a major part of the workforce they are severely exploited and discriminated against. Wages for women average only 56% of men's wages, and the wage gap has been increasing over the years. Women are systematically channelled into the most menial, low paying jobs. The situation is the worst for Black women.

Historically trade unions have been the tool working people have used to improve their

Women Earn Less

That women have gained "equal pay for equal work" is a myth. Just one glance at these 1973 figures show that women are still way behind, and that national minority women earn one half what white men do! In fact, the earning gap between men and women is widening, not narrowing: today, women earn 58% of what men do, while 15 years ago, the figure was 64%.



We must make the slogan "An Injury To One Is An Injury To All" real. Our strength as workers depends on men joining with women to fight all sex discrimination, just as the unity of all working people, Black, White, men and women is necessary to fight for better working conditions and a better life.

working conditions and wages. Although union membership in the U.S. is only 26% of the workforce, (one of the lowest percentages of any industrialized country) only 12½% of working women are organized. This lack of organization leaves working women open to exploitation.

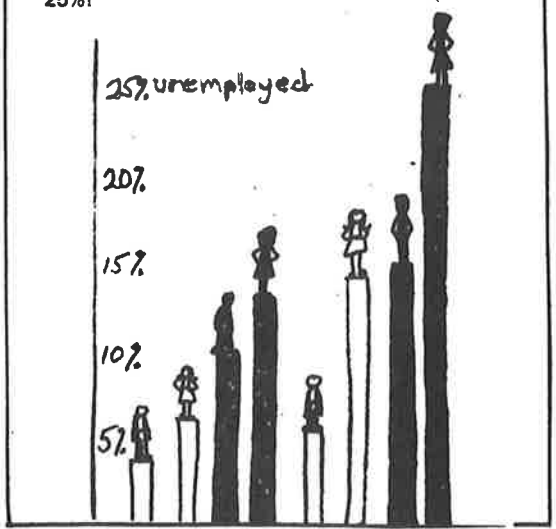
The oppression of women is not limited to the shop, but permeates our society and the situation is getting worse, not better. Public childcare facilities have been drastically reduced. The Equal Rights Amendment is still not passed. The right of women to control their lives is threatened by the government: poor women are denied the right to abortion and sterilization is being forced on minority women.

Sexism and sexist attitudes play an important part in the exploitation of women. Women are set apart from men, portrayed as weak, timid, shy, and to be protected, or on the other hand women are set up as sexual objects, ornamentation to satisfy men's ego's. In either case the ideology is that women are not deserving to be productive members of society and the equals of men in fighting oppression.

Men who buy this baloney are playing the bosses' game and are hurting themselves in the long run. Just think in a strike situation, if men have ignored the demands and problems that the women suffer as a result of sex discrimination, if they figure, "Well that's just the girls,"- then just how solid can you expect the women union members to be when the picket line goes up?

Unemployment

Women lack training, skills and education. They are discriminated against in hiring. Because of lack of maternity leaves and day-care, they are in and out of jobs and can't accumulate seniority. All this adds up to much higher unemployment rates. Black women suffer super-unemployment. The chart below shows not only the official figures, but also a second set based on those who are not actively looking for work now, but do want a job now -- here unemployment among Black women is upwards of 25%!



WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE: M. WILE

NEEDLE TRADES IN BUFFALO

M. Wile is a local Western New York plant which is famous for the top quality men's suits it produces: Johnny Carson, Hart, Schaffner & Marx and Nino Cerutti as well as some private labels. The company sells suits all over the world. In Buffalo, they are priced from about \$140 and up and most workers at the plant are not paid well enough to buy what they produce! M. Wile has about 2,000 employees at three locations: Goodell Street plant has 1,000 to 1,100 employees, while Elmwood and Dunkirk have about 900 people between them. This article will focus on Goodell Street.

The workforce at Goodell comes from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. 40 to 50% of the workers are Black with the major white ethnic groups being Polish and Italian. There are many first generation immigrants who speak little English. About 10 to 20% of the total number of employees are men who usually hold the higher paying jobs of cutting or pressing.

THE BOSSES

The first level of bosses that workers encounter are the floor walkers. Their job is to make sure that the work comes through in a steady supply. Next are the foremen who oversee the operations and handle all aspects of how a job is to be done. Many of them speak more than one language and use this ability to intimidate and misinform non-English speaking women as to what their rights are. At the top of the heap is the upper level of management which includes the vice presidents and people in charge of production.

PIECEWORK —

SPEEDUP AND COMPETITION

Operations are conducted on the piecework system. This is a lousy, vicious, competitive system which pits workers against each other instead of pitting them all against the company. On each operation or job, workers compete for the number of pieces each produces. There is also pressure and tension between the operations. If one operation doesn't work fast enough, it slows down the flow of work coming through to the next job. Because of the competitive nature of the work, the tempo is constantly speeded up. Many women work through their breaks and do not even get up to go to the bathroom. If lunch weren't a mandatory shut-down period, some people would work through that, too.



The rates for the jobs are based on the expectation that each worker should be able to make \$4.50 per hour after about six months on a job. The only department where this was not always a realizable goal was the leisure/sports shop. When leisure suits first started selling, the company used the opportunity to consolidate jobs without raising the rates for those jobs. The result was incredible speed-up at lower pay. Women who had been making a decent income for many years suddenly found themselves close to minimum wage. If that wasn't bad enough, when leisure suits went out of style, the majority of the section was laid off - not retrained!

UNHEALTHY WORKING CONDITIONS

The worst aspect of working at M. Wile is the noise. When all the machines are running you can't even hear the person next to you. The noise, coupled with the speed required for piecework, result in a lot of nervous tension. Dust is another problem in some departments. On operations which have sewing and trimming (there is a knife next to the needle which cuts as you sew), the dust flies up into the air, sticking to your skin and getting into your mouth and nose. On the first floor, there is a major problem with heat. The floor is directly above the boiler system and at times it makes it too hot to rest your feet on the floor for very long.

In the winter, it is in the 90's, and in summer, much worse. If you want to be cool, you have to supply your own fan. The only air-conditioned floor is the fifth, because it is a new addition to the building. For a while this year, the roof leaked, allowing water to run along the floor next to machines which operate off electricity. This was finally fixed due to pressure from people working in such dangerous surroundings. Occasionally, there is some allergic reactions to chemically treated and dyed fabric. Most accidents are a result of fatigue which is a natural part of piecework. The most common occurrence is putting a needle through your hand or fingers or being hit by objects which split and fly off when the machine is running. The most typical injury for the men is being burned on the presses. The nurse for the entire company is at Goodell Street - there are no first aid facilities at Elmwood or Dunkirk! The nurse is very pro-company. While I was employed there, an older woman fell on the ice and broke her hip while walking through the parking lot behind the plant. The nurse swore she saw the whole thing from her window, saying that the woman was just clumsy and fell on dry pavement. The woman was denied compensation. About the only thing it is easy to get from this nurse is tranquilizers.



The most common cause for a grievance at the plant is petty harassment, verbal abuse and being treated like garbage by the foremen and bosses. There is the usual amount of sexism, where the women are called "girls" and treated like children. Non-English speaking people are treated like they are stupid simply because they don't know English.

THE UNION - IMPROVEMENT NEEDED

The union at M. Wile is the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers of America (ACTWA). It is composed of a joint board which represents three locals, one at each plant. In the past, Goodell has had the most reps based on its larger size - a recent decision gave all three plants equal representation. A lot of people are dissatisfied with this and would like to see it

changed back. There were recent elections to the joint board where a significantly greater number of candidates ran for positions than is usual. This was in part based on growing dissatisfaction with the rather entrenched and conservative leadership which has done little to meet the needs of the workers they are supposed to represent. Unfortunately, this fledgling effort was not very well focused and people did not see the necessity of a unified approach to get at least a few new people on the board. There is still a lack of trust among the workers and a lot of individualism. The militancy that exists is still personal. Although there are a few new faces and a new president on the joint board, there does not seem to have been any real shift in political composition. It is still conservative. While there are some women on the board, they are still under-represented according to their numbers in the plant.

CONTRACT VIOLATIONS IGNORED

The union has generally proven ineffective in dealing with the arrogance of the company. A couple of years ago, workers were being cheated out of overtime pay. The union contract stipulates that anything over an eight-hour day or any week-end work constitutes over-time. M. Wile's interpretation of this was that people would only get straight time for the first forty hours, regardless if they worked week-ends or more than eight hours on any day. It took the intervention of the national to rectify this situation. It seems the local and the company had made a bargain which was in direct violation of their own national contract! The policy and procedure were finally clarified, but NO ONE EVER RECEIVED BACK PAY!

Another problem at M. Wile is the lack of plant-wide seniority. There is only operational or job seniority which determines the order of layoffs. Last hired, first fired. The problem arises with the loophole that the company can use to get around seniority if they choose to. The company can switch people to different jobs whenever they come up with a seemingly valid reason and when this happens they lose their seniority. Although the company has not seriously abused this process yet, there is no protection against it becoming widespread. The attitude from the union is, "What can we do?"

Locally, the response of the ACTWU to company attacks has been very weak. If a worker gets laid off, there are no call back rights. The company hires off the street and the union does nothing! There is technically a written grievance procedure, although no one uses it. This leaves a lot of room for misinterpretation and misrepresentation. The company is more organized. They have written complaints against employees which employees have to sign and which go into a person's employment file. Recently at union meetings, the question has been

raised about what the company does with these files - who sees them - do they get passed along as "references", etc. Answers are needed to these questions.

PAST STRUGGLES

The national ACTWU has proven itself occasionally militant on things like organizing drives: Farah , J.P. Stevens: the plan to organize the south which was spearheaded by the merger of the clothing and textile workers. It has proven weaker when fighting for good contracts in shops that are already organized. In 1974, the union called its first national strike in 53 years over a contract. It was handled very bureaucratically and many issues were not explained at all. One provision of this contract became an issue in Buffalo when it was brought to the attention of the workforce by an outside labor support group. They handed out a leaflet in four languages explaining the issue. It seemed that the health insurance company, which is a creation of the union and the companies it deals with, had depleted its funds. Workers were being asked to take one of the 30¢ raises they were getting and give it to the depleted fund. In essence, this amounted to returning the raise to the companies! When the facts became known at the three Western New York plants, the proposal was overwhelmingly voted down - though nationally it passed. This raises two significant points: quite likely, workers will act in their own interests if the issues are put clearly enough; and if the union has been weak in the face of company arrogance, it may not always be trusted to represent its members.

Another militant incident occurring around the national contract also took place in Buffalo. Last June (1977), the contract had expired and workers at the Goodell plant were not willing to work without it. There was a spontaneous wildcat strike and most of the workers walked off their jobs. The union couldn't control it, and tried to get people back to work. The workers would not return to their jobs until a date for ratification was actually set. Even so, the contract was rejected by a 2-to-1 margin locally due to dissatisfaction over local conditions.

STRENGTH THROUGH UNITY

There is a cohesiveness among the workers at the M. Wile plant and they will move together when the issues are clear. The cohesiveness is produced by some of the social interaction within the plant. There are a lot of cases where a more experienced worker shows an inexperienced one the ropes: short cuts, who spies for the company, who speaks for the union and so on. There are the times when collections are taken up for people whose husband or wife has

died, or when someone with family to support is out sick for too long with no pay or benefits. There is a lot of spirit and a slowly growing militancy at this plant. But the main ingredient for success against the bosses is missing. People's actions and reactions still tend to be disorganized and individualistic. They do not have a collective identity or consciousness which would give them the focus that they need. The union leadership, of course, should provide this, but has proven bankrupt in doing so. As a result, people are sceptical and not inclined to trust them. Nor do they necessarily see that there is strength in numbers. In the past, when tenuous unity has been forged, people often got burned anyhow.

Building up this unity in a way that it can be trusted is a very slow process and must come through the actions which carry out the words. The union must be made to fight for the needs of its members and it will take class conscious, collective strategy to do it.



AN INTERVIEW WITH UCPEU



BUILDING A UNION IN BUFFALO

5 years ago 80 some women and men who work at United Cerebral Palsy Association of WNY on Leroy Street were often paid salaries as low as \$3,500 a year, and had no rights of maternity leave, seniority or a just cause dismissal. They dealt with problems on the job individually and had no say in caseloads, or any terms or conditions of their employment. Now after 5 years of organizing, building a militant union, and negotiating a contract after being out on strike during the Buffalo Blizzard of '77, they can look back on work they went through and their future directions as a militant, democratic union. (Names of those interviewed were changed to avoid harassment)

Getting Started

LABOR ROUND-UP (LRU) - HOW DID EACH OF YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE ACTUAL WORK OF ORGANIZING A UNION?

BILL - Early in '74 when I came to work in the Hostel (Residential Service of the Adult Handicapped) a friend of mine came to me and whispered, "Do you want to join the union?" I had already seen a couple of newsletters, but I was skeptical about the union. We were still interested in protecting our interests at the Hostel with this new union. But looking at the overall picture, we realized that most people had no power and no recourse when dealing with the administration.

ANGELA - I was aware of the union when I started to work at UCPA in June '75. Yet, it wasn't until the fall that I became actively involved. It was that fall that the first of many general meetings was called for all UCPA workers.

MERILEE - We went to New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and said, "Who's going to organize us?" NYSUT organizers laid out the legal and political plans to us: legally, we needed 30% of the vote to be recognized as a bargaining unit, but politically it's best to have at least 50%. They told us to be secretive, and careful

not to tip our hand until after the election was called for. I remember one friend who brought sign-up cards in under her blouse so the administration wouldn't suspect her. The NYSUT people gave us the much needed nuts and bolts formulas to questions. For example, we asked who could be legally in the overall bargaining unit. Their answer was that if the person gets a check from UCPA, then he or she is in the bargaining unit.

LRU - HOW MUCH TIME DID YOU SPEND ON UNION WORK DURING THIS PERIOD BEFORE THE STRIKE?

BILL - Oh, for the first year and a half, I would think about 5 hours per week, going to meetings at a local bar every Monday after work. These meetings were basically "what's happening" get-togethers, where people expressed grievances and we talked about our organizing plans. These were exciting times: after winning a recognition election with over 80%, we formed an action committee of those who wanted to do organizing work. Between March '74 and June '75 some hearings were held by the State Labor Relations Board to decide who was eligible for the bargaining unit. Finally an election was held in June '75 where 80% of the workforce voted that yes, they wanted to be represented by NYSUT in negotiations. We went through a lot of growing pains: questions of how to organize, what kinds of committees should be set up to do work and how to begin writing the constitution.

LRU - HOW WAS THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS IMPLEMENTED?

BILL - We began collectively writing the constitution during the summer of 1975. We wrote our constitution with the idea of injecting certain principles into our union, with the goals of struggling against racism, sexism, and for the rights of all disabled people to be integrated into society. This became our bill of rights clause.

We defined our rights as working people within the union and set up our leadership structure and the basis for a democratic union. This process took several meetings over the summer which ended in the big constitutional ratification meeting in October of 1975. At that meeting, no one really knew what the other person was thinking. It was the first time everyone had been together. Issues like whether the union could represent "professional interests" and whether we were "workers" or "employees" came up. Big discussions resulted, the meeting was very democratic, everyone spoke up. We discussed the bill of rights clause. Many people agreed with the clause, but also wanted the union to stick to the "issues at UCPA". It took one meeting to ratify the constitution and it was very productive and brought a lot of us together.

Negotiations

LRU - DURING THIS SAME PERIOD, YOU WERE ALSO BEGINNING CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS. HOW DID THIS PROCESS DEVELOP?

MERILEE - We worked on a contract proposal from July '75 to December '75. The main goal of our contract was to equalize wages and upgrade working conditions. Upgrading salaries, cost of living, health benefits, limits on case loads, and classes, seniority rules, grievance procedures and just-cause dismissal. We really weren't sure on the issues, and this is where NYSUT helped us. They questioned us, clarified our proposals and wrote up the contract proposal. We gave everyone a copy, including the administration on December 17, 1975.

LRU - DID YOU EXPAND YOUR LEADERSHIP? THERE SEEMS TO BE A LOT MORE WORK BEING DONE.

BILL - We set up more committees: from the original action committee we set up elections for an executive council of 5 people, a representative council from each of our three bargaining units, a negotiating team of about 8 people and a finance committee. From an action committee of about 6 people in late 1975, our leadership had expanded to approximately 15 people. Because of this expansion, we still were not overworked; I was still putting in 5 hours a week on the union.

LRU - HOW DID THIS NEGOTIATING PROCESS BEGIN?

ANGELA - For the next year, the administration tried every stalling tactic they could think of. It was always, "No, no, no" and "maybe" and "we'll think about it", from the administration in answer to our proposals. We had approximately 8 meetings up to June, 1976. The administration always maintained that as a public agency they didn't have any money to upgrade our salaries, yet they could pay \$50 to \$60 a bargaining hour to a fancy labor lawyer named Cohen, to do the work for them.

MERILEE - Our negotiating team and membership was really apprehensive during this first period. From April to June, there was a three month

silence from the administration. They held back our January '75 wage increases, saying they wanted to wait until after the negotiations were completed. The negotiating team decided that we needed more active pressure to bring the administration to the table. So we decided on informational pickets late in the spring. People were angry because the administration was stalling. So the timing of the picket line was very important in order to build off that anger. "We want a contract" our picketers yelled up to the administration during a negotiating session. The picket did two things: it showed up the administration's lie about how the union did not represent the workers; and secondly, and probably more importantly, it broke the ice about what a picket line is. It was the first time that many people had ever walked a picket line and it was very successful.

5 Weeks On Strike

LRU - HOW DID THE STRATEGY DEVELOP AFTER PEOPLE RETURNED IN THE FALL?

ANGELA - We also organized another informational picket, this time when a UCPA board meeting was in session. We called the media, signed a petition demanding that they negotiate and wrote informational letters. We made posters for that picket on one of the snow days when no kids came to school. We hid the posters under the rest mats in our classrooms, waiting for the day.

MERILEE - Really, our membership pushed us: "What are we going to do?" one woman asked at our first fall membership meeting, "Will we have to go on strike?" The leadership did not want to raise the necessity of a strike; we didn't want to be called strike happy. There was the December membership meeting where the membership voted 56 for the strike and 16 against. We knew things were going slow but we hoped that the membership also would voice the idea.



BILL - We anticipated the votes for the strike vote but still, we were not sure. We organized car pools for that general meeting and encouraged people to come, but we on the negotiating committee were not the ones who raised the issue of the strike. In fact, we were ultra-democratic, accommodating almost everyone's point of view.

LRU - HOW DID YOU CONCRETELY PLAN FOR THE STRIKE, ONCE THE MEMBERSHIP VOTED TO HIT THE BRICKS?

ANGELA - With the advice of NYSUT we set up a crisis committee to find a storefront and equipment, and subcommittees to deal with the press, team captains for the picket line and a telephone tree. I left the negotiating committee to join the crisis committee since there were already enough people in the bargaining sessions.

MERILEE - We were given much needed support from NYSUT and from other teachers' locals in the state. NYSUT paid the bills, gave us their staff people and were an absolute necessity in our strike. We also had made a conscious effort to reach out to the parents of the children at UCPA, explaining our positions, our demands, to gain their support during the strike.

BILL - The first day of the strike came, since there was no signed agreement, on the 17th of January. But only the snow came. For us, it was the beginning of the Blizzard of '77 in Buffalo. The first day of our strike and no picketing! Our time was totally committed during this period. I was working at the Hostel, which the union agreed to keep open, and I served on the negotiating team and did picket duty. My time commitment shot up from 5 to 40 hours a week. But negotiations were definitely moving along. A mediator came after the third week. There were proposals and counterproposals. The issues left to agree on were the most important: teacher class size and therapist case loads, salaries, hours and union shop. We on the negotiating team were under a terrific burden: on the one hand, how to be fair to the people who have been on strike so long; and on the other, how much longer can we expect the support to remain. During the middle of the 5th week, we had a general meeting to feel people out about the remaining issues. Everyone expressed their feelings and their support for our efforts, and we returned to the bargaining table. Finally, during the 5th

week, we negotiated the final issues; we called another meeting, wrote out a capsulized version of the contract, summarized the agreement and the membership ratified it on February 19.

MERILEE - The turning point came when the administration decided on a desperation move. They started up the program the last week of the strike. Given the very strong support of the parents, who were already overburdened with daycare at home, only about 9 out of 120 children were sent in. But the militancy of the picket line took a stronger turn. People were angry and they showed it by blocking cars and the scabs that came in those last five days. The union's unity was strong enough to resist their attempts to divide us away from our contract demands.

The Contract

LRU - WHAT PROBLEMS DID YOU HAVE TO FACE AFTER THE CONTRACT AGREEMENT?

BILL - The administration, probably on the advice of their 'labor lawyer', acted like they had not even read the agreement. We filed 56 grievances in the remaining 10 months of 1977. These activities kept us on the defensive and caused us to spend a lot of valuable time fighting the administration through our grievance procedure. Here again the NYSUT leadership gave us much needed support and financial backing for certain cases to go to arbitration. Of those 56 grievances, we've won 12 in arbitration, and had most of the others either settled in our favor or withdrawn. Now there are 5 people who know how to use the grievance procedure all the way to the top, and more are in training. The change to an offensive strategy came this fall when the union won its arbitration granting a union shop. But now the issues are clear. We must show the 35 new people who have come to the agency since the strike exactly what the union has won for all of us.

MERILEE - We are planning to write up a history of the union to introduce the new members to the fight for the benefits we now receive. The administration is already trying to take credit for the gains that the union won. We are planning to continue our union newsletter, with a topical addition called the "Inquiring Reporter" and a column "Know Your Contract".



BILL- In the last six months, the leadership has set an example of responsibility in completing tasks and tightening up our decisions. We realize that we are responsible to a lot of people, including those 15 new people who only signed the union cards after the mandatory union shop decision was announced. We know that we must conduct our affairs in a competent, honest and democratic fashion or people will lose trust in our union.

Women at UCPEU

LRU - HAVE PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN OR WOMEN'S FEELING ABOUT THEMSELVES CHANGED BECAUSE OF THIS UNION STRUGGLE?

ANGELA - Women have been a lot more assertive and have stood up for themselves more since our struggles with the administration. At staff meetings or even signing a petition, I think women have been much less passive than a few years ago. Now when the administration tries to lay on criticisms of "unprofessional attitudes" or when they raise a "question of personal competence" women who used to break down and cry, now dish the same criticism back on where it really belongs - with the administration. Women also have developed more personal relationships with each other. Now our friendships are based more on shared values and we stand up more for each other than we have in the past.

BILL - My perceptions of women in general probably have not changed. But there are more women in leadership now than before. We are all more responsible and vulnerable to a larger number of people. Women who have not been active earlier in the union seem to be more assertive. An example of this is a woman who is just beginning to know the contract and is now talking back to the administration using the contract to defend her rights under the contract. I think that we all are taking the offensive in asserting our rights.

U.C.P.E.U. Strike song of 1977

tune - Rise up Children and Bring God to Glory

1st verse:

Workers to bosses there's going to be a union, union
 " " " " " " " " " " " "

Never do it, they kept assuming,
 Workers on the rise.

Chorus:

We'll walk that line and get a contract, contract
 (repeat)

We'll keep strong and keep up the fightback -
 U.C.P.E.U.

Last verse:

We'll win a contract and defend it day by day
 " " " " " " " " " " " "

And things will never be the same at U.C.P.A.
 We're workers on the rise!



ERA article
 cont. from L-12

Blaming The Victim

Another fear drummed up against passage of the ERA is that women will take jobs from men, or at least cut into men's wages through raising their own. This same tactic of blaming the victim is used against migrant workers and other national minorities, especially Blacks, to justify their exclusion from the workforce.

In fact, it is women and minorities who are the last hired and first fired in times of economic depression. Is it necessary that this unfair situation should continue to preserve men's jobs? Actually, the exploitation of women not only directly oppresses women, but is used as a brake against further gains for male workers as well. The bosses can always threaten men with replacement by low-paid women or minorities if they get too pressing in their demands. This divide and conquer strategy can only be defeated through unionization and mobilization of all workers, not one segment at the expense of others. It has always been the case that the security and freedom of one cannot be assured till it is extended to all.

In recognition of this, we support ratification of the ERA as a legal basis for fighting the second class status which has been accorded to women in this society.

With regard to ERA, that means: ORGANIZE and make passage of the ERA a victory for all workers: Men, Women, Black & White.

up

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WHY WE NEED THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

This article will attempt to clear up some of the confusion surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) while at the same time explain why we support it along with the extension of protective laws to all workers - men, women, organized and unorganized.

The ERA was first proposed to Congress in 1923. For the past 55 years, it's been shuffled back and forth between committees until today, when only three more states are needed to ratify it as a constitutional amendment.

Even now there is a well-financed campaign to block ratification of the ERA. The current deadline for ratification is March, 1979, although Congress has the authority to extend the deadline.

What Does It Say?

The Equal Rights Amendment states that: Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

What Can It Do?

If adopted, the ERA will call into question all previous laws and practices which treat women in a way that is different - and consequently unequal - to men. Let's look at some concrete examples of how present laws are discriminatory towards woman. There are four major areas which will be affected by the ERA: Public Education, Selective Service, Family Law and Protective Laws.

Public Education

ERA ratification would potentially mean an end to discrimination in admissions, hiring, salaries, and scholarships. It would make it illegal for high schools to restrict technical training to boys. Sports programs would either have to be broadened to include girls or else separate but equal programs would have to be set up.

Schools would no longer be able to impose the old double standard of expelling pregnant or married girls, depriving them of a high school education, while allowing the unwed fathers or married boys to finish their education.

I'm just terribly sorry, Miss, but we just don't have a policy of hiring women in our more responsible positions. They are just always getting pregnant or married or their husband has to move out of town or their kids get sick or they find a better job or they can't lift heavy things and besides we only have one executive bathroom... But of course we always have openings in filing.



Peg Averitt, LMS

On the college level, admissions procedures would have to be adjusted. For example: the University of Virginia turned down 21,000 female applicants and rejected not one male applicant. ERA would not mean a lowering of scholastic requirements; it would only mean an equalization of them so that all students were given a fair chance for both acceptance and scholarships.

Selective Service

Passage of the ERA would mean that women would be required to register in the event of a draft. However, women serving in combat really isn't the unheard of atrocity that anti-ERA forces would have us believe. In fact, Congress has always had the power to induct women and during WWII, a bill to draft nurses passed in the House. History is filled with examples of women doing their part during periods of just wars and not only by rolling bandages. Women played a major role in the anti-fascist resistance movements in Europe; American women kept heavy industry alive and functioning during World War II; the Vietnamese women defended and rebuilt their land. Basically, women are willing and able to do whatever is necessary in the course of a just struggle.

On the other hand, if a war were being aggressively waged against a people's struggle

for liberation, as occurred in Vietnam, and a draft were instituted, women could mobilize along with men against service in what they considered to be an unjust and imperialist war. Even without the threat of active duty, thousands of women did actively demonstrate their disapproval of our government's actions in Vietnam.

Family Law

This area of the law will be closely reevaluated under the ERA. Since the present code is based on the old English Common Law, which regards women as chattel (property), we can see clearly why change is in order. Some of the immediate changes would be:

1) All property and earnings would be seen as joint possessions of the two marriage partners. This would mean that in the event of a breakup, alimony would be paid by the most able partner (the same goes for child support). At present, 97% of all divorced women do not receive alimony due to the lack of enforcement of the laws. Much the same goes for child support. This situation, coupled with the lack of low cost quality child care, forces large numbers of women with families onto the welfare rolls. Concretely, since women earn about 56¢ for every \$1.00 that men earn, men would still bear the brunt of alimony payments until wages for men and women are more balanced.

2) Child custody is judged on the basis of what is best for the child and that rule will remain.

3) Women would not be forced to work and/or place their children in public child care facilities. Passage of the ERA would be a real boost for those forces fighting to establish their need and right to low cost, quality child care, but it would in no way force the issue on unwilling parents.

4) Men as well as women could collect social security or pension benefits in the event of their spouse's death.

5) Single women will be able to establish credit, get loans, own property, etc., without depending on their fathers, brothers, uncles or whoever to co-sign.

Protective Laws

Protective laws are largely state laws which cover things like rest or break periods, lifting maximums, minimum wage, number of hours worked, maternity leave, etc. For women in unions, many of the positive "protective laws" have been negotiated into their contracts, and these benefits would have to be extended to men as well. Some examples would be pregnancy leave for fathers too, so they could help with other children at home or just take care of the new infant if their wife were unable to do so. Lifting laws could be extended. For example,

the law which is presently in effect in Georgia removed the specific weight limit and now relieves anyone from "lifting weights that cause strain or undue fatigue".

For unorganized women who depend on these protective laws for the little defense they have, ratification of the ERA could mean a loss of those benefits.

It is on this basis that most anti-ERA forces on the left and in the labor movement rest their case. They claim that the bosses will turn an ERA victory into a defeat for the working class - that it will become a banner for extended exploitation rather than protection or equality. To gauge the merit of this argument, we need to look at how real the protective laws are for the majority of unorganized workers, many of whom are members of oppressed nationalities.

Militant Unionism Needed

Unorganized women workers face two problems in relation to the so-called protective laws: First, how to deal with protective laws that work against you - such as Nevada's maximum lifting law of 10 pounds for women - you can be denied employment on this basis. Second, how to get the positive protective laws enforced consistently without getting fired! The situation at worst is total violation of the laws and at best (if you can call it that) racism and favoritism in enforcement.

In any case, the second part of the problem, the question of equal and consistent enforcement, is the most important. With or without ERA, unorganized women workers have nowhere to turn in the face of racism and exploitation but to each other and to their male co-workers. Only through unionization and real organized mass pressure can protective laws mean anything.

- continued on L-10 -

Fred Wright, Union Cartoons

WE HAVE A POLICY OF NO SEX DISCRIMINATION. HERE ...



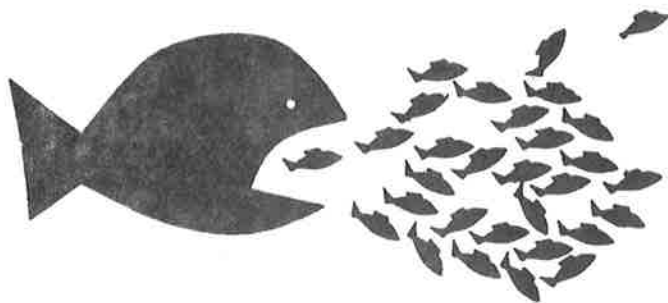
ALL OF OUR EMPLOYEES ARE OVERWORKED EQUALLY!



PALEA WINS

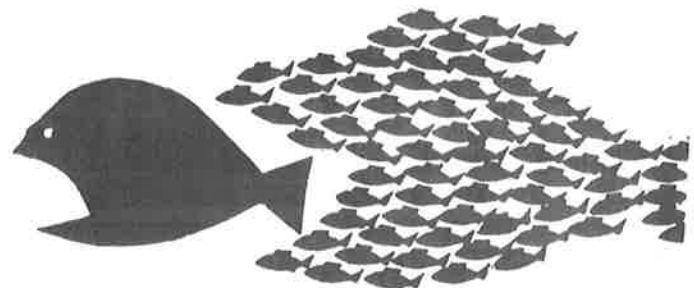
FIRST ORGANIZED ALL CETA UNION IN U.S.

On February 23, at an election conducted by the State Labor Relations Board (SLRB), the CETA Police Athletic League Employees Association (PALEA) gathering 70% of the vote won the right to represent the 482 workers in the PAL community services sector. This first major victory of an organizing effort initiated by the CETA Workers Organizing Committee (CETAWOC) over two years ago is of major importance. This is the first time a union of all CETA workers has won the right to bargain for themselves in the entire United States. The victory and continuation of the drive on the part of CETAWOC will provide the impetus to organize the remaining 2300 CETA workers in the city of Buffalo. It is the largest organizing effort to take place in Buffalo since World War 2 and could set a precedent for CETA workers nationwide.



ORGANIZE TO FIGHT BACK

In spite of the victory CETAWOC and PALEA have their work cut out for them. They still have to bring 2300 CETA workers under the fold of unionization. They have to win over elements in the PAL sector that still oppose unionization. Probably the greatest task before them will be an attempt to wrest a contract from the city of Buffalo. The Buffalo Workers Movement will continue to support the organizing efforts in any way we can. We congratulate these CETA workers on their much deserved election victory.



BUILD A STRONG UNION

CETA workers provide 38% of Buffalo city services and they are one of the most disenfranchised and unrepresented elements in the work force. Despite the vital services they have delivered to our city they have been continually treated as second class citizens by CETA management. They have been callously used to bust civil service and building trades unions. Throughout the programs existence (since 1973) they have continually faced job insecurity because of program mismanagement, low wages, lack of a fair grievance procedure, dead end jobs and every other abuse that one could imagine. They have been essentially treated like cattle in a fancy welfare program and everyday CETA management through its disregard and neglect of CETA workers rights impresses this fact upon them.

Well, CETA workers are tired of being treated like cattle and they proved this in their organizing efforts to get an election through SLRB and then to win it. Despite a vicious and intimidating

Unity Books Softball Season!

This spring Unity Books will again sponsor a softball team. We will be playing on the City Municipal Leagues - Slow Pitch Men's Division. Last year the team finished with a five and five league record with a few keg games outside of league play. If women would like to play on the men's team let us know early so we can petition the league. Also, if enough women show interest the bookstore would also sponsor a team in the City Women's League. We usually have a lot of fun and it's a good way to burn off that winter fat. If you would like to play - write: Unity Books, Softball, POB 6, Station G, Buffalo, N.Y. 14213 or call 882-8232 in the evenings.

Friendship First !

Competition Second !



BOOKS



Little Flags Theatre
presents

SAT Mar 11

Northwest Buffalo
Community Center

155 Lawn Ave. off Military
near Hertel

a rich and vivid musical production
portraying the lives of the coal mining
people and their struggles to organize
against their oppression.



7:30pm tickets - \$2.00 child care provided

SUN Mar 12

Winds of the People

A musical cantata of people's struggles throughout the world. From Chile to the American Plains - from industrial Europe, across the Asian continent and down to Africa, we celebrate the comedy and tragedy, the humanity and heroism of the international people's movement.

Fillmore Rm, Squire Hall

Winds of the people speak to me
Winds of the people carry me
They scatter my heart
And blow through my throat
So the poet will go on singing
As long as my spirit breathes,
Both now and forever.

- Victor Jara

7:30 pm tickets - \$2.00

child care provided

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**unity books presents
a labor history
study program 3**

Once again Unity Books is offering its ten week study program on U.S. labor history to begin in mid April. This is the third time for this study program. The study program provides each participant with a firm grasp of U.S. labor history. It provides a clear understanding of the role of trade unions in capitalist society and the tasks of progressive people within them. Integrated with the basic study program will be a series of presentations by members of the Buffalo Workers Movement addressing historical trends and organizations within the labor movement. United front strategy and tactics are highlighted. Past participants have found the program useful in sharpening their trade union work.

The study group will be open to all those interested in attending. The basic requirement of each participant will be attendance, completing the readings and respect for the other study group members. If you are interested in attending or would like more information: Contact Unity Books Post Office Box 6, Station G Buffalo, N.Y. or call evenings: 882-8232 or 883-9028

FILM SHOWING IN BUFFALO

One of the best films to be ever made about Latin America will be shown April 7 at 7:30 PM at SUNYAB, Diefendorf 146 and on April 8 at 7:30 PM at the Niagara Branch Library. "Courage of the People" is a feature length film in color about the famous miners' strike in Bolivia in 1967. The film was made by Jorge Sanjines who made "Blood of the Condor." Sponsored by the Latin American Solidarity Comm.