

[The following is the text of a leaflet distributed in Australia by the Women's Liberation Group.]

Why women's liberation?

WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY

We all say that people should be free and equal, and have the same opportunities in life. But most of us ignore the fact that half of our population is denied these rights from birth.

Women are denied full participation in this society simply because they are not born men. As women, we learn that our proper aim in life is to be a good wife and mother above everything else. From birth, we are taught to prepare for these roles. At school we learn sewing, domestic science and humanities (while boys learn carpentering, math and sciences.) This not only prepares us for our future roles, but teaches us not to compete with men, that men are stronger than us in every way -- physically, mentally and emotionally. We accept this, and in adult life we rely on men to give us material and emotional security while we become unpaid cooks, cleaners, nursemaids, and companions. This is defined as our proper realm; a woman who rejects this confining definition to seek satisfaction outside the home meets with constant frustration. Most jobs available to her are unskilled and unrewarding-- and she is told that she is not capable of anything better. When a woman has the same job as a man, she invariably gets less pay and less hope of advancement.

Throughout the society, a woman is identified as female long before she is recognised as an individual. She is forced into the "woman's role" regardless of her interests and abilities: TO BE A WOMAN IS TO BE OPPRESSED.

In the past, women fought for the vote and better education, assuming that when these were won, women would be able to take their full place in society. We have seen, however, that education and civil liberties are not enough, and that no group in this society can be free while the REAL power is held by the profit-makers -- i.e. capitalists -- who benefit by oppressing others.

HOW THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN BENEFITS CAPITALISM

Women provide the labour market with a cheap reserve army of the unemployed which can be called on when needed. During World War II, for example, women in many countries were drafted into industry in huge numbers (and alternative ways of childcare suddenly appeared). But when there is a labour surplus, women are the first to be fired and reminded that "a woman's place is in the home." Women's cheap labour keeps profits up and wages down. Moreover, in a competitive society such as ours, where one person's gain is another's loss, the threat of losing their jobs to the cheap labour of women is always hanging over men. Such a threat prevents men from seeing women as their allies in the struggle for better working conditions. This is one of the many ways in which the work force is prevented from uniting against the employers who exploit them.

Similarly at home, a man blames his wife for tying him down and preventing him from doing what he wants. He does not understand that he is the victim of a society which limits his opportunities according to the demands of profit.

Since the profits gained from the work of all go to the profit-makers rather than to the welfare of the people, the family, too, becomes a trap. Each family unit is made responsible for its own welfare, and is totally dependent on the breadwinner. Because the whole family suffers from any loss of income, it is even more difficult for workers to strike for better conditions.

In a capitalist society, production is geared to profit, not to the needs of the consumer. What welfare services are provided are only introduced, under pressure, as compromises in order to maintain the system. Advertising pressures a woman, as feminine, wife and mother, to spend freely on unnecessary clothes, non-nutritious food, badly made household goods and cosmetics. A good housewife is a docile consumer, obediently striving to follow the trends of her Women's Weekly.

FEMININITY

This is all part of being "feminine." But what is femininity? It is being sweet, attractive, submissive, understanding, dependent, and defenseless. A "feminine" woman tries, above all, to serve men. She is told that she likes to be dominated and supported. She adapts herself to men's tastes, and trades "sex-appeal" for the "security" of marriage.

The institution of femininity makes sure that a woman knows her proper place.

The Women's Liberation movement has developed in response to the needs of women who refuse to be imprisoned in their "proper place." We must all work together (as other groups have in the past) to change those things in our society which tell us we are second-class.

WHY WOMEN SHOULD SUPPORT THE VIETNAMESE

Women should support the Vietnamese struggle, realizing that both groups -- women in our own and other societies, and the Vietnamese people -- are being oppressed by the same forces. The same powerful class of business tycoons who profit from women's cheap labour, who pressure women to pay them high prices for cheaply made goods, and who decide that our resources should not be spent on welfare but should be spent on arms -- this same class is leading the war in Vietnam. The government, serving their interests not ours, has instigated a lottery system to choose our young men to kill the Vietnamese -- primarily to keep Southeast Asia within the United States sphere of influence. Southeast Asia is a source of raw materials which provide the large business groups with enormous profits.

Is it any wonder that these groups oppose any government which would distribute its national resources equitably among its own people!

OUR STRUGGLE

The Women's Liberation Movement believes that women must fight against the forces of oppression for the right to determine their own lives, just as the Vietnamese are fighting for the right to govern their own country. We, like the Vietnamese, can only be free of oppression when the profit-makers no longer have the power to determine our lives. We seek a society in which all people will be truly equal and their cooperative labour will be at the full disposal of everyone

THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION GROUP WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14 AT 7:30 P.M. AT 64A DRUITT STREET, SYDNEY. (next to the town hall)

ANYONE INTERESTED PLEASE COME ON JANUARY 14 AND PUT YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON THE ENCLOSED FORM. PLEASE HAND IT IN TO THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION GROUP IN THE TOWN HALL -- or post to:

Women's Liberation Group
22 Nicholson Street
Balmain